If it weren’t for the lighted snowflakes that now line High Street, we’d have no snowflakes at all! Mild weather, coupled with stress-buster activities, should have students relaxed as they head into Finals Week this Thursday. If not, remind them that our libraries are now open 24 hours a day, the WVU therapy dogs are making appearances, and the Academic Center for Exams and Fuel 4 Finals events are coming up – check out the Finals Week section below for more.

As the semester wraps up we are sharing some details on dining plan changes and book buybacks and rental returns that might be helpful. The end of the term also means winter break is soon to follow. Residence hall closing details and off-campus safety reminders are also included. The Parents Club holiday buses still have spaces for rides to and from home. And Commencement for December graduates is just around the corner. The last day to register to walk in the ceremony is today – December 8 – congrats to our newest soon-to-be alumni!

As a reminder, the full spring tuition balance (what’s left after financial aid has been applied) is due by next Friday, December 18. Another important set of dates for families are those for 2016 Fall Family Weekend which has just been set as October 7-9, 2016. Reminders on these and other important upcoming dates follow. Be sure to mark your calendars! In this edition:

- Full Spring 2016 Payment due December 18
- Parents Club Fall Family Weekend 2016 Dates Announced
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- Finals Week – December 10-16
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Full Spring 2016 Payment due December 18

For those who have already taken action by logging on to the spring bill, setting up a payment plan or making payment, a big thank-you! If you have not yet done so, please remember the full spring tuition balance (what’s left after financial aid has been applied) is due next Friday, December 18 – or you can simply enroll in the convenient monthly payment plan and spread your payments out over the entire spring semester, interest free. http://bit.ly/1MsB3mF

If you need extra time, note that no penalties will be assessed until January 11, 2016, but please call today to begin making arrangements or ask questions: 304-293-1WVU (1988). Students and families also can stop by the new Mountaineer HUB one-stop shop to speak with a representative: http://bit.ly/1R8kZwF. WVU wants to work with our students and families as early as possible so we can all start the spring semester successfully.

Parents Club Fall Family Weekend 2016 Dates Announced

Mark your calendars for Fall Family Weekend 2016. The date has been set for October 7-9, 2016. You will hear lots more about it in the coming months. Mark your calendars and make your hotel reservations today!

Important Upcoming Dates

As we approach the end of the term, we have included a list of helpful dates. Please note that University offices will officially be closed December 24-28, December 31 and January 1.

December 8 – Last day for students to register to participate in the December Commencement ceremony. http://bit.ly/1I90BjN

December 17 – Parents Club winter break buses depart Morgantown.

December 17 – Residence halls officially close for winter break at noon.

December 18 – The full spring 2016 account balance is due or monthly payment arrangements must be in place. http://bit.ly/1M1t6TT
December 18 – December Commencement held 1:30 p.m. at the WVU Coliseum.  http://bit.ly/1qEeNjg

December 22 – Fall grades will be posted to students’ STAR accounts in the afternoon (or the parent guest portal with appropriate access granted by your student).  http://bit.ly/1l9XiAm

January 6 – Spring student health insurance opt-out (waiver) deadline (no need to complete if you previously opted out this fall).  http://bit.ly/1l9XdW

January 9 – Residence halls reopen for spring term at noon.

January 9 – Parents Club winter break buses return to Morgantown.

January 10 – Mid-Year Academy for any first-year student on probation (students will be notified over break via email and letter).

January 11 – First day of classes.

January 15 – Last day to add/drop classes.

**Finals Week – December 10-16**

Finals week will run from Thursday, December 10 to Wednesday, December 16. Students should check individual times and dates as noted on their syllabus or as adjusted by their instructor. The overall schedule can be found here: http://bit.ly/1MZdalV.

- **Libraries:** The WVU libraries are offering extended study hours and de-stressing activities including: Games, Coloring and More in the De-Stress Zone; Furry Fun with Hearts of Gold Therapy Dogs; and Reiki, Stretching and Meditation during the Mindful Minute: http://bit.ly/1OS6kCs.

- **Mountainlair:** While keeping regular building hours, the Lair is hosting open study rooms for finals throughout the building. Students can also take advantage of the FREE Fuel 4 Finals, an all-you-can eat breakfast buffet with giveaways, holiday music and more, on Wednesday, December 9, 9-11 p.m. in Hatfield’s.

- **Residence Halls:** 24-hour quiet hours are enforced for the week prior to and during finals. Students in the residence halls are expected to head home within 24 hours after completing their last final, and halls close on Thursday, December 17 at noon.

