



MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
moorhead



September 2008

Seasonal Student Issues

There's a seasonal ebb and flow when it comes to student issues. Here are a few things your student may be experiencing this month:

September

- ▲ exploration and acknowledgement of personal values
- ▲ long distance relationship strain
- ▲ feelings of loneliness and homesickness may increase
- ▲ a desire to feel connected to campus
- ▲ roommate adjustments
- ▲ experimentation with alcohol and other drugs
- ▲ getting acclimated to a new type of academics
- ▲ figuring out how to get organized and manage their time
- ▲ searching for a sense of belonging

Learning Inside & Outside the Classroom

A great advantage your student has on campus this year is that he can learn both in and out of the classroom. This comprehensive take on learning will help him juggle tasks, get involved on campus and learn in a variety of ways. They include:

Classroom Knowledge. Lecture notes, class discussions, textbooks and projects will help students dig into specific subject matter. Don't be surprised if your student is excited about anthropology or astronomy next time you talk!

You Can... Ask your student what she's learning. It'll be great to hear her excitement plus, by sharing the knowledge with you, it's helping her clinch it in her own brain even more, too.

Service Experience. By participating in class-based service learning projects and out-of-class community service initiatives, your student is learning about giving back and engaging with the community.

You Can... Role model community involvement and the value of giving back. Also, talk with your student about the people he's meeting through his community service.

Campus Leadership. Getting involved with the biology club, student government or the campus radio station can enhance students' sense of belonging because they really feel a

part of something. Plus, they're learning how to follow, how to lead, how to work with a wide variety of people, and how to be part of a team.

You Can... Stay in touch with your student about what her group(s) is up to. Is there a program happening this weekend? Has she been working on a particular project? Ask her all about it.

Assisting a Professor. Sometimes students have an opportunity to get involved with a research project. If your student decides to do this, he'll enhance his classroom learning through practical experience.

You Can... Try to understand the research your student is involved in, even if you feel like it's "over your head." By explaining things to you in layperson terms, he will be in a beneficial teaching role.

Your student is surrounded by learning opportunities in and out of class. The combination is unbeatable!

Involvement & Academics Go Hand-in-Hand

Research says that students who get involved on campus will likely do better academically, too. In and out of class involvements complement one another!

September is National Campus Safety Awareness Month

Keeping students safe is a primary concern for all of us. Now the U.S. House of Representatives is in on the action, having passed a resolution to support the annual designation of September as National Campus Safety Awareness Month.

Students hear various safety messages from home and from campus. Here are a few that don't always get the same airplay yet are very important in keeping your student safe:

- Write your name on the same page in each textbook, near the spine, so you can more easily identify them if they are stolen.
- Report any obscene email or phone messages. Some students are bullying and stalking others via cyberspace, and campus officials need to know so they can step in.
- Let residence hall staff know about building concerns like slippery floors, broken glass, missing window screens, burned out lights and more that can compromise community safety.
- When noting a person so you can describe him later, recall permanent features like hair color, height, facial structure, tattoos and birthmarks, rather than just focusing on changeable features like clothing.
- When describing an incident, stay objective, keep things in time order and share where you were located when it occurred.
- Don't post away messages on your Instant Message or on your door

memo board that tell exactly where you are and for how long. That can be an invitation to robbery or other harm.

- If you're sitting in your car, lock the door so no one can take you by surprise.
- If you go somewhere with friends, make sure that everyone is accounted for before leaving.
- Memorize the phone number for campus public safety so you can call at a moment's notice.
- If a friend seems ill, intoxicated or drugged, get help immediately. Don't worry about him "getting in trouble." His health and safety need to be your #1 concern.
- Don't transport anyone to the hospital! Most of us aren't medically trained and could do more harm than good by moving an injured person. Ambulance personnel can work on your friend en route—they know what they're doing.

As we all work together to educate students about safety concerns, we're helping them be smart and stay safe.

Sources:
www.securityoncampus.org;
www.campussafetymonth.org/home



Students Grow More Caring, Spiritual During College Years

Throughout their time in college, many students tend to become more liberal, caring and spiritual, according to new information from the Spirituality in Higher Education project conducted by HERI. Some findings from students surveyed in 2004 and again in 2007 include:

- ▲ 41.2% of freshmen considered developing a meaningful philosophy of life "very important" or "essential"; that rose to 55.4% when they became juniors
- ▲ 48.7% of freshmen said "attaining inner harmony" was "very important" or "essential"; that rose to 62.6% when they became juniors
- ▲ 67.4% of freshmen were interested in "becoming a more loving person"; that rose to 82.8% when they became juniors
- ▲ 54.6% of freshmen considered "reducing pain and suffering in the world" to be "very important" or "essential," that rose to 66.6% when they became juniors
- ▲ 53.4% of freshmen considered "improving the human condition" important; that rose to 63.8% when they became juniors

Many students may be searching for spiritual connections during their time at college.

Sources: The Chronicle of Higher Education, 12/18/07; press release from www.spirituality.ucla.edu, 12/18/07

Alcohol-Related Deaths Spike on Weekends

According to an Associated Press analysis of federal records, 157 college age people, ages 18-23, drank themselves to death between 1999 and 2005. During this seven-year span, alcohol-poisoning deaths per year nearly doubled from 18 in 1999 to 35 in 2005. And 83 of the victims were under the drinking age of 21. Deaths spiked on weekends, when college students are most likely to socialize.

