

In this Issue

Greetings from the Staff	1
The Language of Support	1
Key Dates	3
Madison Initiative for Undergraduates	3
The Wisconsin Idea	3
Safety Tips for Winter Break	4
Bullying Concerns	4
Housing Web Chat	4
Flu Shots	5
Career Corner	5
Sustainability Award	6
First-Year Experience	6

Greetings from the Parent Program Staff

The Parent Program is now in its fourth year and has grown to 21,000 parent/family members. Our program has steadily offered new services, and we have ambitious ideas and goals in mind for the future.

To help us continue to grow, Stephanie Benson joined our team in a full-time position in December. Stephanie is responsible for helping us to expand our reach and services to parents of international students, enhance our newsletters, and serve as another valuable resource when you call or e-mail our office. She recently graduated from UW–Madison and previously spent a year in Korea teaching English. She brings enthusiasm and energy that will serve our program well.

The Parent Program staff now includes two full-time employees and three interns—all ready to serve the needs of our members. We enjoy being a resource

for you, so keep us in mind when you have questions or concerns.

We're also happy to announce that our calendar and handbook for parents earned a national award at a conference of the Association of Higher Education Parent/Family Program Professionals in November. We are thrilled to receive this important distinction. Working in partnership with University Communications, we love producing the calendar and providing it to parents each year.

We hope you and your family enjoy winter break together, and that your student returns in January with a renewed sense of energy.

Happy Holidays!

—Patti, Stephanie, Neil, Nikki, and Sarah

Learning the Language of Support

In almost every exchange with your student—whether you're talking, texting, or even IMing—parents have a chance to support and encourage success in the classroom, participation in out-of-class activities, and the ability to get through those inevitable tough times.

Badger Parent frequently consults with students, parents, faculty, and staff members for advice on the best ways to "learn the language" of support and encouragement so that parents can be effective mentors to their students.

To succeed academically, the group agreed, other facets of a student's life—including the transition to college, health, and state of mind—need to be in synch. The key to promoting this kind of wellness is learning as much as you can about how your son or daughter is feeling, while also being open and nonjudgmental.

"My mom is always available when I need someone to listen to me vent," says Sarah K., a current UW–Madison student. "Talking to her is a way for me to talk out my problems, and she only gives advice if I ask."

Keep in mind that the support a student needs most may change, depending upon the issue—and some-

times as frequently as day to day.

Christopher Lee, an assistant dean in the College of Letters and Science, says that, as a parent, you have an advantage: knowing your student as well as you do provides clues to the real issues.

"Listen carefully to your own gut," he says. "Students are often unwilling to admit problems to their parents, even though they would like to." Lee advises that it's always better to frame the discussion with a question—such as, "How are you feeling about school?"—than to start by asking if something is wrong.

Asking open-ended questions, rather than asserting opinions, is another way to approach the conversation, he adds.

For example, if your student says, "I'm not good at chemistry," you could respond with, "I know you are smart and can do it. Keep trying." This response, while supportive, has limitations. It places the student in the position of having to prove that he or she is smart by doing well.

Instead, parents can ask, "What are you having

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UW–Madison Parent Program

Continued on page 2



Learning the Language of Support (continued)

trouble with?" This question is more likely to elicit useful information about what is wrong, ranging from problems with math to not attending lectures. When students are given the chance to identify the problems themselves, they are much more likely to attempt to solve them, Lee says.

Susan Brantly, professor of Scandinavian Studies and director of the Bradley Learning Community, agrees that it is important to listen and sympathize when your student calls and is homesick or frustrated about something. But, she says, it's then most helpful to encourage him or her to begin solving the problems independently.

For students living in University Housing, house fellows or residence life staff are particularly adept at coaching students to solve problems and redirecting them to the many campus resources.

Cathy Middlecamp, distinguished faculty associate in the chemistry department, reminds parents that a student's health can have a major impact on academic performance near the end of the semester. If your student is sending e-mails at 2 a.m. or is sounding particularly worn out during your conversations, remind him or her to pay attention to the basics, such as sleeping enough and eating well, to stay healthy.

"This is about the time of the semester that everyone gets tired and ill," she says. "Signs of exhaustion are frequently followed by illness. Stakes are higher now when [students] get sick, in terms of making up lectures or assignments."

Beyond mental and physical wellness, parents can encourage their student to participate in activities that supplement academic experiences, such as study abroad, undergraduate research, or leadership programs — all of which are components of the Wisconsin Experience, and some of which are unique to UW–Madison.

The key is knowing which approach to take. It's important for students to be successful in the classroom and to be engaged in the Wisconsin Experience.

"Some students may be independent enough to do things on their own, while others may need more encouragement from parents," Middlecamp says.

