

IMPORTANT
DATES TO
REMEMBER:

- Sept. 9
Part-time Job Fair
- Sept. 28-Oct. 3
Homecoming
- Oct. 12
Spring Semester course
schedule available online
- Oct. 16-18
Family Weekend
- Oct. 21
Major Fair
- Oct. 23
No Classes
- Nov. 10
First day of spring term
registration
- Nov. 11
Deadline to withdraw
from individual course
- Nov. 25
Deadline for withdrawal
from University
- Nov. 25
No night classes
- Nov. 26-27
No Classes-Thanksgiving
- Dec. 7-11
Final Exams
- Dec. 13-Jan. 10
Winter Break

QUESTIONS,
COMMENTS OR
CONCERNS?

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Family Connections

A NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS OF MINNESOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY MANKATO STUDENTS

College: A Transition for Students AND Parents

...Adapted from umich.edu

Transitioning to university life can be, and often is, a challenging stage in a young adult's life. This is precisely why universities provide an abundance of opportunities for students to seek support. MSU is no exception. We also acknowledge and empathize with the transition you, as parents, are currently going through.

If your student is no longer living at home, you will probably be seeing them less than you are used to. This means that when you do speak or see each other, there is a good chance that changes in your student-and your relationship with them-may start to surface. To help you best handle these changes, this article will discuss what to expect and how best to approach aspects of the university transition.

A few common possibilities:

- **Infrequent interaction with your student.**

While living together, you spoke to your student daily, but now, away at college, interaction may be less frequent and/or limited in length. Make the most of these conversations by *listening*. Your student may need advice, but make sure you recognize when they just need to talk. Also, be *supportive*. Transition is a time of uncertainty and your student may begin college less confident than in high school. Support your student by being positive, and encourage them to give "settling in" some time. Feeling anxious or nervous is part of the process.

- **Your role/style as a parent may begin to change.**

During high school, the "my

house, my rules" approach was probably effective with your student, but now, cracking the whip from a distance may not be the best way to impact your student's actions. Students are not only transitioning to the university environment, but into adulthood.. A university student is likely to take advantage of new-found freedom, and it's possible (perhaps even likely) that they are going to make mistakes along the way (hanging out with friends instead of studying, getting a parking ticket, etc). Rather than saying "I told you so" or jumping to judgment, give your young adult some room to learn. Be understanding and informative when necessary, but allow them to experience what is normal in this stage in life. Let your student know you are there to help, but in a way that encourages them to ask you for advice when they need it...**continued on page 2.**

Get Involved, Be a Part of MSU!

Trevor Gohner, FYE Graduate Assistant

For a new student, one of the best ways to make new friends and to stay active is to join a club or organization. MSU offers literally *hundreds* of opportunities for group affiliation-there is a group for every interest!

- **Student organizations:**

Student organizations can be academically based, such as the Finance Club, and offer professional development opportunities, or special interest based, like The Truth Movement, or Muslim Students' Association.

- **Greek Life:**

Greek Life opportunities include leadership development and community involvement; recruitment is September 8-12.

- **IMPACT Team:**

Plan movies, special speakers, and other campus events for fellow Mavericks!

Advice for Living with a Roommate ...Torin Akey, Associate Director for Residential Life: Adapted from Sept. 2007 Family Connections

Living with another person is always an adjustment. Attending college is an adjustment. And, since living with someone else in a residence hall room combines both elements, it is likely that there will be days when your student is "getting along great" with their roommate and days they wished their roommate moved out.

What should you do if your student is describing their current roommate experience as less than ideal?

- **Listen with the intent of listening rather than problem solving.**

Conflicts are inevitable as both students adjust to this living experience and have different needs, values, likes and dislikes. Your student may simply want to vent to you or the experience they are sharing is simply a "sound byte" of their day or week. Avoid volunteering to intervene; your student may tell you less about their experiences in the future if that is your first reaction.

- **Ask your student how they have brought this conflict to the attention of their roommate.**

Instant Messaging or sending an email is not an effective way to deal with conflicts. Encourage your student to share face-to-face with their roommate their concern and what they need in this shared space to be successful.

Most reoccurring roommate conflicts occur when students choose not to talk about their concerns with their roommate or try to be "too nice" when discussing their individual needs. When you are hearing of a conflict, encourage your student to revisit the agreed upon expectations or, if they didn't complete a roommate agreement, encourage them to fill out another one...**Continued on page 3**

Communicate According to a New Set of Rules

Trevor Gohner, FYE Graduate Assistant

Shifting from high school to university means adjusting to new processes, standards, and policies. One policy in particular often surprises parents-FERPA: Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act.

The main idea of this federal act is that academic institutions, such as MSU, are not allowed to release non-directory information about a student to anyone other than the student in question. Parents, for example, can not obtain their child's grades, course schedule, or the name of the student's advisor by contacting MSU.