- **Tutoring and Study Assistance:** The drop-in Academic Center for Exams will be held Wednesday, December 9 from 12:30-4:00 p.m. in the Mountainlair Shenandoah Room. Free tutoring and student success coaching will be available.
Getting Home for the Holidays

Looking for a way to get your student home for winter break? There may be a bus headed in your direction. Check out the destinations here: http://bit.ly/1LqJ1e7. Please note that the dates for the winter break holiday buses will be:

- Buses leave Morgantown: Thursday, December 17, 2015
- Buses return to Morgantown: Saturday, January 9, 2016

These dates, as always, correspond to the residence hall closing and opening schedule. To make reservations go to http://bit.ly/1LqJ1e7. The last day to request a refund has now passed.

For those travelling to and from campus, carpooling is helpful at this time of the year as well. Remind students they can list or look for a carpool on WVU’s ZimRide site: http://bit.ly/1tYX9Tv.

Housing Wrap-Up and Safety Notices

On-Campus

Students are expected to vacate their residence hall rooms within 24 hours of their last final to ensure a quiet environment for those still studying. University residence halls will officially close on Thursday, December 17 at noon and they will not reopen until Saturday, January 9 at noon: http://bit.ly/1L74eOY.

All students must be out by this time but can leave belongings in their residence hall room. They should take any valuables items they may need over break home with them. During Winter Break, students will not be permitted into their residence hall rooms nor will they have access to their mailboxes. This does not apply to students living in University Apartments.

Prior to leaving, students should lock valuables in their closet or take the valuables home, close and lock their windows, close the curtains, empty their trash, and unplug appliances such as hair dryers and curling irons. If they have rented a MicroFridge, please leave it plugged in to prevent food from spoiling. Finally, students should make sure their room door is closed and locked when leaving.

Off-Campus

If your students live off-campus, remind them to prepare their apartments for being away. Unfortunately, crime tends to increase around the holidays. Tips to pass along include:

- Put lights on a timer.
- Have mail temporarily held by the USPS to give their place the “someone's-home” look.
- If they subscribe to a newspaper, contact their carrier to temporarily stop the delivery.

- Take out their trash and clean up before leaving.

- Take valuable items with them when they leave town.

- Keep their heat on during break to avoid pipes freezing/bursting during a cold snap. Set the thermostat to a lower-than-normal setting while out of town, but do not turn the heating system off. Landlords generally require a minimum thermostat setting in winter months.

- Have a friend who is local check on the place. The Morgantown Police are also available to do a vacant property security check. Requests can be made online at http://bit.ly/1NEuBge or you can call the Morgantown Police Dispatch Center at 304-284-7522 to set this service up.

- Finally, the obvious reminder is to close and lock all windows and doors as. Many crimes are simply crimes of opportunity.

- Upon returning to Morgantown, students should immediately report any theft or incident that is suspicious in nature to authorities.

Here's to a safe and restful break!

December Commencement Reminders

We wish a fond farewell to our December graduates! Commencement is scheduled for Friday, December 18, 2015, at 1:30 p.m. in the WVU Coliseum. Ceremonies are expected to last roughly two hours. Students who wish to participate must register to walk in the ceremony by December 8: http://bit.ly/1NEuBge. Students can check in at the upper Red Gate beginning at 12:30 p.m. If families need accessibility accommodations they should contact the WVU Office of Accessibility Services in advance at 304-293-6700. If family members are unable to attend, the event will be recorded and a video will be uploaded to the December Commencement website the week following the event. For more details, go to: http://bit.ly/1qEeNjg. Congrats to our soon-to-be new Mountaineer alumni!

Dining Plan Changes and Leftover Dining Dollars

If your student is considering making a change to his or her spring meal plan, this website provides details on what to do: http://bit.ly/1ISn5ZK. The deadline to adjust spring plans is Monday, January 18. If your student has other questions regarding meal plans, they can call Dining Services at 304-293-2096 or visit http://bit.ly/1ISn73D
While Mountie Bounty funds DO roll forward to the spring term, if your student has leftover Dining Dollars these DO NOT. Your student might consider some of the following:

- Grab lunch at the Mountainlair or Evansdale Crossing when standard dining plan exchanges are not accepted at these locations.

- Purchase snacks leading up to exams at the Evansdale and Downtown Library or other retail outlets on campus.

- Consider going to the Lyon's Den convenience store and stocking up on packaged food and beverage items, laundry detergent or other toiletries to resupply and stock up for spring.

