

UMD Parents Newsletter

UMD Parent & Family Program

December, 2007

University of Minnesota-Duluth

Getting Ready for Finals

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Although you may be tempted to monitor your student's preparation for final exams, it is important to remember that final exams are ultimately your student's own responsibility. If you feel the need to discuss final exams, you may want to do it as a "dialogue" rather than a "monologue"-- an exchange of ideas and experiences rather than a lecture on successful strategies. encouragement!! understanding

CARE-PACKAGES FOR FINALS!

Parents - to order a care package for your student, the following organizations will take your orders:

ScholarsClub:
hoec0019@d.umn.edu

Phi Sigma Sigma:
Siolk002@d.umn.edu

Questions? Concerns?

We are happy to help with any questions you have! Stop by the Advisement Coordination Center at SCC 78, call us at (218) 726-7779, or email

umdlife@d.umn.edu.

We're also on the web at <http://parents.d.umn.edu>

Step 1: For each class in which your student has a final exam, encourage your student to find out as much as he or she can about the exam

What kind of test will it be (multiple choice, essay, short answer)? How many items and how long will it take to complete? What topics will be covered - is it cumulative or does it cover only a section of the material?

Step 2: Encourage your student to evaluate

Are all readings and assignments completed? How long will it take to prepare all the class notes into either a study guide or study cards? What is his or her current grade in each course? When developing study guides, students should develop a strategy that self-tests their own knowledge, rather than a strategy that simply reviews all the material. Study what you *don't* know in order to prepare for an exam.

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Step 3: Encourage your student to consciously prioritize how to spend his or her study time and energy

Which class is most important or least important? Generally, courses that are required for a major or minor should receive the most attention. If your student is receiving an "A" or a "B" in one course, but is receiving a low grade in another course, his or her energy and attention is better focused on the latter.

Step 4: Encourage your student to create a daily schedule

Although cramming may be better than nothing, all developmental educators agree that cramming is a very ineffective way to prepare for exams. Finals week is December 15th through December 19th. Students, ideally, should begin preparation for their final exams by December 4th.

Step 5: Students may not be required to take more than two final examinations on the same day.

Your student should review the final examination policy and talk with the appropriate instructor: UMD's final examination policy and schedule can be found at:

http://www.d.umn.edu/registrar/reg_exam_sched.html.

Step 6: Encourage your students to take care of his or her physical and mental well being

Getting enough sleep (6-8 hours), eating healthy foods (protein, vegetables, fruits), avoiding alcohol, and exercising daily all make the human machine work more efficiently. Sending a "care" package can be a welcome treat for your student, but leave the cookies and candy on the shelf! Mozzarella sticks, peanut butter crackers, nuts, and other low-sugar foods are better snacks.

Health Issues: Depression and Anxiety

As the first semester of college comes to an end students often have experienced great change, multiple challenges, and have grown a great deal from the experience. For many, these changes have led to positive feelings of self-growth as they have successfully met the challenge of moving away from family and friends and established themselves in their new routine or environment. While change is growth producing it can also be stressful and can be a time when students struggle with symptoms of depression or anxiety. The purpose of this article is to provide you with information regarding symptoms of anxiety and depression so that you can recognize the signs. Everybody experiences times when they are sad or down every now and then. But when someone is sad most of the time and it is giving them problems with grades/school attendance, relationships with family and friends, alcohol or chemical use, or controlling their behavior in other ways, the problem could be depression.

Some of the symptoms reported by people who have depression include the following:

- Feelings of sadness that are with you most of the time. Frequent episodes of crying can also be reported.
- Feeling guilty for no reason: feeling like you are no good; as if you have lost your confidence.
- Life seems meaningless, as if nothing good ever happens or will happen again. You may frequently have a negative attitude, or it can seem that you have no feelings at all.
- Lack of motivation or desire to do things that you used to enjoy (listening to music, playing sports, spending time with friends) and feeling as if you would just as soon be left alone most of the time.
- Difficulty making decisions, forgetting things, difficulty concentrating.
- Chronic irritability; little things cause you to lose your temper or over react.
- A change in sleep patterns: sleeping more than usual, difficulty falling or staying asleep.

Continued - Health Issues: Depression & Anxiety

- A change in eating patterns: loss of appetite or eating more than usual.
- Feeling restless or tired most of the time.
- Thoughts of death, feeling as if you are dying or having thoughts of suicide.

If you notice that your son or daughter is experiencing these symptoms, they should be referred for further assessment. Most people with depression can be treated with psychotherapy and/or medication. Having depression does not mean that someone is weak, a failure or isn't trying hard enough. It means that they need treatment.

The myriad of changes that students go through as they begin college can contribute to problems with stress and anxiety. Stress is the physical, emotional and mental response to change, regardless of whether the change is good or bad. Without some stress, people would not get a lot done. At times stress can motivate students to finishing a paper or study for a test. In these cases, the stress subsides once the activity is completed. If you find that they cannot return to a relaxed state, then this stress can become negative. The changes in your body start to take a toll and work against you. The expectations placed on college students along with the changes they are experiencing can challenge the coping skills that they have developed up to this point in their lives. When their levels of stress exceed their ability to cope, Anxiety Disorders may occur.

