

Parent Electronic News
West Virginia University
February 25, 2016

Spring Break is just over three weeks away, and Parents Club buses are filling quickly. Before heading out, along with studying for midterm tests (midterm grades will be posted March 7), students should be scheduling to meet with their advisor for fall/summer advising now. Online class registration dates begin just after break. To get up to speed on midterms, majors changes, DegreeWorks and advising topics, check out the “Academics” section below and share with your student.

This is the last reminder that the 2016-17 FAFSA priority deadline is less than a week away (March 1). I have also included some helpful info on scholarships and funding, as we often get questions on these topics this time of the year. We advise students to file a FAFSA every year because, in addition to other aid, some scholarships require that they have a valid FAFSA on file – be sure to log on to complete this today: <http://1.usa.gov/1TB28Kx>.

For parents of new incoming students – welcome! While much of the Parent E-Newsletter information is directed to parents of current WVU students, there are some items specific to you, such as the Adventure WV information below. Curious about what to expect next? Check out this website: <http://bit.ly/1UmPSyb> and keep an eye out for New Student Orientation information that will be mailed to your student in the near future. And finally, a special Happy ‘Leap Year’ Birthday to any of our parents and students born on February 29 – enjoy your day Monday! In this edition:

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A GeeMail Invitation

Check out the latest GeeMail regarding a prominent achievement – WVU has earned the status of “R1,” the highest level of research activity as defined by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education: <http://bit.ly/21u1aT6>. This places WVU in the top 115 universities among the nation’s 4,500+ institutions. We also invite you to join us March 1 at 11 a.m. for a live webcast of a special State of the University speech from Dr. Gee regarding this ranking and planning for WVU's continued ascension: <http://bit.ly/1Q4midy>.

Parents Club Spring Break Buses

Spring Break is coming soon – has your student made their travel arrangements to head home? The Mountaineer Parents Club will once again be running buses home for the break, so make your reservations soon. Availability is limited. Times and locations can be found here: <http://bit.ly/1vStQFj>. Local clubs are also sponsoring buses to central Maryland, northern Virginia, Long Island and southern New Jersey.

As a reminder, residence halls will close for spring break on Friday, March 18 at 7:00 p.m. and reopen Sunday, March 27, at noon. Please note that Sunday, March 27 is Easter Sunday and classes resume on Monday, March 28.

Is Your Student Traveling Abroad for Spring Break or Summer?

If your student will be traveling abroad for spring break or summer, they can visit the Travel Clinic at the Student Health Service located on the Evansdale campus: <http://bit.ly/1R4k8bM>. In addition to getting any needed vaccinations, students can obtain health advice for the area they will be visiting, prevention information and preparation if they should have a health issue while abroad. This helpful video gives students an overview of what to expect: <http://bit.ly/1VGXOsl>. Students should bring along a list of prior immunizations, allergies and their travel itinerary, along with their insurance card and payment.

Students traveling abroad should also be sure to review their health insurance coverage before departure. Students with Aetna Student Health Insurance can check out the travel benefits provided here: <http://bit.ly/1Oxls4P>.

Also, WVU Medicine has created a Q&A concerning the Zika virus that has been in the news. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), among other health organizations, has been tracking the spread of the Zika virus. You can find information directly from the CDC at <http://1.usa.gov/1S3LDah>. You can review the WVU Medicine information at <http://bit.ly/1LHRH1n>.

FUNDING AND FINANCIAL UPDATES

FAFSA Priority Deadline March 1

The March 1 priority deadline for filing the 2016-17 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is right around the corner! Consideration for various grants and scholarships, such as the PROMISE Scholarship, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, and Federal Work Study, requires that students file a FAFSA by March 1. File now at <http://1.usa.gov/1TB28Kx>.

If you have not completed your 2015 taxes, don't worry! You can use your 2014 taxes or 2015 W-2 forms to estimate your income for the FAFSA. It's OK to use estimates to complete and submit the FAFSA in order to meet the March 1 priority deadline. Once you file your taxes, you can log back into FAFSA and update your application.

New for 2016: IRS Form 1095-B for WVU Aetna Enrolled Students

Students enrolled in the WVU Aetna student health insurance plan during 2015 will receive a new IRS tax form, called Form 1095-B. It is used to report certain information to the IRS and to taxpayers about individuals who are covered by minimum essential coverage and therefore are not liable for the Individual shared responsibility payment through the Affordable Care Act. Form 1095-B does not need to be filed with your or your student's income tax return, but your student should keep the form with their tax documents to serve as proof that they had qualifying health coverage during 2015.

