



a newsletter for parents & families



GEORGIA'S PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY

University Housing

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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:

- Panic, fear, and cramming as finals and project deadlines approach
- High temper as stress mounts
- The realization that some friends may not be returning next semester
- Increased pressure to participate in sexual activity because of the approach of vacation and extended separation
- Financial strain due to holiday gifts and travel costs
- Religious conflicts as he/she gets ready to return home after a semester of gaining new perspectives
- Excitement/anxiety about returning home
- Increased use of alcohol and other drugs

Looking Ahead with Career Exploration

Winter break is an excellent time for your student to slow down and look ahead, especially when it comes to career exploration and preparation. It's never too early to embark on this path – students who examine career options now will be much better situated when the true career search begins!

You can help by asking your student some simple questions during your holiday down time. They might include...

- What classes have you enjoyed?
- Why is that?
- Who has a job that seems appealing to you?
- What is the appeal?
- What would you definitely like to have in your workplace?



- What would you definitely *not* like to have within your workplace?
- What topics do you have a passion for?
- What types of things do you think you are good at?

By examining these types of scenarios and preferences with your student, you'll be helping him/her tap into what's important and be able to make solid career-related decisions when the time comes.

Career Checklist for Winter Break

Here is a series of tasks that students can undertake during winter break to ready themselves for the career search – whether it's for full-time work or a summer gig...

- Line up your references
- Draft a resume
- Take a career inventory or two
- Read an article or book about a career option
- Shadow someone in a job that interests you



Discussing Implicit Bias

Implicit bias is a term that has been discussed in multiple contexts: during presidential debates, within college diversity trainings, as a concern among educators, amidst questions about law enforcement actions and more. Chances are that many students have heard about it during their time on campus.

Implicit bias is when deep-seeded attitudes and stereotypes impact our actions, our decisions and our understanding, without us being conscious that it's happening. This subconscious bias can impact how we feel about people based on race, ethnicity, appearance, age and other factors, according to the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at The Ohio State University.

If you and your student choose to discuss this important topic, here are five key characteristics of implicit biases from the Kirwan Institute to consider...

1. "Implicit biases are **pervasive**. Everyone possesses them, even people with avowed commitments to impartiality such as judges.
2. Implicit and explicit biases are **related but distinct mental constructs**. They are not mutually exclusive and may even reinforce each other.
3. The implicit associations we hold **do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs** or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse.
4. We generally tend to hold implicit biases that **favor our own ingroup**, though research has shown that we can still hold implicit biases against our ingroup.
5. Implicit biases are **malleable**. Our brains are incredibly com-

A Bias Cleanse

Point #5 in this list states that we can unlearn some of our implicit biases through "debiasing techniques." The Kirwan Institute and MTV have created seven-day bias cleanses focused on race and gender to help users "begin to de-bias yourself."

The online tool sends users simple exercises or thought-starters "to help you recognize and chip away at your biases." Consider giving it a try at: www.lookdifferent.org/what-can-i-do/bias-cleanse.

plex, and the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually unlearned through a variety of debiasing techniques."

Implicit bias is a concern that is bound to gain even more atten-

tion via education, politics, policing and much more in the year ahead. Discussing it now can help all of you take a look – and learn.

Source: The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias/>

Listening to Your Student's New Perspectives

Chances are that your student's worldview has expanded during the past term. After all, that's one of the main reasons higher education exists!

However, listening to your student's different perspectives and rationales may be surprising at first. Don't worry – you still know your student. There just may be some topics that she is learning more about and making decisions about that don't fully jive with your own perspectives. That's where love, understanding and agreeing to disagree can be your very best tools.

Some of the topics that may arise include...

- Religion and spirituality
- Politics
- Vegetarianism and veganism
- Culture and race
- Poverty and homelessness
- Courses of study
- Humanitarian issues
- World news

As you listen to your student share her perspectives, try not to call them "wrong" or "misguided." Instead, allow her to express herself. Ask questions, if you like. Share your perspectives, too. You likely won't agree on every little thing, yet try to remind yourself that learning to express points of view – no matter what they are – is a strength that will serve your student very well in the long-term.



Getting Home for the Holidays

How will your student be getting home for the holidays? This important detail may have slipped her mind while she's enmeshed in December's hubbub of final projects, exams, saying goodbye, preparing for the holidays and more.

You can be helpful in figuring this out by taking a look at the two most common scenarios...

If You Need to Pick Up Your Student:

- Ask your student when he is planning on coming home (keep in mind that this may change based on academic commitments; let your student know your level of flexibility upfront).
- Find out when would be a good time to arrive (if he lives on campus, remind him to check the school's policy on the time he is required to be out of the residence hall).

