



MOUNT
MERCY 
UNIVERSITY

A Season of Change

*Family Calendar
and Guide to
the First Year
of College
2011-12*

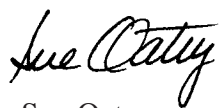
Welcome to Mount Mercy University!

The first year of college is a transition for both students and family members. Staff and faculty at the University have developed many programs and services to assist first year students with this transition.

This calendar is provided to assist family members to understand the challenges facing students and to provide suggestions for ways in which you, as a family member, can support and encourage your student. It is our hope that this information will also allow you to feel confident in referring your student to the many people and offices on campus who are here to help students succeed.

Mount Mercy is a place filled with caring individuals who share their talents, skills and values. A special contributor to this calendar was Mr. Marty Andreas, a member of Mount Mercy's Board of Trustees. His wonderful photographs provide the visual images for our theme of transition and change. We are grateful to Marty for his generous contribution to our calendar.

We are here to provide our students with an extraordinary educational experience. We encourage you to be an active participant in this experience.



Dr. Sue Oatey
Vice President
for Enrollment and Student Life



Marty Andreas
Board of Trustees Member

Andreas, the longest-serving member of the Mount Mercy Board of Trustees, joined the Board in 1976.

Andreas, who makes his home in Solon, Iowa, recently retired from a 35-year career with Archer Daniels Midland Company (ADM), one of the world's largest agricultural processors. When Andreas moved to Iowa from Florida to concentrate on his Cedar Rapids-based business, Corn Sweeteners (which later became a part of ADM), he was business savvy and eager to broaden Mount Mercy's academic offerings for the sake of the community and the continued growth of the University.

Andreas' interest in photography started in the 1950s when he began taking pictures of his friends waterskiing. It wasn't until later that he began to blend photography with his other passion; gardening. Andreas has been gardening since he was four years old, and in the 1970s he built a greenhouse

in Cedar Rapids in order to enjoy his hobby year-round. Having a greenhouse inspired him to capture the beauty of flowers on film, and he has been taking photos of flowers and sharing them with family and friends ever since.



HELP RESOURCES

Mount Mercy Main Switchboard / Directory Assistance 319-363-8213

Academic Affairs 363-8213 ext. 6482
www.mtmercy.edu/academics

Academic Center for Excellence. 363-8213 ext. 1208
www.mtmercy.edu/ace

Admissions 363-8213 ext. 6460
www.mtmercy.edu/admissions

Adult Accelerated Office. 363-8213 ext. 1863
www.mtmercy.edu/adult

Athletic Office 363-8213 ext. 1376
www.mountmercymustangs.com

Business Office 363-8213 ext. 6470
www.mtmercy.edu/business-office

Campus Computing 363-8213 ext. 4357

Campus Ministry. 363-8213 ext. 1494
www.mtmercy.edu/campus-ministry

Campus Store 363-8213 ext. 1209
www.mtmercy.edu/bookstore

Career Services Office 363-8213 ext. 1620
www.mtmercy.edu/career-services

Communications & Marketing. 363-8213 ext. 6475
www.mtmercy.edu/communications-and-marketing

Counseling Office 363-8213 ext. 1257
www.mtmercy.edu/counseling-services

Dining Services 363-8213 ext. 1272
www.mtmercy.edu/dining

Enrollment & Student Life 363-8213 ext. 6462
www.mtmercy.edu/enrollment-and-student-life

Facilities. 363-8213 ext. 1290
www.mtmercy.edu/facilities

Health Services 363-8213 ext. 1283
www.mtmercy.edu/health

Library 363-8213 ext. 6465
www.mtmercy.edu/busse-library

Mail Center 363-8213 ext. 2200

Mount Mercy Times 363-8213 ext. 1320
times.mtmercy.edu

Public Safety 363-8213 ext. 1234
www.mtmercy.edu/safety

Recreation & Wellness 363-8213 ext. 1296
www.mtmercy.edu/wellness

Registrar 363-8213 ext. 1845
www.mtmercy.edu/registrar

Residence Life 363-8213 ext. 6469
www.mtmercy.edu/student-life

Student Activities 363-8213 ext. 1229
www.mtmercy.edu/events-activities

Student Financial Services 363-8213 ext. 6467
www.mtmercy.edu/financialaid

Student Government 363-8213 ext. 1820
www.mtmercy.edu/student-government-association

Volunteerism & Service Learning 363-8213 ext. 1399
www.mtmercy.edu/campus-ministry



The Transition

The transition to college can be an exciting yet scary time for students and families. It is often a time of saying “good-bye” to a child who has never been away from home for more than a few days or weeks at a time. It is an opportunity to “start anew” for a student who is striving towards becoming more independent.