The symptoms below may indicate stress as well as other problems. It is advisable to have a medical check up for any physical symptoms and try some stress reduction techniques to regain perspective. Focusing on basic health such as proper nutrition, adequate exercise and recreation, getting good sleep, and seeking enjoyable activities can help to reduce stress. The following are signs of stress that may indicate an **anxiety disorder**:

- Problems eating or sleeping.
- Increased use of alcohol or other drugs.
- Increased boredom and fatigue: a general sense of "the blahs".
- Problems making decisions, increased procrastination.
- Becoming anxious and confused over unimportant events.
- Inability to concentrate or pay attention.
- Inability to get organized.
- Weakness, dizziness, and shortness of breath; "anxiety attacks"
- Persistent, hostile or angry feelings; increased frustration with minor annoyances.
- Nightmares.
- Overpowering urges to cry or run and hide.
- Changes in exercise habits
- Frequent, headaches, backaches, muscle aches, or tightness in the stomach.
- Frequent indigestion, diarrhea, or urination.
- Frequent colds and infections.
- Frequent accidents and minor injuries.

There are many types of anxiety disorders and the type of treatment can vary depending on how the anxiety manifests itself. Since managing stress usually involves both physical and mental processes, treatment can include skill development (time management, prioritizing tasks, effective studying or test taking strategies, relaxation techniques), lifestyle changes, looking at thinking patterns that contribute to the anxiety (perfectionism, black and white thinking, etc) and assertiveness training. Individual counseling can be helpful for assessing thought patterns and developing new skills. Some students with more severe physical anxiety symptoms can also benefit from a medical evaluation and possible use of medication.

Jean Baribeau-Thoennes is a counselor in UMD Health Services and can be reached at: jthoenne@d.umn.edu.

Have a freshman at UMD? Here's what to expect during the month of December.

This is an on-going segment to outline the perspectives of first-year students, parents, and some support strategies to help you throughout the first year of college. Though these events and issues are not experienced by all freshmen, the following issues and adjustments are common experiences to many first year college students. This compilation exists to identify issues and concerns, so it does not necessarily focus on the positive and smooth transition that many students experience.

The First Year Experience and Students in Transition website also provides some detailed information regarding transition issues at: <http://www.d.umn.edu/fye/freshmen/transition/>

December		
Parent Perspective	Student Perspective	Suggestions for Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Parents are analyzing first visit home and beginning to recognize, if not understand, the changes that are occurring ~ Mails relevant clippings from local newspaper, such as high school football stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Excited to see friends again over winter break. ~Students realize they have changed and high school now seems in the past or may miss home all the more and can't wait until semester break 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Ask reflective questions about the college experience and relationships.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Stressed out student calls home. "This is costing a lot of money, when do I intervene?" ~ Parents wonder how to deal with student's love relationship ending ~ Parent tries to express love and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Frustration about class selection for second semester since new students register after upper-class students ~ First serious love relationship crashes or roommate issues blow up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Encourage a connection with a friendly adviser. Possibly seek counseling and support resources as needed. Advisement Coordination Center, Health Services at UMD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Hopes social life isn't out of control ~ "Does he/she party too much?" ~ Great time for big care package ~ Early holiday present/gift certificate to restaurant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Crunch time begins- Everything is due ~ "All-nighters" are pulled ~ Dead hours (24-hour quiet hours) begin in the residence halls ~ Even the library isn't quiet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Communicate with your son/daughter about their partying at campus. Encourage them to find other means of stress relief.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Finals week- Pressure from home regarding grades ~ Packing to go home ~ Holiday stress ~ No money for gifts 	<p>Encourage study breaks and exercise.</p> <p>Send care packages with notes of encouragement.</p>
<p>OVER WINTER BREAK:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Student being home is not like it used to be ~ “It’s different—we just got used to living this way.” ~ “I don’t believe it! He wants to major in Philosophy.” ~ “It’s been two weeks since he finished finals, you’d think he could get up before noon and help around the house.” 	<p>OVER WINTER BREAK:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Final semester grades ~ Adjusting to living at home with old rules ~ Changing relationships with family members ~ Seeing how friends from home have changed ~ Missing school friends ~ Long distance relationships and introductions to family ~ Relaxation ~ Working in hometown ~ Anticipation of going back to a place where the student now feels familiar 	<p>~Communicate expectations while student is at home. Help them set goals for the second semester of school. What needs will they have the next semester??</p>



HAPPY HOLIDAY

Holiday Expectations

Excitement. Shop 'til you drop. Lights. Good cheer. Family and friends. Good Times. Peace. Renewal. Old friends. New beginnings. The holiday season has tremendous energy and excitement associated with it for many of us and we expect our college students to join the club upon their arrival home. Yet what can you really expect when your college-aged daughter or son walks through the door?

