

West Virginia University
Parent Electronic News
March 5, 2009

PARENTS PLEASE NOTE — in addition to timely spring break and mid-semester updates, this Parent E-News also contains some information on a recent case of suspected meningitis that resulted in a student death earlier this week and also an update on the pending WVU presidential announcement which will be forthcoming a bit ahead of schedule so please be sure to read this update entirely for information on these items. Also know that we anticipate another Parent E-Newsletter going out tomorrow announcing dates for the 2009 Fall Family Weekend as well as the 23rd President of WVU so be sure to stay tuned!

With the weather warming up, it can mean only one thing: spring break is right around the corner. Whether your student is going home or to some far off island destination, make sure his or her travels are safe. Read on for tips and also about some recent travel alerts should your student be heading to Mexico and other safety tips.

This week marks the mid-semester point which means midterm grade reports may be on the horizon if a student is not doing well in a class. Remember these reports go out only to students who are receiving a D or an F at the midpoint of the semester and are meant to be a red flag -- so no news is good news! If your student does face some rough waters, direct your student to the one-stop shop Mid-Semester Help Center to be held this Monday, March 9th. In addition to these topics, other important information is also in this Parent E-News so please read on!

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HEALTH ALERT UPDATE: STUDENT DEATH FROM SUSPECTED MENINGITIS
The following has been released from Student Health officials as the most recent update on the death of a WVU student from suspected bacterial meningitis. Please know

information has been and continues to be made available to students throughout the week through a variety of mediums but we also wanted to update you, the parents:

"An off-campus, 19-year-old WVU student, Chelsea Kanatus, was hospitalized on March 1, 2009 with a suspected diagnosis of bacterial meningitis, and despite the best efforts of all involved, she died on March 2, 2009. At this time, medical officials feel it is appropriate to proceed with measures as if the patient had bacterial meningitis, although test results are inconclusive.

Meningitis is an infection of the meninges, the tissues surrounding the spinal cord and brain. Meningitis can be either viral or bacterial. Viral meningitis is more common, and typically much less serious. Bacterial meningitis is a very rapidly progressive and severe infection that strikes 1400-3000 Americans each year and is responsible for approximately 150-300 deaths. 100-125 cases of bacterial meningitis occur on college campuses each year, and 5-15 students will die as a result. Because bacterial meningitis is more common in individuals between the ages of 15-20, and in individuals living in dormitories WVU and many other universities require vaccination against bacterial meningitis as a pre-matriculation requirement for freshmen. The vaccination is helpful in preventing about 70-80% of cases of bacterial meningitis, however in rare cases; even those who have been vaccinated may contract the disease.

Bacterial meningitis may be spread from an infected person to others through sharing of saliva, as in kissing, or sharing glasses or eating utensils. Additionally, individuals with greater than 4 hours of continuous exposure in a confined space may be at risk. Persons exposed for less than 4 hours, as in classrooms, or cars, or PRT are not at significant risk. WVU Student Health officials have interviewed Chelsea's friends, relatives and contacts to determine all that might have had significant exposure within the week prior to her becoming ill, which is the time of possible risk/transmission. Everyone who was determined to have significant risk of exposure was treated with antibiotics to prevent the infection. No related illnesses have been identified. At this time, medical officials do not feel there is any significant risk of new cases developing, however, anyone who develops fever, stiff neck, headache, vomiting, or confusion should seek immediate medical attention. If this case was bacterial meningitis, the usual incubation period is less than 7 days, so if there are no cases by this weekend, then there should be no further concern for spread and should be no danger in people traveling for spring break.

This week, informational booths have been available in the Student Rec and the Mountainlair to address student's questions and provide information. Student Health Service has been open and treating students throughout the week. Tonight there is also a panel discussion for faculty, staff and students with medical staff to answer questions. In addition, Carruth Center for Counseling staff have been working directly with students and are available for walk-in appointments for anyone needing assistance or counseling.

