There is no place like home for the holidays and we hope you and your students will enjoy some quality time together this season! December presents a wonderful time to not only look back on all that has been accomplished, but to also look ahead. Details follow to help with a successful start to the spring term including information on academic support, housing, spring textbook purchase and exciting trips and recreation fairs. Career Services also includes a great suggestion for those looking for last minute gifts for your student!

For the parents of our recent graduates, congratulations! In many ways higher education truly is a family journey and we are glad you and your new alumni embarked on this journey as Mountaineers. More on December Commencement can be found below and if you now wish to be removed from our listserv, see below for details, and be sure to let us know what their next chapter entails!

As 2015 comes to a close, our hopes are that your students are celebrating a successful fall term. Dean’s and President’s Lists will be coming out in January and we will be sure to alert you once these lists are published online! If things didn’t go well and assistance is needed to get back on track, please read on for details on support and resources. Please do note that University offices will be closed for a few days over the holiday break and these and other helpful spring dates are noted below!

With that, Happy Holidays from all of us here at West Virginia University! As our WVU holiday greeting notes, this is the season to remember to enjoy the most amazing gift we have – each other: [http://bit.ly/1ScF0Sg](http://bit.ly/1ScF0Sg). Until 2016! In this edition…

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**Graduation wrap up**

Nearly 3,000 University graduates received the gift of a college degree Friday, Dec. 18 at the Coliseum during the December commencement ceremony. But the gift that they take with them isn’t limited to a degree. It’s the Mountaineer spirit that they’ve acquired during their time at the University that the institution’s leadership encouraged them to use as thinkers and practitioners to change the world: [http://bit.ly/1khRKJq](http://bit.ly/1khRKJq). Please also take a moment to share your opinion of WVU Commencement – whether you were able to attend or not. Your responses will be used to strengthen and shape future events: [http://bit.ly/1jitjew](http://bit.ly/1jitjew).

**Direct Loan Exit Counseling**

For students graduating or leaving the University, they are reminded that they should complete exit counseling for their direct student loans. More can be found here: [http://bit.ly/1aW7ltH](http://bit.ly/1aW7ltH).

**Parent/Guest Portal Reminders**

The Parent/Guest Portal allows students to grant parents or guests direct online access to relevant student record information, including grade information, financial aid details, and student account/billing information. While home over break, this is a great time to have these conversation and have your student set up and grant you access. Access to these records is protected under the Family Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) [http://bit.ly/13hvI1w](http://bit.ly/13hvI1w). Access is only able to be shared once access is granted by a student and can be revoked by students at any time. Students who wish to grant this access should log on to their STAR account and designate what access they wish to grant to whom, the term of that access, and a FERPA pass phrase that will be used to authenticate the identity of a designee, should he or she need to call a relevant University office regarding a record. Once completed, an e-mail will be sent to the parent/guest designee with instructions to set up the guest account. For step-by-step instructions, FAQs, and tutorials, go to: [http://bit.ly/1l9XiAm](http://bit.ly/1l9XiAm). This access covers the majority of typical student service areas where parent/guest access might be needed. However, this does not cover access to areas where student interaction should be the primary means of contact, such as faculty access.
Academic conclusion of the Fall Semester 2015

It is the end of the semester! Final grades are now available via STAR or the Parent/Guest Portal. We congratulate all students in good academic standing. Outstanding undergraduate academic achievement is recognized by awarding President’s List and Dean’s List status to students who obtain a 4.0 GPA or 3.5 GPA, respectively. For more information visit [http://bit.ly/1FTPcI](http://bit.ly/1FTPcI).

If the semester did not finish as well as your student had hoped, we encourage you to talk with your student about ways to get back on track.