Aetna has determined that students may have received Form 1095-B with their WVU student ID in place of their social security number in error, and will be correcting and resending Form 1095-B to students' mailing addresses. Questions about the 1095-B may be directed to Aetna at 855-531-6837. More info can be found from Aetna <http://aet.na/1p8BJsB> or the IRS: <http://1.usa.gov/1OxIWla>.

2016-17 GI Bill Certification Form Due March 1

For students receiving veteran benefits, the 2016-2017 GI Bill Certification Request Form (formerly the Coordinator Card) is online and must be submitted by March 1. It is the second

option in the menu when a student logs on to WVU's Veterans website at <http://bit.ly/1S3MF60>. Students who are graduating in May 2016, are not returning, or have exhausted their benefits at the end of the spring 2016 semester are asked to email and inform the WVU Veterans Office at veterans@mail.wvu.edu and do not need to complete the certification request form.

Scholarships and Funding 101 – Part 1

Whether you are the parent of an incoming or current student, there are always questions about scholarships and funding. Here are a few tips that can help your students be savvy when it comes to funding their education. I will include a second part to this article in the next Parent E-Newsletter so stay tuned!

1. **Know the requirements:** Starting early and doing some research is helpful. Is an additional application needed for scholarships or are they considered simply by applying to the school? What are the deadlines? Scholarship requirements often vary due to donor funding requirements. For instance, specific scholarships are available and designated for transfer students (<http://bit.ly/1EaHyJH>) in addition to in-state and out-of-state freshmen: <http://bit.ly/1vkfodo>.
2. **Achievement and renewal:** For incoming students who are close to meeting requirements but just shy of a test score, perhaps taking the test again may move the score within scholarship range and be worth the cost of the retest. For current scholarship students, making sure they know if an award is renewable and the requirements (GPA, credit hours, etc.) to maintain it, from the start, is crucial (<http://bit.ly/1AMXYZ9>). Also, how long do they have to meet the requirements? It might be worth paying for a summer class to maintain a longer-term scholarship.
3. **Always file a FAFSA form by the March 1 priority deadline:** Often parents file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and assume if they don't get any scholarships or grant aid one year, they may not get any in future years. Finances can change, and there are often additional scholarships available to students from year-to-year. Also keep in mind that many scholarships often have a requirement that a student have a current FAFSA on file. Don't let this step count your student out! <http://1.usa.gov/1MBApWy>.
4. **Have students check out opportunities in their areas of study:** Through the generosity of our alumni and friends WVU offers scholarships to both current and incoming students. Most applications come out in the spring for the following school year: <http://bit.ly/1EtT017>.

ACADEMICS

Midsemester is Just around the Corner

We are approaching the midsemester mark and this means midterm exams or projects are just around the corner. Be sure to check in with your student and if they need assistance, they can explore tutoring support options through our Academic Resource Centers <http://bit.ly/1Gn6MnW>

or explore the “Additional Tutoring On Campus” section of that site for a list of all learning centers and resources across campus. Remind students that visiting faculty during office hours is also a great idea if they need assistance in a course. Some key dates follow:

- March 7 – Midterm grades of a D or F at the eight-week mark will be recorded and posted to the STAR system and Parent/Guest Portal. Remember – no news is good news.
- March 18 – Last day to drop a class with a “W.” Students should consult with their academic advisor prior to dropping a class to ensure what impact it might have on their forward progress.

Students should also keep their advisor posted on their current progress, as advising appointments for summer and fall are under way at this point as well.

Major Changes – Parents Club Question of the Month Results

The Parents Club Question of the Month for February asked about major changes, and we heard back from a number of you. While 55% indicated that your students are happy with their initial major choice, 29% noted that your student has changed their major and you think it is great! Another 3% indicated that your student has not yet made a change but are considering doing so; 11% indicated that while a change has occurred, the jury is still out whether this is the best fit or not. Another 2% noted that your student has not yet declared a major.

For those still working to find the best path for them or perhaps considering minors or even graduate school options, remember that the **Major Match Fair will be held next Tuesday, March 1** in the Mountainlair Ballrooms from 10:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Tables featuring representatives from the various WVU colleges, majors and services will be set up, and information will be available. This fair will help students explore academic and career possibilities. Students are encouraged to ask questions and express their interests and goals. For more information, visit: <http://bit.ly/1Pphugy>.