As parents, having a son or daughter go away to college is a time to see all of the hard work of parenting pay off. Unfortunately, the pay off does not come right away. First come anxieties about how your student will adjust. Not only are students learning to adjust to life on campus, they must also learn more about the surrounding community of Cedar Rapids.

Families of first year students may be wondering whether their young adult will be able to manage the workload that the new academic environment brings. Will he or she be able to balance school with social life? Will the student remember to eat healthy and get enough sleep? Is he or she making friends or feeling homesick? The questions can be unending and without definite answers.

Throughout this period, there will be moments of anxiety and fear so keep in mind that these thoughts and feelings are very normal. Choose instead, to look at this as a time of joy, growth and discovery for you and your student. Try to engage them but not hover. Trust the foundation that you have built. It will not be long until your student’s feelings of uncertainty and apprehension will bloom into self-confidence and a sense of connectedness.

August 2011

Families can help by . . .

- Talk with your student before or upon arrival to campus about the support people available. Seek out the Residence Life staff, the Campus Ministry staff or the Director of Counseling Services. These are a few of the people who are trained and prepared to help your student adjust to the changes that college life brings.
- Reassure your student that anxiety is normal and that there will be a natural adjustment period. Remember this yourself.
- Talk with your student about how often you will communicate by phone, e-mail or in person. It can help to have something to look forward to for both you and your student. Be flexible and keep in mind that communication with your student may change throughout the semester.
- Encourage involvement in campus activities as this helps form a sense of belonging. The Clubs & Organizations fair will be held on the 30th.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28 New Students Move In	29 Founders' Convocation	30	31 Classes Begin			

Notes:

Finding Balance

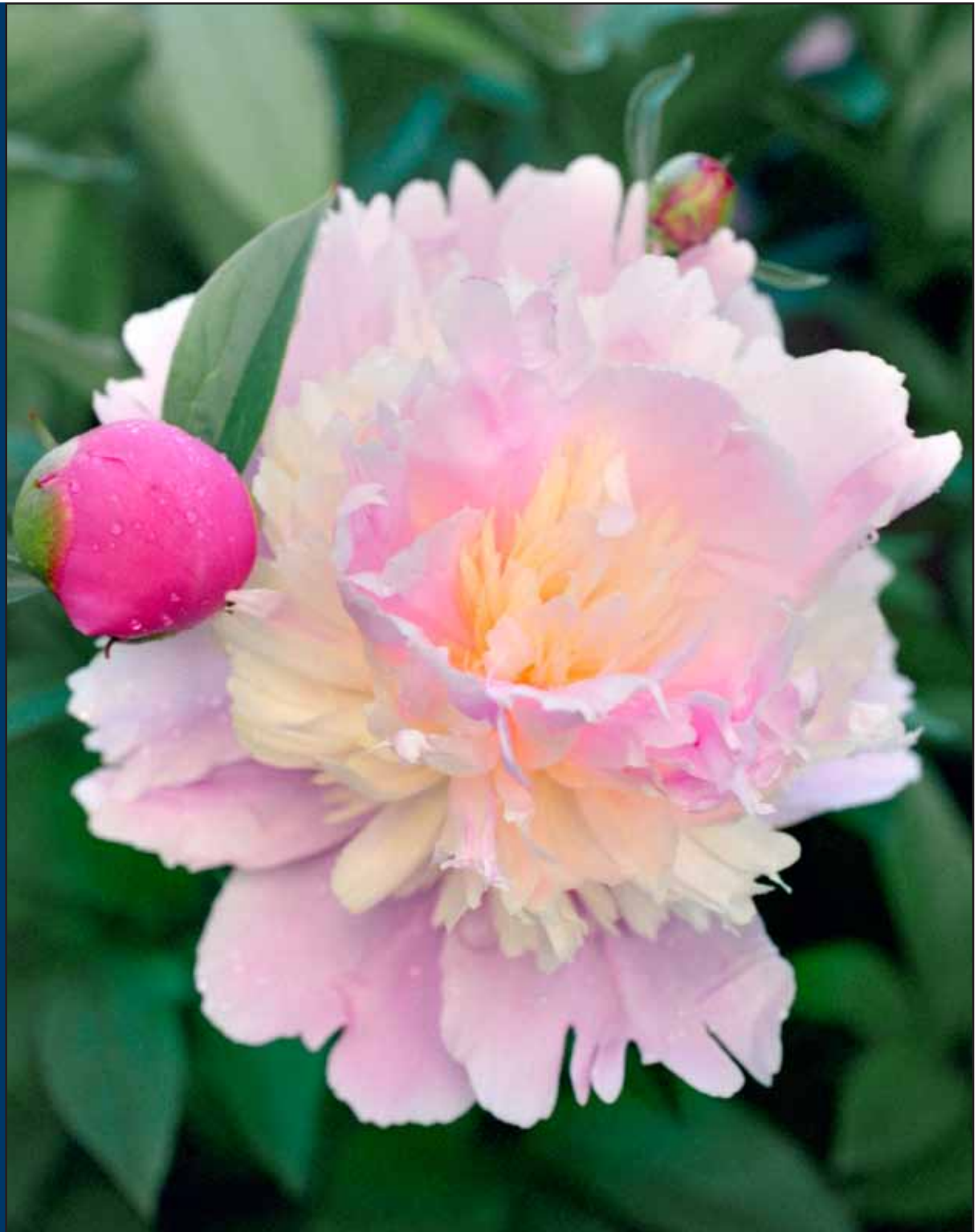
Your student has made it through the first few weeks of college and so have you! Congratulations on getting your student off on the path to a bright future! Focus on the positives and don't be afraid to remind your student that he or she is already successful for having taken this step.