Students can view Dining Dollars balances, as well as remaining Dining Plan swipes, online at [http://bit.ly/1rrdX5R](http://bit.ly/1rrdX5R).

**WVU Bookstore Buyback and Rental Return Programs**

As we approach the end of the semester, the WVU Bookstores will be collecting books that students rented for the fall term and are offering their Book Buyback service.

- Rental Returns: If students rented their textbooks, these titles are due back in the stores by December 16* (last day of finals). Students should return books back to the WVU store where they originally rented them. Please help us remind your students of this due date, as we know they are very busy studying and preparing to leave for holiday break. The bookstores also send three automatic email reminders to help remind them. *Unfortunately, the Bookstore home office will automatically charge a late fee for any rental books not returned by December 16, as these books are needed back in stock to use again for the upcoming spring term.*

- Book Buyback: For books that were purchased, we offer our Book Buyback option, which is paid out in cash. We advise students to first return their rentals, then sell us back other books they purchased. Students can simply stop by a WVU Bookstore location. They must have their WVU ID. Students will receive a cash payment for those books that are bought back. If a book has been reordered for use by WVU professors, it can be worth up to 50% cash back. For books not ordered for the spring term, our national wholesaler will set price based off demand, between 10% to 30%.

- Holiday Shopping? – The WVU Bookstore is having a 25% off all Champion items sale now through December 19, at all WVU locations! If you are on campus picking up your student or looking online for the perfect WVU gift, the WVU Bookstore also offers a variety of other great gift ideas in the store and online, including ornaments, attire and other great WVU gear and collectibles. [http://bit.ly/1SQRqfD](http://bit.ly/1SQRqfD). Our WVU Barnes and
Noble Bookstores work closely with the Parents Club and provide direct support back to your students. More than $1.5 million is returned in student scholarships each year!

**WVU Portal Replacement for mix.wvu.edu**

The WVU Portal, a new mobile-friendly application (http://bit.ly/1m8XLtH), went live this week and offers current WVU students and newly admitted students a single front door to a variety of critical services and applications. Bringing together some of the most-used student resources, this new platform offers one location where students can easily go to check grades and course content; check their student account balances; access DegreeWorks; view academic and athletic calendars; get real-time PRT status updates; and check eCampus, MIX Gmail and STAR. Portal.wvu.edu is replacing mix.wvu.edu. Users will automatically be redirected to the new site through the end of the spring 2016 semester. MIX Gmail will NOT be going away; it will remain accessible through portal.wvu.edu.

**New students.wvu.edu Website unveiled**

With the new WVU Portal, messaging and announcements previously posted to MIX have moved to a new Project 168 website. We want to make sure your student makes the most of the 168 hours in every week. The new Project 168 website (http://bit.ly/1TZuNaR) displays announcements, events and frequently used links in one accessible, convenient, mobile-friendly location. Previously, this information was available inside WVU’s MIX student portal, which required a WVU login for access and was not optimized for smart phones. Now, everyone – parents included – can use the page to keep up with what’s happening on campus!

**NEW Phone Scam Alert**

We have been alerted that students are receiving fraudulent phone calls that appear to be from the Financial Aid Office. The individual calling says they are from WVU, that the student owes a balance, and that there is a warrant out for their arrest. Do not make a payment to them. THIS IS A SCAM! There are no arrest warrants out for students with past-due balances. Student balances are always available to view online through a student’s STAR account. If you need to make a payment, you can do so online through STAR or by calling the Mountaineer Hub at 304-293-1WVU (1988).

**McNair Scholars Program Recruiting**

The McNair Scholars program is taking applications for the 2016 six-week paid McNair Summer Research Internship. Please encourage current sophomores and juniors who are the first in their family to attend college and who have demonstrated financial needs, or students from underrepresented groups who are interested in pursuing a Ph.D., to apply before January 15, 2016. For more info and to download an application form, please visit http://bit.ly/10rYVpF or contact the McNair office at 304-293-4316.
Desert Bound: Mountaineers Headed to the Cactus Bowl January 2

Mountaineer alumni, fans and friends are invited to join the WVU Alumni Association and Mountaineer Athletic Club for a special travel opportunity to Phoenix. http://bit.ly/1N9VUO7

Help Us Find Future Mountaineers

Do you know a high school student in your area who would make a great Mountaineer? Pass along their information by completing this form: http://bit.ly/1NNMLZ3. Participants will qualify for one free T-shirt while supplies last. Questions? Contact Katie Condon at kccondon@mail.wvu.edu.

Katie Gallagher and Lisa Hanselman

Office of Parent Relations

West Virginia University