WVU students or parents may call 304-293-2311 to speak with a Student Health Nurse, especially if your student believes he or she may have been exposed. Students who are

determined to have significant exposure will receive antibiotic prophylaxis at no charge through the Student Health Service. Meningitis vaccination is also available at cost and any student who would like to be vaccinated may do so through a nurse appointment at Student Health - 304-293-2311. Please be aware that incoming freshmen to WVU have been required to have the vaccine since 2006."

PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH UPDATE: ANNOUNCEMENT EXPECTED TOMORROW

Moving a bit ahead of schedule, two final candidates for the Presidential Search have visited campus this week. Gregory H. Williams, president of The City of College of New York, and James P. Clements, provost at Towson University, both accepted invitations and visits will conclude today with an announcement expected by tomorrow, Friday, March 6th.

It has been an exciting time on campus with community, faculty, staff and student forums taking place over the past two days as we prepare for the announcement of WVU's 23rd President. For more on the campus visits, finalists bios, or overall search process, which for the first time included a Parents Club representative - Harry "Chip" Shaffer, go to: <http://www.wvu.edu/Redirect/?id=1029>. As soon as an official announcement is made, we will be sure to notify you, so stay tuned!

MID-SEMESTER HELP CENTER TO BE HELD MONDAY, MARCH 9

Mid-semester is here which means some students may find they need a little extra support or advice. At midterm, students can view any possible midterm grades on their STAR account, but we find that if they receive one, typically they already know it is coming. If midterm reports do surface, these should be heeded as a warning that action needs to be taken. Based on parent feedback in past semesters, the Mid-Semester Help Center was designed to allow you to direct your students to a central location to seek assistance from a variety of key offices at this crucial time for student success. This drop-in Help Center will assist students in making informed decisions about their mid-semester situation at this vital time period for student success.

The Mid-Semester Help Center will be held in two locations this Monday, March 9. From 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. it will be located in the Commons Area of the Mountainlair. Then from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. it will be located in the Free Zone of the Rec Center.

Units participating include the Office of Financial Aid and Undergraduate Scholarships; advisors from the Undergraduate Academic Services Center and Student Support Services; Admissions and Records; the Carruth Center for Counseling; Student Health Services; Disability Services; Extended Learning (summer school); the Center for Civic Engagement; Student Employment; and the Academic Resource Centers (learning centers).

Not sure if your student needs assistance? Ask yourself the following questions. Does your son or daughter need to:

* Speak with an academic advisor?

- * Ask general questions or check the impact of academic progress and matriculation in relation to midterm grades?
- * Find assistance to deal with test anxiety, depression, or other areas of concern affecting his/her academics?
- * Find information on learning disability testing or assistance/counseling?
- * Find and pick up mid-semester classes?
- * Find out the possible repercussions of dropping a class?
- * Get info on learning centers, supplemental instruction, and tutoring?

- * Check the impact that grades may have on financial aid or scholarships?
- * Find assistance switching majors or possibly finding a new one?
- * Consider summer school classes to stay on/get back on track?

If you answered yes to any of these, encourage your student to stop by the Mid-Semester Help Center Monday, March 9! Again, students are encouraged to simply drop by to ask questions, pick up info, or schedule follow-up appointments if necessary. The timing of this Help Center corresponds with the start of eight-week mid-semester classes and is prior to the financial aid 100% earned date as well as the last day to drop a class, which is Friday, March 27. This allows students ample time to assess their status, gather information, and make an educated and informed decision about their mid-semester situation.

UNIVERSITY RESIDENCE HALLS & APARTMENTS CLOSE FOR SPRING BREAK FRIDAY, MARCH 13

All university supervised housing for undergraduate students will close for Spring Break on Friday, March 13, 2009. All students must be out of their rooms by 7:00 p.m. This affects students in University-owned or University-supervised residence halls and apartments. University Housing supervised by WVU includes Pierpont Apartments, parts of College Park - The Ridge, and Spruce/International House. During the Spring Break, students will not be permitted into to their rooms nor will students have access to their mailboxes. Dining Services will serve meals at their usual locations and times through 2:00 p.m. on Friday, March 13, 2009.