At this time, it is likely that students are starting to understand that what they envisioned about college life is not exactly the reality of college life. Television and Facebook may make it look glamorous and fun but it's quite a bit more. This month, the focus is on balance.

Expectations have been laid by professors and hopefully students are starting to understand the importance of studying and time management. Keep in mind that understanding the importance of time management is not the same as being able to successfully manage one's time. This often takes weeks or months to navigate. Be patient with your student. Students have to assume responsibility for managing personal time.

Your student may be settling into residence life and learning how to cope with a roommate who may or may not have the same lifestyle. It is here, however, where many lifelong relationships begin. It is also at this time, when many students begin to assert themselves in ways that they have never had to before.

Some students may be experiencing increasing feelings of homesickness and question the choice about going to college. Other students who may be commuting may be having a hard time connecting to the campus and may feel isolated. Both situations are normal and indicate that college life has become a reality. This reality is not something to be feared, it is something to embrace. As the month draws to a close, students will most likely have found a routine that works best for them.



September 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5 Labor Day No Classes	6 Last day to add a class or declare pass/fail	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30 - Homecoming - Family Weekend	

Notes:

Families can help by . . .

- Remain calm when and if you get a frantic phone call about a difficult professor or a disrespectful roommate. Listen and validate your student's feelings but don't get drawn into the drama of the situation. You are now in a position to be a mentor to your student. Be supportive. Let your student know that you will help him or her find a solution if there is one to be found but avoid "fixing" or making a decision for them.
- Encourage the use of the Academic Center for Excellence or taking advantage of a professor's office hours. It is okay to ask for help!
- Invite your student to choose a healthy outside activity unrelated to academics. This may help ease the stress of school and encourage a sense of belonging if the student is feeling homesick or disconnected.
- If your student is pursuing employment, be supportive. Remind him or her to consider work-study employment opportunities on campus. This is a great way to become more familiar with campus and presents an easy way to meet people while making money.



Midterm

October marks mid-term which often means feelings of pressure as students prepare for examinations and mid-term grades. It is the middle of the semester when it becomes even more apparent that the old study habits from high school are not sufficient to be successful in the arena of higher education.

Some students may question their choice of major and question what they once thought would be their future profession. This can be confusing and upsetting for students and parents. It is extremely common for students to waiver on their major at this time in their college career. Academic advisors are available to discuss these challenges and help students re-evaluate their plan.