Connie Gores, vice president for student life at Winona State University (MN), shed some light on the issue. "There have always been problems with young people and alcohol, but it just seems like they are a little more intense now than they used to be. The goal of a lot of them is just to get smashed."

A separate AP analysis of hundreds of news articles uncovered that those who died from alcohol poisoning had an average blood-alcohol level of 0.40%—five times the legal limit for driving. In nearly every case, friends knew the victim was drunk and put the person to bed to "sleep it off."



Colleges and communities have not ignored the issue, developing educational programs, creating strict sanctions and laws, and coordinating

other awareness and prevention initiatives. However, in approximately 40% of the cases in which criminal investigations were known, charges were filed. Most often, these charges were filed against fraternity members or others who obtained alcohol for an underage person. In most cases, plea bargains were reached.

First year students and those celebrating 21st birthdays accounted for a significant number of these deaths. It's a cautionary tale as we dig into a new academic year, trying to avoid these statistics at all costs. Don't be afraid to talk with your student about smart alcohol choices. It could make a major difference when she's faced with these difficult decisions.

Sleep & Caffeine

It's tough to tell how much caffeine is in a cup of coffee. The way it's prepared, the type of bean used... all can impact the total caffeine content.

Caffeine is often found in many students' coffee mugs on a daily basis, as it's a stimulant that promotes alertness to get them through the long days and nights. However, that's no help when they're trying to get some good sleep! Caffeine can make it difficult for students to fall asleep plus it can reduce the amount of deep sleep that they get. It takes about 30 to 60 minutes to reach a peak level in the blood, according to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM), and the effects can last from 8 to 14 hours.



So, the AASM recommends that caffeine consumption be limited to no more

than 300 to 400 mg. per day (about 3-4 cups of coffee). It's also a good idea to avoid caffeine in the late afternoon and evening if students want to get a good night's sleep. Now, wouldn't that be nice?

Caffeine Content

Check out the comprehensive table of how much caffeine is in various products, from soft drinks to medications to chocolate ice cream, at <http://sleepeducation.com/Topic.aspx?id=45>.

Spreading Their Wings

Students need to express their autonomy and spread their wings when they get to school. This does not mean that they've stopped needing you—of course they do! What it may mean, though, is that your student needs a chance to:

- make his own mistakes
- decide how to confront challenges
- communicate with others when there's a problem
- choose how to spend her time
- take responsibility for his actions
- struggle a bit
- learn from experience

Be there to talk things through when your student needs that and to offer support. The actual "doing," though, is primarily up to her. This independence is one of the main ways that she will learn, grow and develop into a strong adult.



"We dig. You decide."

VoteGopher.com

VoteGopher is "your one-stop, non-partisan election resource, created by young voters to focus on the issues." A new site has been created by students for students, with the goal of educating and encouraging young voters. And it can help you have some politically aware discussions with your student. Here are some of the tools available on the VoteGopher site...

Issues

When you click on the "Issues" tab, you can check out 25 key issues. For each one, from the Environment to Diplomacy to Economic Recovery, VoteGopher.com offers bulleted points summarizing both John McCain's and Barack Obama's perspectives. The issues included are:

International:

- Iraq
- Diplomacy
- Terrorism & Homeland Security
- Middle East

Economic:

- Economic Recovery
- Taxes & Spending
- Trade & Globalization
- Labor & Business Regulations

Domestic:

- Healthcare
- Energy
- Environment
- Immigration
- Education
- Social Security

Social:

- Abortion & Stem Cells
- Gun Policy & Crime
- Gay Rights
- Poverty

Political:

- The Courts
- Government Reform
- Vice President

Candidate Qualities:

- Experience & Background
- Team
- Message
- Controversies

These at-a-glance summaries are informative and comprehensive.

My Ballot

The My Ballot section allows you to find your candidate when it comes to various issues. Click on your preference (John McCain, Barack Obama, 3rd Party or No Preference), explain your position and rank the importance you give that issue. The My Ballot tally will tell you who your preferred candidate is.

Video Breakdowns

This section offers a variety of video clips where the candidates discuss various issues. VoteGopher gives a brief overview of each issue and then provides summarized commentary as clips of the candidates play via YouTube.

Bloggopher

The "Bloggopher" blog feature explores issues more in depth, providing updates on the candidates' stances as well as issue debates. Readers are encouraged to comment on the posts and to take part in discussion boards about the issues, too. The site also has an Election Coverage section coming soon.

Consider tapping into VoteGopher to help you and your student make more informed choices once November 4 rolls around. "Gopher" it!

Absentee Voter Guide

The Harvard Institute of Politics offers a comprehensive online resource full of all the state-by-state info college students need to vote by absentee ballot when they're away at school. It's available at www.iop.harvard.edu/Voter-Information-Center.

Looking Toward Family/Parent Weekend

Here are a few things to do to prepare for this upcoming weekend:

- Find a place to sleep, if you're planning to stay overnight
- Look through the campus listing of all there is to do that weekend
- Check with your student to see what he'd like to do during your visit
- Express the types of things you hope to do when on campus
- Determine if siblings and other relatives will be joining you
- Make meal reservations in town—it's a busy weekend!
- Ask your student if he'd like you to bring anything he needs to school and/or take anything back—that'll help you plan your vehicle space

We look forward to having you on campus with us!