

UAAC FAMILY NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2009

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OCTOBER: MONTH OF TRANSITION

October: the month when the days get noticeably shorter, the temperature cooler, and the pace of university life more intense. By now your student has settled into university life, established routines, gotten used to the campus and dining hall food. But October brings more deadlines and, of course, midterms, all of which will come fast and furious. Time management will be the key for students to get through October successfully.

Most students will have had at least one test by now, and

hopefully will have done well. For some, though, their test grades may not have been as high as they had expected. They may be feeling more pressure now as the realities of college-level academics set in - the amount of reading or fast pace of the class may feel overwhelming. Even the format of their exams may cause stress as they deal with take-home and open-book formats as well as multiple choice and essay.

You can help your student deal with possible discouragement and stress by asking them to describe what they are doing and listening to their concerns.



GUEST ACCESS TO HOKIE SPA

Did you know there is a guest access account feature that students can activate to give parents, guardians, and other specified individuals access to financial aid information as well as information regarding their academic record? This feature is found on the Hokie Student Personal Access site affectionately called Hokie SPA.

On Hokie SPA students can, among many things, add/change their meal plans, update their addresses and phone numbers, request and drop/add classes. Now students can release their financial aid infor-

mation such as their award letter, requirements to receive aid, financial aid holds, academic progress, cost of attendance, and loan history. They can also give access to their academic record so the authorized individuals could view the student's final grades of a semester and unofficial transcript.

Once your student has given you access, you will receive an email giving you the link to the Virginia Tech Guest Access Information Gateway site where you would create your account. You will have 48 hours to do so. After the creation of your ac-

count you will receive a second email. This email will inform you of the information for which you have been authorized and the name of the student giving you authorization.

PLEASE NOTE: Having Guest Account Access on Hokie Spa does NOT replace the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (see page 2). University officials will still need authorization to discuss student information with you. This authorization can be granted on Hokie SPA by the student.

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STUDENT EMOTIONS

Students may feel inadequate because their grades are lower than the grades they earned in high school. They may not understand why they are not making A's and B's or why there are not as many grading opportunities to raise their course average. Many students have found or are finding out that waiting until the last moment to study for

exams does not produce favorable results. They are discovering it is not the paraphrasing of information, but applying the knowledge they have acquired to different scenarios and situations. Most professors use the text book to supply background information for lectures, not for material to use on an exam, while

others do not. If your student is having difficulty understanding material in course, acknowledge that you know things are tough, but encourage them to speak with their instructor as soon as possible during their office hours or by appointment.



FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT

Parent of first year students are especially concerned about the academic performance of their students, but having access to that information may not be as easy as it was when the student was in high school. Virginia Tech, like other institutions, abides by FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974). This act, often called the Buckley Amendment, guarantees students the right to limit access to their academic record by a

third party, including parents. Students, however, can authorize a third party to receive academic information by utilizing the FERPA Disclosure Web Form on Hokie SPA. Students will give the parent or guardian a Pass Code. When a parent or guardian calls for information the university officials will ask for the pass code prior to disclosing information. Third parties without the pass code will not be able to receive educational

record information. If no FERPA disclosure is on file, state law allows parents or guardians to request the information if they provide the university with proof of tax dependency.

FERPA differs from Guest Account Access in that Guest Account Access allows an authorized third party to view academic or financial information whereas FERPA allows an authorized third party to discuss information.

“The great thing in this world is not so much where we are, but in what direction we are moving.”
—Oliver Wendell Holmes

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP

- Offer advice if asked and do not tell what to do, give suggestions on how to handle the problem.
- Encourage your student to make an appointment with his/her **advisor** to discuss courses for the next semester.
- Encourage your student to discuss **mid-term grades** with their advisor.
- Encourage your student to discuss their academic performance with each of their **instructors**.
- Discuss with your student their progress with their **Pathways Planner**.
- Encourage your student to attend a departmental information session to learn more about potential majors.



ACADEMIC RESOURCE: PATHWAYS PLANNER

The Pathways Planner is a tool that allows students to plan their education – by considering their intended major, possible minors or second majors, internships, and even study abroad experiences. It is a booklet that folds out so students can see their entire undergraduate study at one time. The Pathways Planner can help students see what they have accomplished and plan where they're going.

There are majors at Virginia Tech, such as Biological Sciences and Human Nutrition, Foods and Exercise, which

require the completion of a 4-year plan that shows the classes the student intends to take each semester for their intended major.

A student receives the Pathways Planner and a pack of colored post-its from their academic advisor. The post-its are used to color-code classes needed for the major, classes needed for the Curriculum for Liberal Education, and classes needed for a minor (if applicable). Using a graduation checklist for the major and the University Catalog students can map

out their time at Virginia Tech. Because interests change and new majors created, the Pathways Planner use of post-its makes it easy for students to adjust their Pathways Planner accordingly.

The University Studies office will hold workshops on October 19th to help students work on their plans. The workshops will run every hour and no registration is necessary. Students should contact their advisor or the University Studies Office for the specific times.

IMPORTANT OCTOBER DATES

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| October 2 | Last Day to drop a class without grade penalty (students should still have 12 credits on schedule after dropping a course) |
| October 6 | Department of Human Development Information Session, 11:00 am - 12:00 pm, 120 Randolph Hall |
| October 7 | College of Architecture Information Session specifically for University Studies students, 5:00 pm 300 Cowgill Hall |
| October 9 | Fall break, no classes for students, but the University is open |
| October 13 | Informational Meeting conducted by the department of General Engineering for University Studies students., 5:00 pm - 6:00 pm, 210 Roberson Hall |
| October 13 | Informational Meeting conducted by the Pamplin College of Business for University Studies students., 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm, 1028 Pamplin Hall (also held on October 21 in 1045 Pamplin Hall) |
| October 16 | Elementary Education Teacher Information Session, 301 War Memorial Hall, 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm., RSVP required to Mary Parish at phd4mwp@vt.edu . |
| October 19 | Department of Communication Information Session, 5:30 pm, 043 Shanks Hall (in the basement), Also held on October 20 th in the same location. |
| October 19 | University Studies Pathways Planner Workshop (held every hour and will parallel regular class times; students can contact their advisor for specific times), 120 Femoyer Hall |
| October 19 | Last day for students to resign (drop all classes) without grade penalty. Student should meet with advisor regarding this. |
| October 20 | Opening of web request for spring 2010 courses for students |
| October 24 | Family Day (See http://www.dsa.vt.edu/familyday/ for scheduled events) |
| October 27 | Closing of web request for Spring 2010 courses for students |



**“A goal without
a plan is just a
wish”.**
—Antoine de
Saint-Exupery