Added to the academic pressures can be the additional pressure of relationships. Stress on the home front can also be hard for a student away at school because he or she may be distracted by problems that feel beyond his or her control.

Finding a balance between family obligations and other responsibilities can be challenging for both commuter students and those living in the residence halls. Students may feel like they are being pulled in several different directions. Discovering a way to relieve stress will help your student cope with the issues he or she is dealing with. Participating in intramurals, taking a fitness class or taking time out to attend Club Friday each week are just a few ways to relive stress.

Families can help by . . .

- Stay connected. Some students may grow exasperated when family members ask questions about their lifestyles but most can still appreciate, and even like, that families are interested in them and how they are doing. Strike a balance between too many questions and not enough by saying “What’s up?” or texting about something that happened that reminded you of your student.
- Talk to your student about healthy boundaries and give the student ideas on how to find space when living in close quarters with others (ex. access the library to study).
- Remind your student that it is okay to miss family functions as this is expected with the increased demands of college life. Your reassurance may ease their mind and lessen the guilt.
- Plan to visit campus during Homecoming. Go out to dinner or pick up groceries. Encourage your student to show you around and meet their new friends.
- Continue encouragement in outside activities. Suggest service opportunities as these often give students an enhanced sense of self and are a good way to connect with other students and staff.
- Again, connect students with resources on campus that may be able to assist with learning study skills like the Academic Center for Excellence or Career Services if they need to reevaluate a major.

October 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 - Homecoming - Family Weekend
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17 Midterm	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	Notes:				

Almost Finished

As students move past mid-terms, they are likely working on major class projects or papers which often come before final exams. Staying focused is important at a time when thoughts turn towards the holidays and the end of the semester.

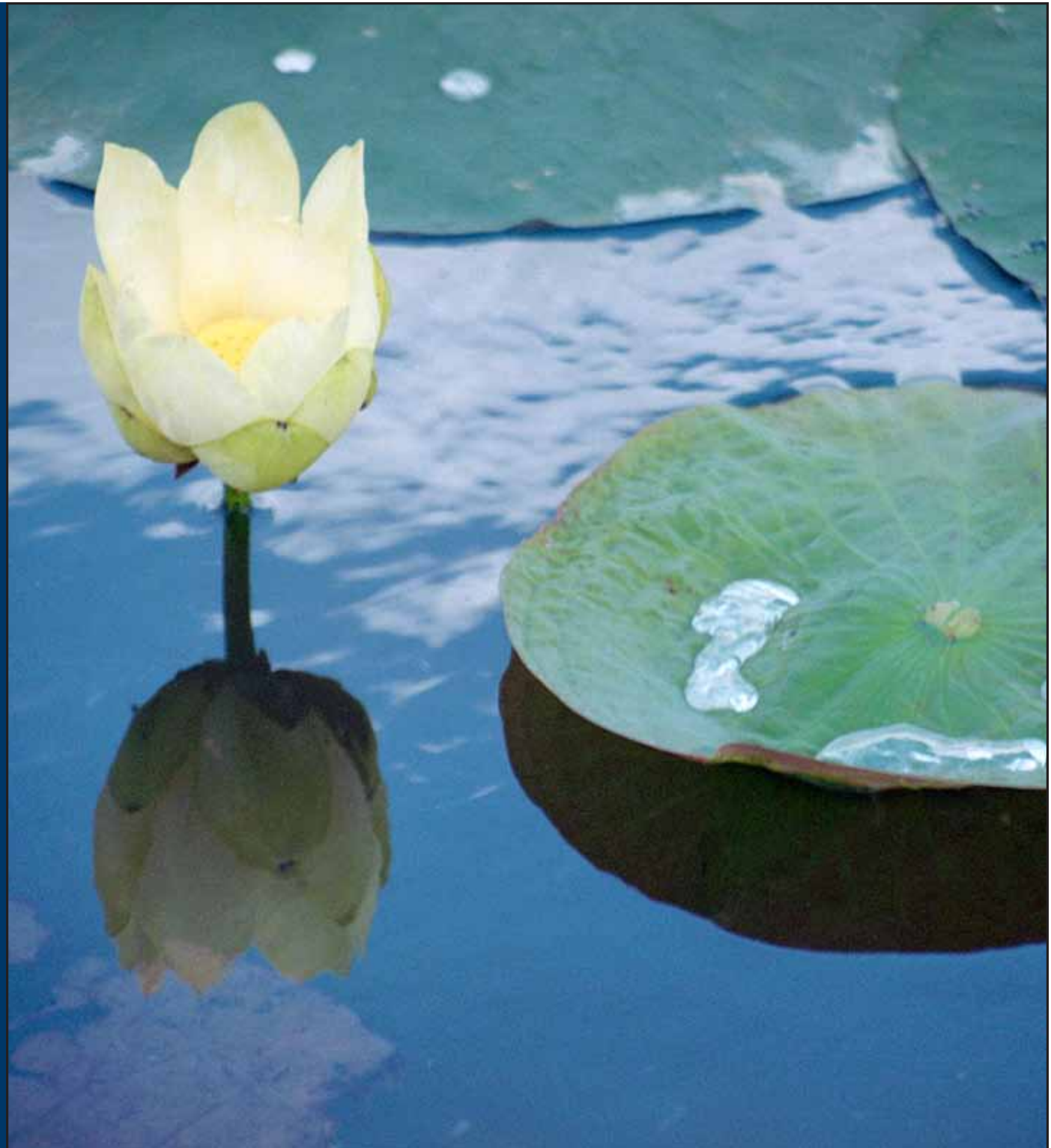
Holiday time means reuniting with families which may or may not be stressful for the student. For some students, financial hardships surface more at this time as summer funds start to run out and expenses start to pile up.