Parents who attended First-Year Parents' Weekend in November offered these suggestions for supporting students:

- Support your student's independence and have confidence in his or her decision-making ability
- Allow your student to make mistakes
- Encourage your student to try new things
- Unconditionally support your student through good grades and bad
- Share fun things happening with the family back home so your student is still in the loop
- Let your student know that you love him or her and that you are always there for him or her
- Offer advice, not directions
- Call to offer words of encouragement
- Send postcards, gifts, and food

Parents offered this list of things to avoid:

- Criticizing your student or expecting him or her to fulfill your personal goals
- Calling too much. Let your child take the lead with correspondence at first and then set up a weekly schedule, if need be.
- Trying to make decisions for your student
- Hovering. Some things they have to learn on their own.
- Trying to over-manage your student's experience
- Pressuring your student with unreasonable expectations. Give him or her some time to figure it out.

Current Badgers comment on their parents:

"My parents were supportive of me academically; they encouraged me to get good grades and to find out what I was interested in. They loved me from afar."

—Hannah K.

"My parents let me call them: if I didn't, it meant I was too busy. They also visited me two to three times during the semester, which was just enough."

—Mallory S.

"My parents have always been my greatest cheerleaders, instilling within me the strength needed to overcome any challenge. I would call them twice a week freshman year to share any tidbit of my life, be it exciting or stressful, and they were always so excited to listen."

—Val K.



Spring recess



Did you know?

If your student is looking for something to do during the cold winter ahead, how about volunteering? The Morgridge Center for Public Service on campus can help connect your student with nonprofit groups and the community through volunteerism, service-learning, and community-based research opportunities. The center uses VolunteerYourTime.org and the Madison Community Shares network to match your student with an ideal volunteer opportunity. Your student can view the center's drop-in advising hours or schedule an appointment by visiting www.morgridge.wisc.edu/students/advising.html.

Safety Tips for Winter Break

If your student plans to be gone from campus during winter break, make sure he or she is protecting property and valuables. To prevent theft and other dangers, share these winter break safety tips with your student:

- Lock apartment and office doors, as well as windows, before leaving for the holidays.
- Burglars frequently target cash, compact discs, laptops, bikes, jewelry, video games, bikes, stereos, and televisions. Don't leave attractive items out in plain sight. If possible, store them in a locked drawer, closet, or interior room. Take small valuables with when you leave.
- Draw curtains and shades, and set a timer for lamps.
- Temporarily stop delivery of mail and newspapers.
- Let a landlord, property owner, or co-worker know how long you'll be gone and how you can be reached in the event of a problem.
- Record serial numbers for expensive items, such as VCRs and bikes. Property can also be engraved with a driver's license number; you may check out an engraver at the central library branch. Victims are far more likely to recover stolen property if items are engraved.
- If you own a scooter, remember that it cannot be stored inside a university residence hall. Make sure to use an external locking device around a tire to prevent theft.
- To help prevent an accidental fire, make sure to unplug large electrical appliances, including computers, stereos, and microwaves.

Division of Student Life Addresses Bullying Concerns

The issue of bullying has been in the news in recent months, with several tragic, high-profile cases taking place at universities around the country. UW-Madison is taking steps to proactively address the issue for the campus community.

The LGBT Campus Center (LGBTCC), a department in the Division of Student Life, has launched Stop the Silence, an anti-bullying campaign designed to support LGBT students on campus.

In addition to Stop the Silence, Dean of Students Lori Berquam has initiated a campus conversation on

bullying, harassment, and respect issues as they relate to all students, faculty, and staff.

Berquam says that bullying and harassment can take many forms, including emotional, verbal, physical, and even electronic. At its core, it is aggressive, uncivil behavior designed to hurt or marginalize others, she says.

For more information, visit www.news.wisc.edu/18510.

To watch a short campus video on the topic, visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhXJWj6APo.

Web Chat Explores Housing Options

More than 75 parents participated in a web chat held Nov. 3, taking advantage of a chance to learn about second-year housing options. In case you missed it, here are a few key points that were covered during the session.

- If you are searching for off-campus living, the university provides a resource to help. Campus Area Housing is a student service of Visitor & Information Programs. For more information, visit www.campusareahousing.wisc.edu.
- With 25 percent of our University Residence Halls residents returning for another year, parents had several questions about timelines and logistics. Students who decide to return to the residence halls are able to choose rooms. Most halls will have 50 percent of the spaces reserved for returning residents. Tripp Hall and the Susan B. Davis House spaces are held for non-first-year students only.
- Students who will be studying abroad also need to consider housing options. Many property owners offer semester leases; the key to finding those leases is waiting out the fall rush. After the initial rental-season surge, rent prices and lease terms tend to be more flexible. Also, your student has the option to stay one semester in the residence halls. University Housing releases students from contracts if they are studying abroad. Students forfeit the \$300 deposit, but are released from the semester charges.

For the full transcript of the chat, visit www.news.wisc.edu/chats/housing_20101103.html.



Flu Shots Still Available From UHS

Every fall semester, University Health Service (UHS) encourages students to lower their risk of getting sick or spreading illness to others by getting a free seasonal influenza vaccination.