Prior to leaving for break, students should lock valuables in their closet or take the valuables home, close and lock their windows, close curtains, empty their trash, and unplug appliances such as clothes irons, hair dryers, and curling irons. Finally students should make sure their room door is closed and locked when leaving.

As this is Spring Break and the final break before the end of the term which after break is just 5 weeks away, you may encourage students to make end-of-semester move out easier and less stressful. Suggest they plan to take some winter clothes and other little used things home now. No need to wait until May to start moving your things out of your residence hall room or apartment.

The residence halls will re-open at noon on Sunday, March 22. Meals will resume with dinner on Sunday, March 22. If students have any questions, they should contact their Residence Hall Coordinator. We wish all students a happy and safe Spring Break!

UNIVERSITY POLICE ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO BE SAFE DURING SPRING BREAK

Earlier this week, a message was sent out to WVU students in conjunction with University Police in anticipation of the upcoming Spring Break week and a travel alert for Mexico that has been published. Spring break for West Virginia University students is March 14-22. Students were reminded to take the proper precautions so they have a safe, enjoyable hiatus from studying wherever they go.

The U.S. State Department has issued a travel alert urging U.S. citizens to use caution if planning a trip to Mexico because of increased drug-related violence south of the border. To learn more about the alert, go to <http://www.wvu.edu/Redirect/?id=1030>. Lt. Randy Friend of University Police also offered some helpful tips to ensure that spring break is a time students remember and not an experience they wish to forget. Please use this information to help us remind your student to be careful and use caution if they plan to head out for a fun-filled Spring Break!

Before traveling:

- Research intended destination - find out about any risks or potentially dangerous areas to avoid.
- Emergency contacts - assure a home contact has cell phone numbers and full names of traveling companions in case you lose your phone or some other problem arises that would make it difficult to contact you.
- Itinerary - relay travel route, stops, diversions, and the address and phone number of intended destination to those at home.
- Lock up - be sure to secure valuables and lock up your Morgantown home before leaving.
- Car safety - have your vehicle inspected to assure a safe trip asking the mechanic to check belts, tires, brakes or any safety equipment that might cause a potential problem while traveling.

While on spring break:

- Car safety - Wear your seatbelt, remember winter road conditions can be treacherous and road surfaces can change from rain to ice in a matter of minutes, don't drink and drive, and get sufficient rest before traveling.
- Lock up - be sure to keep your room locked and your property secure at all times.
- Use caution - avoid wearing flashy jewelry, flashing cash or doing anything that may increase your risk of being a victim of theft or robbery and if you are a victim of a robbery attempt, comply with the perpetrator.
- Go in groups - always go out with at least one of your traveling companions and try to stay with larger groups whenever possible. Statistics indicate that your chance of being a victim of crime is reduced by up to 65 percent if you travel in groups of three or more.

- Just say no and moderate - avoid illegal drugs and limit your alcohol intake. Most injuries, physical assaults, sexual assaults, and criminal citations and arrests that occur on spring break involve alcohol.
- Look out for one another - especially if someone in your group becomes intoxicated, don't let any member of your party wander off alone and don't let them wander off with others outside of your group.
- Not in my drink! - don't ever put a drink down where something could be placed in it and don't accept drinks from others. If at anytime you suspect that something may have been slipped into your drink, alert your friends immediately and then call the local police.
- Be smart - Don't get involved in any type of activity that might jeopardize your safety or increase your risk of becoming a victim. Avoid acts that might lead to your being criminally cited or arrested. Incidents of students falling from balconies, being struck by vehicles and other accidents happen too frequently during spring break.

HELP US IDENTIFY OUR DEPLOYED MILITARY MOUNTAINEERS

Is your student currently deployed overseas in the US Military?

Deployed Military Mountaineers, a subcommittee of the WVU Veterans

Committee, is searching for current faculty, staff or students who are in the military and deployed overseas. The group would like to send care packages to those serving the country toward the end of this term. Anyone who knows of a deployed Mountaineer is asked to complete an online form by April 10, 2009. This form and more information on the WVU Veterans Committee can be found online at

<http://www.wvu.edu/Redirect/?id=1031> under the link for Deployed Military

Mountaineers. Any questions can be directed to Rebecca Berger at 304-293-6700 or Rebecca.Berger@mail.wvu.edu.