Stress and fatigue lower a student's resistance and makes them more susceptible to illness. Depression and anxiety are also high during the coming months as the days grow shorter and the winter weather sets in.

Coping strategies need to be productive. Late night socializing and increased alcohol consumption are common during this time of the semester. Poor eating habits and less sleep also become more prevalent and don't help that already vulnerable immune system.

Time management becomes critical during this part of the semester. Students may have to learn to say no to some social opportunities in order to accomplish all of their academic requirements and co-curricular commitments.

Thanksgiving break provides an opportunity to catch up on some much needed rest before students finish the semester. A relaxing break will benefit students as they prepare for finals.



November 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
			_____ Thanksgiving Break _____ Thanksgiving			
27	28	29	30			

Notes:

Families can help by . . .

- Encourage the student to find a study partner or someone to help them stay up and accountable for the much needed study time.
- Continue to listen and be supportive without judging. Check in by leaving brief messages on phone or e-mail.
- Remind the student of the resources on campus that may assist when things seems stressful. The Counseling Center and Health Services have lots of ideas on how to improve mental and physical health needs.
- Continue to encourage healthy eating and getting adequate sleep and exercise. For residential students, the annual Thanksgiving Dress Dinner is on the 20th.
- If your student comes home for Thanksgiving break, find some one-on-one time to talk to him or her about how things are going.



Final Exams

Final exams creep up quickly as students return from Thanksgiving break and have only two weeks to prepare. They return with excitement about the holidays and this makes focusing on academics even more of a challenge. However, it is during this time that students need to focus most and utilize their professors and study time to maintain or bring their grades up before the semester ends.

Student's contact with home may decline during this time but many students will still appreciate a few calls with well wishes and reminders that there is an end in sight. Respect that they are busy. The end of semester marks a time when students sometimes struggle with that balance that they were so desperately trying to figure out early in the semester.

Encourage your student to eat healthy, exercise, and get enough rest. It may be difficult if the student comes down with illness, as it is likely the first time he or she is experiencing being sick away from home. Remind the student that he or she has the skills needed to take care of himself or herself.

The semester break will likely be a nice time to reconnect with your young adult but don't be surprised if it is also a challenge. Students are use to making their own decisions about when to go out, when to eat, when to go to bed, etc. Keep communication open about needs and expectations and continue to help them learn balance. Give them options but encourage them to spend time with family. Enjoy this special time with your new young adult.

December 2011

Families can help by . . .