While FERPA can frustrate parents, it exists to protect students' right to privacy, and there is an important upside to consider: *letting students conduct their own business teaches them how to be their own advocate in the future.* Consider this to be an opportunity to develop independence and maturity while they still have the option of getting help from you.

It's easy to want to step in and take over, whether the task at hand is filling out

their FAFSA, or their housing application, or even setting up an appointment with their advisor. Students should take responsibility for their own education and learn the ropes now, while they are in an atmosphere of support and learning. This learning process might not be easy or fast, but in this process the student should be in the driver's seat. Parents are more than welcome to be passengers; experienced drivers who can provide guidance along the way.

College: A Transition for Students AND Parents

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- **Phone calls from your student expressing stress.**

Don't be surprised if your student calls you (maybe even late at night) to express their worries. Test anxiety, a stressful week, or worrying about choosing a major can lead to a call to mom or dad. Once again, listening is key. Listen carefully so you can discern what your student is *really* stress-

ing about. Do your best to be supportive and encouraging. If it seems like normal first-semester jitters, calm their nerves and express your confidence in your student. But if you are concerned that your student needs a little more than a pep talk, make sure to suggest the Counseling Center, a FREE, confidential on-campus service available only to MSU students.

- **Homesickness (or not!).**

Homesickness is common of first-year college students, whether a surprise or not. Even though a student is excited for college, it takes time to settle in and get into the groove of things. Support your student and encourage them to stay in touch with family and friends, and to give the process some time. On the other hand, parents may be surprised if their student *doesn't* get homesick. This just means your student is adjusting well and likely having a good time. Make sure to stay connected but respect your student's newly built home.

Family Weekend Oct. 16-18, 2009

Join us for Family Weekend October 16 – 18!

We have a variety of activities planned for all interests – academic college events, student presentations, a 5k fun run/walk, movies, an illusionist, theatre performances, open game rooms, tours and much more! Visit www.mnsu.edu/familyweekend for a complete schedule and hotel information. You can also let your student know you are coming (or just to say “hi”) by sending a virtual postcard!

For maps and directions to campus, visit www.mnsu.edu/maps/directions/. **Free parking will be available in any gold, purple or green lot starting at 4:00 p.m. on Friday, October 16.**

SEE YOU THERE!

Advice for Living with a Roommate

...continued from page 2

- **Ask your student how you can help.** Do they want to practice their roommate conversation with you? Do they want your advice and guidance? Recognize that how you want to help and how they want you to help them may be different. "Letting Go" and "Letting (your student) Grow" is difficult at times; however, helping your student to develop conflict resolution skills will provide them benefits in many future environments.
- **Ask your student what resources they know about.**

The Community Advisor (CA) can help mediate roommate conflicts and the Complex Director can help when the conflict involves a policy violation. Room changes also can give your student a "fresh start" in a different environment. As you help your student navigate their college transition and find yourself stuck, needing advice, or wanting to know a "next step" please con-



Safety First!

Trevor Gohner, Graduate Assistant

At MSU, we strive to provide a safe campus, but part of the responsibility belongs to our students to make smart & safe choices.

While walking to/from class:

- Avoid walking alone at night, but if you do, walk in well-lit areas, don't take shortcuts.
- Be alert; don't listen to your iPod or talk on your cell phone while you walk.
- Make sure someone knows where you are and when you will be back.
- Have your keys readily accessible.
- If walking on campus, call 507-389-2111 for an escort!

How to safeguard your apartment/dorm:

- Keep your doors locked at all times and do not leave windows open while you are not home.
- Do not open the door for strangers.
- Know your neighbors; know who you can trust and build a safety network, even if only to be careful.

A Reminder from Student Health Services:

All students are required to have updated records for the mumps, measles, rubella, tetanus and diphtheria vaccines. Health Services also recommends students get the following vaccinations:

- Influenza (yearly)
- Meningitis
- Gardasil (females)
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- TDaP (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis)

Updates regarding **H1N1 Vaccine** availability will be posted on the Student Health Services website: www.mnsu.edu/shs. Contact Student Health Services for more information at (507) 389-6276.

Ways for YOU to Stay Involved!

Now that you and your son/daughter are going to be apart for longer periods of time than you are probably used to, here are a few small ways for you to stay connected with your student while s/he's away!

- **Send mail.** *Real* mail. College students love getting a letter, card, or care package while at college!
- **Talk.** Set up a weekly time to talk on the phone, or email regularly so both of you stay in the loop with each other.
- **Visit!** If possible, visit your student at MSU! Go to a Maverick game, eat in the CSU, get a feel for your student's college life.
- **Attend Family Weekend!**

However you and your student choose to stay connected, keep in mind that they are in an exciting point in life. Stay connected, but also try to encourage them to spread their wings.