Academic Probation and the Mid-Year Academy – Students are placed on academic probation if their cumulative GPA falls below a 2.0. All students will be notified by e-mail during the winter break if they are on academic probation. First-time freshmen on academic probation will receive a letter and email. First-time freshmen on academic probation are required to attend the Mid-Year Academy on Sunday, January 10, beginning at 1:30 p.m. During the Academy, students will meet with advisors, review academic suspension guidelines and financial aid policies as well as learn about WVU’s academic and other support services to help them get back on track.

The Mid-Year Academy is the first step in helping your freshman improve his or her academic performance throughout the spring semester. All freshmen on probation will be under a contract to help them get back on track for graduation. An Adviser and Student Success Coach will work closely with your student to help him or her create and implement a plan for the spring semester. These plans consist of action items your student needs to address. Additional information about the Mid-Year Academy will be sent via e-mail and regular postal mail during the winter break if your freshman is on academic probation. Please e-mail any questions to studentsuccess@mail.wvu.edu.

Academic Suspension – The standards used to determine a student’s eligibility for suspension are based on overall GPA in relation to credit hours attempted. Credit hours attempted include all credits included on the student’s WVU transcript (regardless of where or how completed, and including credits with grades of F). Students whose GPAs fall below the stated requirements are eligible for suspension from the University in May 2016. For more information, please visit: [http://bit.ly/14XJ0kH](http://bit.ly/14XJ0kH).

Finally, if your student has not yet registered for classes, be sure he or she completes course registration before the start of the spring semester! We hope you have a very happy holiday season and look forward to seeing your student in January.

University Breaks and Dates

In the coming days, the University will be closed for various holidays. Even when WVU is open, some offices run with a more limited staff during semester breaks as faculty and staff take vacations. Please plan ahead and be understanding. Many University facilities, such as the
Mountainlair, Student Recreation Center, Student Health, Libraries, etc., also have modified hours. Students should be sure to check websites for hours over winter break.

Afternoon of December 22 – Grades posted to students’ MIX/STAR accounts.

*Thursday, December 24-Monday, December 28 – University Holidays/offices closed.*

*Thursday, December 31-Friday, January 1 – University Holidays/offices closed.*

January 6 – Spring student health insurance opt-out (waiver) deadline (no need to complete if you previously opted out this fall). [http://bit.ly/1l9XdfW](http://bit.ly/1l9XdfW)

Saturday, January 9 at noon – Residence halls reopen.

Saturday, January 9 – Mountaineer Parents Club 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)

Monday, January 11 – First day of classes.

Monday, January 11 – Assessment of late fees for outstanding balances.

January 15 – Last day to add/drop classes.

Monday, January 18 – Last day to adjust spring dining plans.

*Monday, January 18 – University Holiday – no classes/offices closed.*

Friday, March 18 at 7 p.m. – Residence halls close for Spring Break.

*Friday, March 25 – University Holiday – no classes/offices closed.*

Sunday, March 27 at noon – Residence halls reopen from Spring Break.


Monday, May 2 – Friday, May 6 – Finals Week.

Saturday, May 7 at 5 p.m. – Residence halls officially close for the spring term. (Note: students must vacate rooms 24 hours after their last final)
Transportation winter break announcements

The Personal Rapid Transit system, Campus Shuttle, ADA Service, and Sunday Shopping Shuttle will not be in operation beginning Thursday Dec. 17. The PRT will resume spring operations on Jan. 7. The Campus Shuttle and ADA Service will start up again on Jan. 11. The Sunday Shopping Shuttle will resume service on Jan. 17. The Mountain Line bus service is free with a University ID. For more information, follow @WVUDOT on Twitter or visit http://bit.ly/1OF8ap3. You may also call the PRT office at 304.293.5011 or the Transportation office at 304.293.5627.

A Sharp New Interview Suit...The Gift that Keeps on Giving

If you're still shopping for the perfect holiday gift for your student, look no further than the nearest department store. This year, invest in your child's future by buying them a tailored suit to ensure that they make a positive first impression on prospective employers. Career fairs and on-campus interviews will resume in January, so send them back to school in style!