IMPORTANT ADVISING/REGISTRATION UPDATES

As of Monday, March 2, when your student accesses STAR, they will be asked to update their Race and Ethnicity. New Federal reporting regulations require WVU to resurvey Race and Ethnicity. Once the survey is completed, they will be directed into STAR. There is also a link under the Personal Information Menu which will allow students to view or update their Race or Ethnicity if there is a future need. Please encourage your student to enter STAR and complete this survey PRIOR to their pre-registration period for fall or summer 2009 as this must be done and may cause a slight delay if not taken care of previously.

Also, below is an update to the STAR Registration Dates as published in the last Parent E-News:

- Graduates, Professionals, Honors Seniors, Athletes, Disabilities, and PSC Promise - Tuesday, March 24th
- Honors Juniors - Wednesday, March 25th
- Honors Sophomores - Thursday, March 26th
- Honors Freshmen - Friday, March 27th
- Seniors - Tuesday, March 31st

- Juniors - Tuesday, April 7th
- Sophomores - Tuesday, April 14th
- Freshmen - Tuesday, April 21st

Remember to remind your students to contact their advisors about advising for summer and/or fall classes. They will obtain their Term PIN needed for online registration at that time. Timely scheduling of these meetings will help assure the best chance for requested classes.

TIPS FROM THE TRENCHES - "HELPING YOUR STUDENT GET A SUMMER JOB OVER SPRING BREAK"

By: Susan Jennings Lantz, Assistant Director, Student Employment,
Division of Human Resources

"Summer Jobs just don't fall out of the sky and smack you in the head," or so one father exclaimed to us last July when his daughter still didn't have a job. Parents of college students can be in a difficult position: they want their students to come home for the summer, but "home" may not offer a lot of seasonal summer employment to help your student make some money before heading back to school next fall. The uncertain economy makes the situation more worrisome. The good news is that students can take advantage of their time home during spring break not only to visit with the family and do some laundry, but also to scope out summer job opportunities ahead of the pack. Here are some tips on helping your student get a summer a job:

1. Tell them to talk to the people in the WVU Office of Student Employment before they leave campus. We can be reached at (304)293-9270, and the website is <http://www.wvu.edu/Redirect/?id=1032>. They can also stop by our offices above the Bookstore. There are a lot of opportunities available in the Morgantown and in other places, and we can talk to students about a plan of attack for their job hunt at home.
2. Work with them to make a list of employers in the area with whom they would like to work. Make sure they plan to approach several businesses (it isn't unrealistic to visit five potential employers a day over spring break). Make sure they keep a journal of names, numbers, and email addresses of all of the businesses they contact. (After visiting several different businesses, it is easy to become confused.) Some students apply for one job at a time. It's easier that way, but its pretty easy to be unemployed for the summer, too.
3. Make sure they have a resume with no grammatical errors or spelling mistakes for each employer. Suggest that they include three references on a separate typed sheet with names, titles, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, and an explanation of their relationship to your student (e.g., employer, teacher, clergy, mentor, etc.).

4. Insist that they practice their eye contact, firm handshake, and professional introduction with you. Suggest that you (or a family friend) try a short mock interview with them. Check out what they are planning to wear while they look for a job. Although a three piece suit is not necessary for handing out resumes and applications, it is not unusual for businesses to perform interviews on the spot, so students should be dressed in business casual at the very least. Remind them that revealing clothing, body piercings, multiple rings, flip flops, and Ugg boots aren't considered to be in fashion off of most college campuses, and will ultimately work against them as they search for a summer job.

5. Make sure they follow-up! Students should remember to send thank you notes to everyone who takes the time to talk to them at any business. In addition, it shows initiative to make a polite phone call or send a short email to enquire about the status of a position.

These are all great career skills to start practicing now while on the search for a summer job! The WVU Office of Student Employment has a lot more information and several books available to help students in the hunt. Send them to the office and website, and we'll help them prepare their plan of attack!

Parent Advocate Office
West Virginia University