DegreeWorks

If your student has not yet, they should be logging into their DegreeWorks account to review their academic progress. DegreeWorks is an online checklist for their majors and much more! If they wish to explore what GPA they need to get this semester to reach a certain cumulative GPA, DegreeWorks can help with its various GPA calculation tools. Are they considering changing their major but curious how this will affect their progress? DegreeWorks’ “What If” feature allows them to seamlessly explore how their completed courses would work toward another major and see what else they might still need. If they are getting close to graduation or simply looking ahead to pick courses for the upcoming summer or fall semesters, DegreeWorks tracks their progress so far and allows them to see what they still need to complete or identify any missing items they need to follow up with their advisor on, well in advance. Check out this helpful tutorial and encourage your students to do so as well: <http://bit.ly/1p8EN7T>.

Advising Appointments Being Scheduled Now

Summer and fall online course registration will begin in late March, and students must have met with their advisor prior to scheduling online: <http://bit.ly/1ycPaJz>. If students need help determining who their academic advisor is, this can be found in DegreeWorks. Appointments fill up more quickly the closer registration dates get, so students are encouraged to schedule early. Students register according to their class rank, but classifications are based on previously earned hours plus those being attempted in spring 2016. For example, if your student is a first-year student who has 15 earned hours after fall 2015 and they are attempting 15 hours now, they would register as a sophomore. STAR priority registration dates are:

Graduate/Professional/Honors SR/Accessibility Services/Athlete Students – Tuesday, March 29

Honors Juniors – Wednesday, March 30

Honors Sophomores – Thursday, March 31

Honors Freshman – Friday, April 1

Seniors (89+ hours) – Monday, April 4

Juniors (58-88 hours) – Wednesday, April 6

Sophomores (29-58 hours) – Friday, April 8

Freshmen (0-28 hours) – Monday, April 11

CAREER READINESS

Mocktail Party and Fashion Show – March 8

What truly sets a great candidate apart from the rest when competing for a job opportunity? Is it good grades, the perfect internship or a degree from the best university? The answer is not as simple as checking these items off on a resume, but one thing is clear – strong interpersonal communication skills are critical to launching a successful internship/job search and building a professional network. The Career Services Center is here to help your student hone their networking skills, learn how to dress to impress, and gain a competitive edge in the real world.

The 5th Annual Mocktail Party and Fashion Show will take place on Tuesday, March 8 from 6 to 8 p.m. in the Mountainlair Ballrooms. This event is an interactive workshop where students will learn how to:

- Perfect the elevator pitch with personalized feedback from corporate recruiters
- Conduct oneself during formal and informal events

- Distinguish between casual, professional and interview attire

Refreshments will include appetizers and non-alcoholic mocktails! There also will be drawings throughout the evening for various prizes, including a GoPro HERO4! Space is limited! Registration is free and now open in MountaineerTRAK (<http://bit.ly/1T9ETsX>).

PARENTS OF FUTURE MOUNTAINEERS

Adventure WV Orientation Experiences for Incoming Students

Registration for Adventure WV's popular Orientation Experiences opened on Monday, February 1. WVU's Adventure Orientation Experiences are peer-led adventure-based programs that prepare incoming students for life at WVU and in West Virginia. Orientation Experiences offer participants diverse experiences and opportunities to learn about themselves, classmates, WVU and West Virginia. Programs take place the summer before a student's freshman year. Some offer academic credits and involve fall participation, while others are a one-time experience.

Take the time today to talk with your son or daughter about signing up for an Orientation Experience. In addition to being a great time, Adventure WV Orientation Experiences set students up for success at WVU. **On average, Adventure WV Orientation trips increased first-year retention rates among participants from 2003-2012 by 5.7% and 6-year graduation rates by 6.53%** (source: WVU Office of Institutional Research).

This year, Adventure WV is offering four different types of Orientation Experiences:

- **Orientation Trips** (7 days) and **Mountaineer Quest** (5 days): Cost is \$95 or free if your student is Pell-Grant eligible
- **C²: Community Connection** (2 days) and **NSO Basecamp** (1.5 days): Cost is \$35 or free if Pell-Grant eligible

Multiple options mean that students can choose the best fit for their interests. Help your student have the best start possible to their college career by encouraging participation in an Orientation Experience! To learn more, visit: <http://bit.ly/1xolaKv>.

/Katie Gallagher and Lisa Hanselman

Office of Parent Relations