First of all, it is very natural to have high hopes and expectations when your child returns for holidays, especially during the semester break. However, keep in mind that regardless of age, these expectations are seldom met. The following will cover some common expectations, experiences and suggestions:

Quality Family Time. Parents anticipate family time and catching up with each other's lives. This is an area where you will see significant changes as they progress through their college career. The first year home will be the most difficult to appreciate. You will want to spend time with your child, while your child will want to prioritize old and new friends. They will spend what you may consider an inordinate amount of time with friends. The first time home is a big occasion for new college students. They'll want to share their experiences with peers and reconnect with old friends. My suggestion is to talk with your child prior to their return. Are there activities that they already have planned with their peers and when you should avoid planning family time? Are there significant family events that you really want to have as family time? Give them a little breathing room that first year and you'll be pleasantly surprised that as the years pass, family will often become the priority or at least a better balance will be found.

Return to Family Rules.

For those with younger children, family rules especially around hours, friends and drinking need to be discussed. One of the hardest adjustments for new students to college is learning to appropriately manage time. For the first time in their lives, they don't have someone reminding them of deadlines or appointments. The wonderful thing about the transition is that they do learn and as a result feel a sense of independence and personal responsibility.

Holiday Expectations Continued:

However, this does not always immediately translate into a broader responsibility toward community, family or others. Many college-aged students experiment with alcohol. Returning home to a vehicle and old friends may tempt students to make poor choices such as drinking and driving. My suggestion is to discuss these expectations before finalizing the ground rules. Find out what your child's expectations and plans are for the holidays and look for areas to accommodate mutual needs while also clearly stating your values.

Thoughtful Gifts. It's amazing how quickly money goes when you're the one footing the bill. Freshmen are amazed that their savings can be gone just months into their college career. Where did it go? How am I going to buy gifts? For the first time for many students they understand the meaning of a "poor college student". This may mean getting a job over a lengthy break, which can equate to even less family time. This too is a natural and in some ways positive learning experience. The meaning of money and money management take on a whole new meaning and often leads to increased appreciation for what parents have done for them. Consider suggesting alternative present ideas such as spending time with a younger sibling, participating in a family event, or helping with a project. The present is in the eye of the beholder.

Who are you? As college-aged students explore their identity, many will experiment with alternative looks or habits. Having a child walk through the door with tattoos, piercings or a new significant other can be disconcerting. Be open with your son or daughter and prior to his/her arrival home, ask if he/she has anything new to tell you.

As your child goes through his/her college years you will see tremendous changes. Keep the lines of communication open and enjoy your time together.

Paula Knudson "former" Director of Student Life at UMD.

Campus Happenings for December 2007

Each month, UMD's First Year Experience & Students in Transition office compiles a sampling of events around campus that students can attend. Many of these events are also open to the public. You can check out what's available for your student to enjoy, or take some of the fun and attend yourself. There's lots more happening on campus; these are only a few of the hundreds of events available every month.

All Through December

Turkish American Projects in Art + Design

Come see a collaborative display of work from UMD students and Graphic Design students at Baskent University in Ankara, Turkey. Tweed Museum.

December 2nd, and 4th -- 8th

Dinner With Friends theatre production

When Beth and Tom decide to split after 12 years of marriage, their friends Gabe and Karen are forced to examine their own marriage. Come for a good laugh at the Dudley Experimental Theatre. \$6/students.

December 5th - 8th

AIDS Memorial Quilt on Display

Call 726.7300 for hours or if you wish to volunteer! Event hosted by Multicultural Center in the Kirby Ballroom.

Thursday, December 6

"Historical Divisions, Myths and Stereotypes: Distinguishing African and African American Similarities and Differences"

By Quinnita Morris- Director of African American Learning Resource Center. 3-4pm in KSC room 268

December 7 & 8

Men's Hockey vs. Alaska Anchorage

Come cheer on your Bulldogs at the DECC! 7:07pm; Student tickets: \$7.00 at athletic office with an activity pass.

December 8 & 9

Women's Hockey vs. Ohio State

See a great game at the DECC! 3:07pm; Student tickets- \$

Sunday, December 9

Sounds of the Season: UMD Band Concert

Let holiday cheer and beautiful music fill you at the Weber Music Hall. 4:00pm; \$5/Students.

December 11 & 12

Gift Wrapping and Pictures with Santa Owl

All the supplies you need- just bring gifts that need wrapping! Kirby Rafters, 9pm. FREE

Wednesday, December 12, 2007

Winter Jazz Concert

Come get into the spirit of the season at this festive event! Weber Music Hall; \$5/Students.

Wednesday, December 12

Arrowhead Astronomical Society

Eric Norland of the Arrowhead Astronomical Society will be giving an unforgettable presentation. This show is free and open to the public. Marshall Alworth Planetarium; 7:00pm.

Thursday, December 13

Kirby Games Room

Free pool, Xbox, foosball, and big screen TV! FREE for UMD students 10:00pm-1:00am.

December 15, 19, and 22

Star of Bethlehem- A Special Holiday Presentation

Around the time of the birth of Jesus, there were several rare astronomical events that occurred over a period of many months and may have been interpreted to foreshadow the birth of the Messiah. Attend this interesting discussion and dark-sky presentation.

Want to know more about what's going on? The UMD website is packed with things going on each month! So check us out!