- Try to determine how much stuff your student plans on bringing home, so you can plan accordingly.
- Stay in touch with your student throughout finals in case plans change – on your end or his – and try to be as adjustable and understanding as possible.

If Your Student is Getting Home Another Way:

- Ask your student when she is planning on coming home and how she is planning on getting there.
- Remind her to check schedules, if she will be utilizing public transportation, in case there are any last minute changes.
- Remind her to be careful and to make smart decisions based on weather, if she will be driving herself or driving with friends. Let her know how you can help



– if you can – and remind her that safety is more important than rushing home.

- Encourage her to be safe.
- No matter how your student is planning on getting home, this is a great opportunity for you to provide support as he makes these decisions for himself. He'll learn a great deal by taking responsibility for his travels. But don't be afraid to offer suggestions if he asks for help too.

Student-Friendly Care Package Options

Receiving a care package during finals time can help boost your student's confidence and state of mind. You know your student best, so figure out what she'd most like to help keep stress at bay. Here are just a few suggestions...

- A photo of the family dog with a "Good luck!" bubble coming out of his mouth
- Brain-friendly foods like nuts, tuna packets and fruit
- Warm, cozy socks
- A notice about something to look forward to during winter break
- Tea, coffee or hot chocolate
- A head or neck massager
- A fun holiday decoration
- New highlighters and pens
- Rice or corn bags that can be warmed in the microwave
- Encouraging notes from family and friends
- A gift card for a local food delivery place





Anger Management: 5 Tips

This can be a volatile time of year on campus. Stress, a lack of sleep and trying to finish multiple tasks in a small amount of time may put many students on edge. And when they're feeling like they're on their last nerve, it can be easy to lose their temper.

Learning to manage their anger is so important. When anger isn't expressed appropriately, it can disrupt relationships, affect thinking and behavior patterns, and also create a variety of physical problems. Those who chronically suppress anger can experience health issues such as high blood pressure, heart problems, headaches, digestive problems and depression.

When people effectively manage their anger, they can more successfully and safely get on with their business. Here are some anger management tips to share with your student...

- 1. Take a Break.** It's a simple tool, but counting to 10 before reacting can really help defuse anger or frustration. Deep breathing, visualizing a relaxing scene or repeating a calming word can also be helpful.
- 2. Calmly Express Your Emotions.** Expressing anger is healthy, but it's important to do so in a non-confrontational manner. Be assertive, but not aggressive.
- 3. Be Careful with the Words You Use.** It's easy to get carried away when emotions are involved. Stick to the issue at hand and don't say anything you'll regret later.
- 4. Use "I" Statements.** Avoid blaming language and instead share how you feel from the "I" perspective. The other person is less likely to get defensive as a result.

"Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured."

— Mark Twain

- 5. Identify Solutions to the Problem.** After expressing your concerns, offer potential solutions to resolve the issue at hand.

It's important to remember that conflict itself is neutral. It's the behavior of the individuals experiencing conflict that determines its value. By managing anger in positive ways, your student is less likely to let it derail him.

Sources: WebMD.com; MayoClinic.com

The Perils of Pulling an All-Nighter

Many students believe that pulling all-nighters to cram for final exams is necessary and expected. However, study after study show that depriving the brain of sleep can cause dysfunction that does more harm than good.

"Sleep deprivation's effect on working memory is staggering," said David Earnest, PhD, a professor with the Texas A&M College of Medicine who studies circadian rhythms (our 24-hour

body clocks), as reported by *Science Daily*. "Your brain loses efficiency with each hour of sleep deprivation."

According to Earnest, here are some things to let students know about all-nighters...

- Pulling an all-nighter only activates short-term memory when what is needed to recall and retain most facts is long-term memory



- Performance for learning and memory is higher during the morning and day, not late at night, so the brain's performance significantly decreases when you fight against your body's natural rhythms
- Trying to comprehend information at the last minute by cramming typically doesn't work well
- It's better to study as much as you can until bedtime and then wake up early to review materials before a test than to pull an all-nighter because sleep rejuvenates the brain

Source: Texas A&M University, 9/19/16, reported by *Science Daily*

Study Prep

"The optimal study method is to stay on top of things and prepare by studying in small chunks (20 to 30 minutes), multiple times per day, three to four days in advance of the test," advised David Earnest, PhD, a professor with the Texas A&M College of Medicine. "By going through information numerous times, you're allowing your brain to move those facts to long-term memory for better recall... Repeating information, whether out loud or verbalizing it in your thoughts, helps spur this process forward."