- Consider sending a survival kit for finals week and the week prior. This package could include lots of healthy foods and fun snacks, CD's, well wishes, etc.
- Continue to encourage healthy habits such as exercising and getting adequate sleep.
- Try to be positive during contact with your student. Minimize stories about stress that may be going on at home. Avoid placing too many expectations on him or her regarding contact at this time.
- Suggest your student participate in stress-reducing activities on campus.
- Think about gift cards, gas cards or calling cards for students as holiday gifts. This can be very practical and subtle if you are aware that finances are tight for students at this time of year.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5 Last day to drop a class	6	7	8	9 Last day of classes	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Final Exams						
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Winter Break						
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Christmas	Winter Break					

Notes:

J-term

Hopefully, your student was home for the holiday break and he or she got some rest and relaxation. Starting a new semester can be exhilarating and anxiety provoking for students and families. For many students, J-term presents a nice way to ease back into school after a long first semester and the holiday break. It is a time to reconnect with friends and hit the books without the task of juggling several different subjects.

J-Term is a perfect time to take advantage of off campus trips. Students have the opportunity to take classes that incorporate service trips into their curriculum. The office of Volunteerism and Service Learning also offers a service trip experience during the J-term break. Most of the trips have a southerly destination which provides a nice break from the Iowa winter.

The New Year presents a great opportunity to talk with your student about his or her college experience so far. Together you can discuss ways that your student can create a successful plan for the second half of the school year. Students may be open to setting some New Year's resolutions that coincide with their plan for the future. If the student did less than expected, re-introduce him or her to the services on campus that can be of assistance. Due to the student's continuing desire for independence, encourage him or her to make the contact on their own or ask if you can assist. Follow up with your student later about how things are going. Consider the New Year a fresh start.



January 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 J-term classes begin	4 Last day to add classes or to declare pass/fail	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20 Last day to drop classes	21
22	23	24	25	26 Last day of classes	27	28
29	30	31				

Notes:

Families can help by . . .

- Start the new term off with some enthusiasm. Remind the student how proud you are that he or she is investing in his or her future. If your student is struggling with the return to campus, remind him or her of resources. Your reactions to your student's return to campus may influence how he or she perceives the new semester. Be supportive.
- Encourage participation in campus activities including the winter break service trip that is held at the end of J-term.
- The time is now for your student to investigate opportunities for next year including studying abroad, becoming an orientation leader or residence hall assistant. If your student is interested in these, encourage him or her to seek out information and apply.
- Be aware that winter is often time when students are more susceptible to depression due to the dark and cold days that come with Iowa winters. If you see signs that your student may be sad or unmotivated, remind your student that counseling is available at the college.



Second Semester

The expectations by faculty and staff increase during the second semester since new students have had time to get acclimated and now have the first semester under their belt. Encourage good time management skills now regarding academics so that students don't fall behind and get overwhelmed since final exams seem so far off into the future.

Making plans for spring break and summer activities is also something to start considering. A spring break service trip may help a student feel more connected as well as give them something to look forward to during the long winter days. Be aware that some students may begin to get more involved. Involvement increases the positive feelings about college life but does present an even greater need for balance as some students tend to over commit.

As Valentine's Day approaches, there may be a tendency to focus more on relationships and socializing and less on academics. Moods also continue to fluctuate during this time of year. Students still need their families, especially since you likely know their moods better than anyone. Positive and open communication will help students stay on track. An occasional letter or package in the mail is another way to boost your student's spirits!

February 2012

Families can help by . . .

- Continue to talk with your student about balance and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
- Encourage your student to meet with advisors and Financial Aid personnel about next semester. Be aware of deadlines for applying for scholarships and grants. Assist students in finding the resources they need.
- If a student seems undecided about his or her major, remind him or her about Career Services. The staff can help assess whether a student's major is the right one for him or her.
- Follow up about whether students are interested in study abroad programs or becoming part of the residence life or orientation staff.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
5	6 Classes Begin	7	8	9	10	11
12	13 Last day to add classes and declare pass/fail	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29			

Notes:

Spring Break

March is a busy time. With sporting events overlapping with service opportunities and academic demands, students have many distractions making it difficult to prioritize. Midterm exams illustrate where students stand in their courses. This brings some pressure to achieve when procrastination is at its highest since the spring weather makes it hard to stay indoors and study.