Although walk-in clinics are over for fall semester, it's not too late for students to get a free flu shot by calling 608-265-5600 for an appointment, either in December or when they return to campus in January. Students need only bring an ID, and wear short sleeves or sleeves that easily push all the way up to the shoulder.

Career Corner: Evaluating Full-Time Career and Internship Offers

As the fall semester comes to a close, many students are in the process of identifying what they want to do for the summer or immediately following graduation. The employment evaluation and acceptance process requires proper research, assessment, and informed decision-making, and there are some important details that you and your student should take note of throughout this process to handle it in an ethical fashion:

- Make sure your student weighs his or her options and examines the details of the offer, including:
 - Personal fit with the organization's mission, culture, and people
 - Rewarding and challenging role within the organization
 - Competitive salary and benefits: signing bonus, relocation coverage, health care plan, retirement plan, vacation time, stock options or profit sharing, graduate school tuition support, insurance packages, pre-tax dollar benefits on transportation, and flexible spending accounts
 - Work/life balance
 - Geographical location
 - Opportunities for advancement/marketable career trajectory
- Have your student spend some time thinking about the overall fit of the opportunity prior to making a decision. If a deadline extension is warranted, encourage your student to have this discussion with the employer as soon as

possible in the process. Honesty, openness, and transparency are always best.

- If your student receives a career or internship offer, encourage him or her to get it in writing. Most offer letters will arrive via email or postal mail with instructions to sign the contract and fax it back.
- It is NOT acceptable for a student to accept an offer and continue to interview with other organizations.
- It is highly unethical to accept an offer with one organization and then "renege" it simply because a better offer comes along. This not only affects the reputation of the student within the industry but also negatively impacts the University of Wisconsin's relationship with the recruiting organization.
- Once your student is ready to accept an offer, encourage him or her to accept the offer first either verbally or in writing. At that point, the student should refrain from participating in further interviews and should notify other employers of their decision which will open up opportunities for other students.
- Please encourage your student to report their offers and acceptance to their home career center so that it may be used for aggregate salary information.

More information about career opportunities and employment evaluation strategies may be found on your student's home career center website.

UW–Madison Earns an “A” for Sustainability Efforts

UW–Madison received an A — the highest possible grade — in a national college sustainability ranking released in October. The grade makes UW–Madison one of just seven schools, out of 322 campuses surveyed across the United States and Canada, to receive top marks on the College Sustainability Report Card 2011, an independent ranking prepared by the Sustainable Endowments Institute. The UW was also named an Overall College Sustainability Leader for its high score.

Schools were graded on 52 sustainability indicators across nine equally weighted categories: administration, climate change and energy, food and recycling, green building, transportation, student involvement, endowment transparency, investment priorities, and shareholder engagement. UW–Madison earned As in eight of the nine categories and a B in food and recycling.

The report card specifically highlights a new campuswide Sustainability Initiative, a 24 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions since 2006, sustainability efforts of numerous campus units, and the accomplishments of the We Conserve initiative.

The First-Year Experience

Winter Break: What to Expect

Students are finishing a busy first semester and preparing to head home for winter break. So, what can you expect?

- Students will be recovering from the physical and mental strains of finals week. Don't be alarmed if your student's top priority is to sleep.
- Catching up with high school friends may be at the top of your student's to-do list. This is a healthy response and can affirm his or her ability to maintain long-distance friendships.
- Schedule time with your student to make sure that activities that are important to you aren't lost in the shuffle.
- Have a conversation with your student about expectations for schedules, housework, and behavior during the month. Decide whether all of the original rules of the house still apply, and also consider some extra flexibility to take into account your student's newfound independence and autonomy.
- Discuss first-semester academic performance with

your student. Remember that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) stipulates that students maintain formal control over their educational records, including their final semester grades. Parents may not review the records unless their student grants approval in writing. The best way to find out about final grades is to ask your student.

- Some students may consider leaving the university after a difficult semester. Parents can play a key role with such a critical decision by helping the student evaluate his or her options while deciding whether staying or moving on is the right decision.
- Don't be surprised to hear your son or daughter refer to Madison as “home” or discuss viewpoints or values that may be unfamiliar.

By opening the lines of communication and creating clear expectations, you will make your student's return home from UW–Madison the enjoyable and rewarding experience that it should be.

Parent Reception Highlights

As part of First-Year Parents' Weekend, the Parent Program welcomed 450 parents and students for a reception at the historic Red Gym on November 12. The reception offered a variety of events, including:

- A performance by Fundamentally Sound, a male a cappella group.
- An Art Gallery exhibit with work by Tyanna Buie.
- Tours of the Red Gym led by campus tour guides.
- A showing of “Being Bucky,” the documentary that shows what it's like to be UW–Madison's beloved mascot.
- An appearance by Bucky, who posed for pictures with parents and students.



The Parent Program hosts the parent reception as a way for parents to connect with one another as well as with university faculty and staff.