If you are looking for additional resources to help provide career-related support and guidance to your student, check out the Career Services Center's new parent resource guide on our website at: http://bit.ly/1J5gKQ1.

University Apartments short-term lease options available

Is your son or daughter studying abroad? Are they graduating next December? Whatever the reason may be, Vandalia and University Place Apartments are currently offering short-term leases for both spring and fall 2016. Also University Park Apartment is offering the month of January for FREE when students sign a lease for January 1, 2016-July 15, 2016. Visit our website http://bit.ly/1DUWA5f to learn more about the properties.

Spring 2016 Textbook purchases

Parents please help us to remind your student of the following as they prepare for the start of the spring semester:

- **To use financial aid** to get your course books, please follow the directions below by December 29. *(For further details, please refer to the original email sent to your student's mix account from the Financial Aid office)*

- **If you are NOT using Financial Aid**, you can order your textbooks at your convenience. We advise placing your order by Jan. 5th, to ensure cheaper used book availability, but we can accept orders through the website through Jan. 16th.

- **Order textbooks online** for the most convenient method. Payment options include credit card, gift card, financial aid, etc. and parents can pay for books using their credit card and designate their son or daughter to pick them up. Follow these eight easy steps:
1. Log on to MIX, then select the STAR tab
2. Select Student Services and Housing
3. Select Registration
4. Select the WVU, PSC, and WVU Tech Bookstore link
5. Select the drop-down menu under “Your Term” and select Spring 2016
6. Select “To Order Your Books Online - Click Here” to order your books.
7. Next, select the “Select Format” tab to choose New, Used, Rental, or EBook, and add the items to your cart.
8. Choose your payment option and you’ll be ready to pick up your textbooks at the start of classes.

- The WVU Bookstores offer a **full refund through Jan. 19th** *(competing area stores do NOT offer refunds)*

- Once books are paid for online, your student can **pick them up at their convenience**...no rush or stress of waiting in lines.

- **New location**: In addition to our Downtown Bookstore location, we also encourage students to visit us in our new, two-story Evansdale Bookstore location in Evansdale Crossing. This location will replace the Brooke Tower location.

Parents, as always, we appreciate your assistance to communicate with students, and wish you a Happy Holiday season! Get official WVU gear at [http://bit.ly/1SQRqfD](http://bit.ly/1SQRqfD). Questions? sm583@bncollege.com.

**Adventure WV and Campus Recreation are hosting a spring sports, exercise and outdoor recreation fair**

Students looking to build a new fitness routine, join a sports club or team, or take part in an outdoor adventure can gather information and sign up at the Student Recreation Center Jan. 13 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Representatives will be available from club sports, intramural sports, outdoor recreation center trips, group exercise classes, the climbing wall and personal trainers: [http://bit.ly/1J5gQXV](http://bit.ly/1J5gQXV)

**Rising sophomore students offered outdoor adventure opportunity in Utah**

Sophomore Outdoor Adventure Reorientation is an Adventure WV program that will take students camping, hiking, and canoeing through the red-rock deserts and canyons of Utah. SOAR is a three-credit course that will be taking students who just finished their freshman year on a 13-
day adventure this May. The application deadline for first consideration is Jan. 27. Visit this link for more information: http://bit.ly/1wsYgMC

Housekeeping: Removal from the Parent E-News Listserv and the Mountaineer Parents Club

With Commencement upon us, many of you will be saying farewell and leaving the Mountaineer Parents Club. Thank you for all you have done supporting your students during their time at WVU. While you are welcome to stay on with us, we understand that many of you want to end your membership. To be removed, simply reply to this e-mail with the following information:

   Parent Name(s):

   Student Name:

   Other Comments/Farewell Messages/What their next chapter entails (employment, grad school, etc.):

/Katie Gallagher and Lisa Hanselman

Office of Parent Relations