Socializing is also on the rise during this time of the year as spring break is approaching. Students are looking forward to spending a week away from the demands of school. Some choose to get away with friends, others go home while others try to use the time to make extra money by putting in more hours at work.

Ideally, the break will renew a student's emotional wellness so they can return to school, focused and prepared to give his or her best effort over the next eight weeks. During this time, students may be finalizing decisions about the next semester. Encourage him or her to think about healthy living situations as well as courses that seem to fit with his or her long term goals.



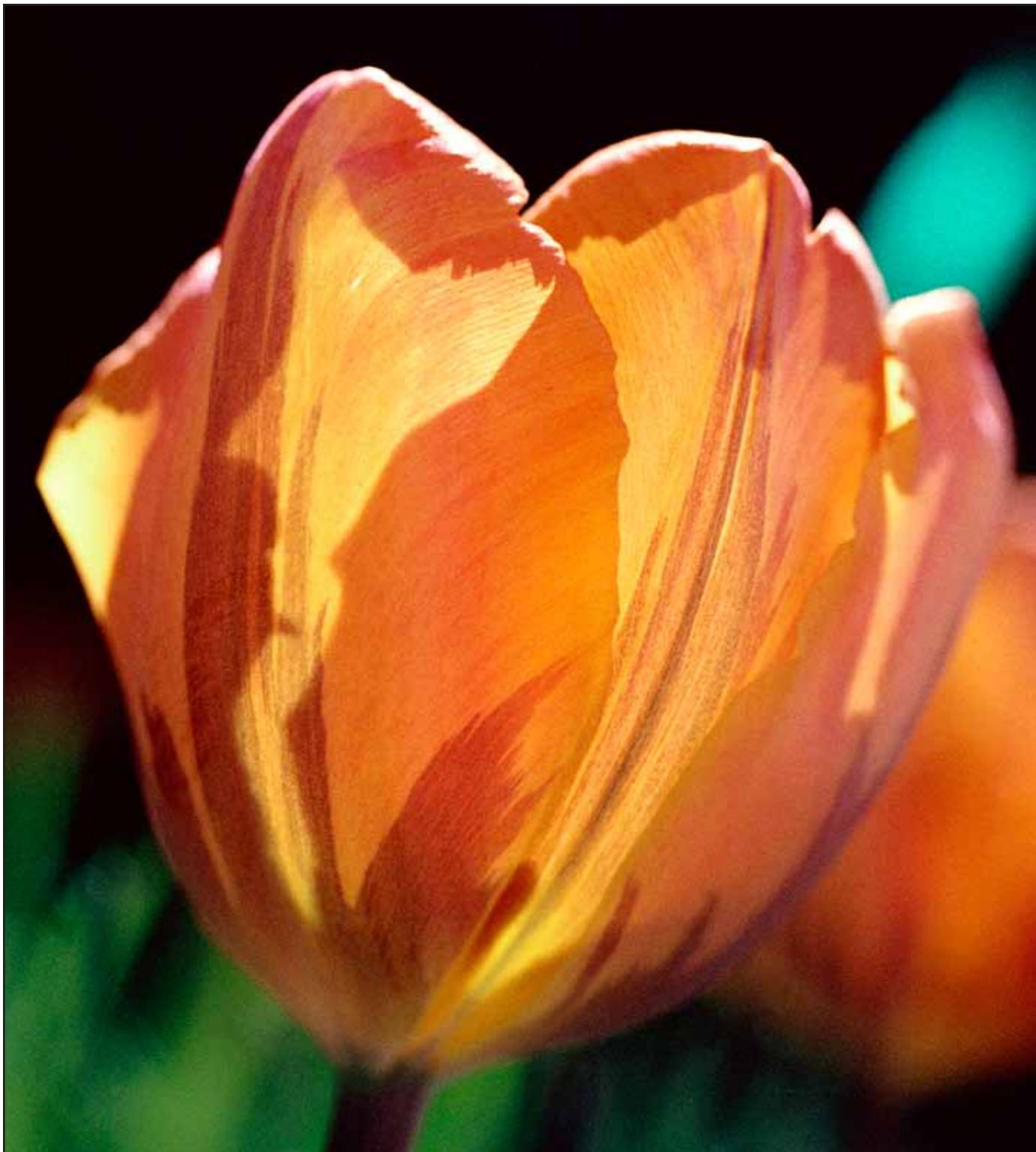
March 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20 Midterm	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<hr style="width: 80%; margin: auto;"/> Spring Break <hr style="width: 80%; margin: auto;"/>						

Notes:

Families can help by . . .

- As spring break approaches, it is a good time to talk with students about their ability to make good decisions for themselves.
- Take time to talk about plans for next year including roommates, classes, and employment opportunities. Make final appointments with Financial Aid.
- Discuss summer work plans and living arrangements.
- Remind your student that, while spring is a time for much social activity, maintaining a healthy balance will ensure success.



Full Speed Ahead

As time winds down in the semester, the pace speeds up. Students have numerous demands placed on them including finishing papers, getting together for group projects and preparing for final exams. Student organizations are holding end of the year events and banquets as well as electing officers for next year.

With deadlines comes more stress and the need for good time management skills. Faculty and staff are prepared to assist students with time management but students may forget to seek out this assistance.

With better weather also comes a desire to get outside. The new season can definitely help with the mood and cabin fever but makes staying indoors for class and studying sometimes seem less than appealing for students. Checking out a bike from the University Center or attending an outdoor sporting event are ways in which students can enjoy the outdoors.

This is again where finding balance is the key to being successful. For students who have been putting studying off, giving up or finding more distractions may be a danger. Alcohol consumption may increase. For students who have performed competently in classes and have worked towards a healthy balance, spring can be uplifting and even more motivating.

April 2012

Families can help by . . .

- Minimize the demands that you make on your student since he or she is in the final phase of the year and likely has many demands already placed on him or her.
- Provide support and encouragement and again focus on the strengths including your student's ability to maintain and keep up with the college routine. This is a positive in and of itself.
- Encourage participation in end of the year activities but remind students that they do not have to do or be present for everything.
- Remind students to get outside and enjoy the spring weather but keep in mind that with this sometimes creates the desire to procrastinate and get distracted from end of the year priorities.
- Encourage your student to seek out professors to find out about grades and assess what is needed to finish out the semester strong.
- Send notes or care packages with healthy snacks and motivational messages.
- Double check to ensure that students have completed the necessary paperwork for summer and fall classes as well as financial aid, employment, living arrangements, etc.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6 Good Friday No Classes	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Notes:

A Successful Year

May starts with high stress as the push for final grades is imminent. May is also a significant month for first year students as it marks the end of their first year of independence. Returning home may be something that they have been looking forward to or quite the opposite. Either way, adjusting to the different schedule will likely bring with it some stress and anxiety.

Expectations of college students in regards to home, work, rules, obligations and social behaviors should be clearly established and discussed as soon as students return for the summer. Students and parents must also keep in mind that there is an adjustment period that comes out of leaving friends whom they have literally spent hours with throughout the school year.

Cell phone bills may be high so visits to see friends might help the transition. It is healthy for students to maintain their connections so that the following semester starts off on a positive note. Returning to old friends at home may also present some challenges as relationships may have changed some and will likely be different for the student.

For students who decide to stay on campus, getting use to a new schedule, which may likely include work, may be difficult. Although students may be getting better at balance, this is still something that warrants revisiting. Hopefully whether your student continues to take classes or spend the summer at home, the change in structure will be a healthy transition between their first and second year of college.



May 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7 Last day to drop classes	8	9	10	11 Last day of classes	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
<hr style="width: 60%; margin: auto;"/> Final Exams <hr style="width: 60%; margin: auto;"/>						
20 Graduation	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Notes:

Families can help by . . .

- Make plans for how your student will move home or to a new location and offer assistance in the process.
- Discuss with the student what expectations you have for their summer plans, especially if they are returning home. Listen to their expectations and concerns as well.
- If your student is staying in school for the summer, reiterate the need for balance and effective time management skills.
- Encourage relationship building and maintaining as hometown relationships may have changed over the year. It is important for students to feel connected whether they are back home or remaining on campus.
- Review grades and academic experience. Make a plan for ensuring success for the next semester.
- Take time to talk with your student about their overall first year experience. Discuss what worked well and what didn't. Remind him or her of the positives that you have seen throughout their first year.

*The Division of Enrollment and Student Life wishes
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