Help your student **create** a plan for academic success, find **support** resources on campus, learn what it means to get **involved**, and how you can welcome your student **home** from their first semester.
It's hard to believe your student's first semester in Aggieland is already nearing its end. The 2018-2019 school year has proven to be a busy one. Between Howdy Week, rigorous coursework, Aggie Athletics, as well as numerous student organization and campus-wide events, your student has had plenty to do.

Your student may have recently been home for Thanksgiving and is now back on campus preparing for the end of their first semester. In this edition of the Aggie Connection, you will find information on how to support your student academically, mentally, and logistically as they prepare for finals and winter break.

This is the last Aggie Connection in the series for your student's first year. To continue to receive periodic advice and information specific to Aggie families, we encourage you to look to our Aggie Family Newsletter. If you do not already receive this monthly email newsletter, we invite you to sign up at aggiefamilies.tamu.edu/newsletter.

As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact New Student & Family Programs staff at 979.845.5826 or email us at aggiefamilies@tamu.edu. Your student can also visit us at Student Services @ White Creek. We're located in Student Life 2, Bldg. #0068. Bus Route 03 (Yell Practice) travels from Main Campus and stops right across the street from Student Services @ White Creek.
For students living on campus, there are a few logistics to consider prior to returning home for winter break. The information provided below can help make the transition to winter break smoother for your on-campus student.

In preparation for winter break, all students should be out of the residence halls 24 hours after the last exam, but no later than 5:30 p.m. Friday, December 14. Halls will reopen on Thursday, January 10, 2019 at 8:00 a.m. Early move-in starts on Thursday, January 10th. To request early move-in, your student should go to the Housing Portal at oncampusaggies.tamu.edu. Residents living at White Creek Apartments do not have to leave for the winter break.

Room Change Procedures
Residents returning to the halls for the spring semester must follow the express check out process covered in their closing hall meetings and prepare their room accordingly given their style of hall. Failure to do so may result in an assessment of charges. Residents with approved room changes must complete the room change process and check out with a Resident Assistant prior to leaving for the break. All belongings must be removed from the resident’s present room and moved to their new room/hall prior to checking out. Residence hall staff will be inspecting all rooms to ensure the buildings are secure, appliances are unplugged, and that all guidelines have been followed.

Mail Service
For those who have purchased mail boxes on campus, mail will be sorted and distributed on a reduced schedule. While the service window will not be open during this time, there are still several ways to acquire packages. Please contact the mail provider, Baur Services for more information. Information will also be posted at the service windows in Hullabaloo Hall and the Commons Community Center.

Housing Cancellations
Students not returning to the halls for the Spring semester must check out within 24 hours of the last university final exam. Failure to do so may result in an assessment of charges. Residents not returning after the break must cancel their housing contract with the Housing Assignments Office either in person in the A-3 Lounge, on the north side of campus, or by email at housing@tamu.edu. Please refer to the residence hall contract for specific deposit forfeiture and room charges associated with canceling your contract. Residents who decide that they will not return to the residence halls for the spring semester must cancel their housing with the Housing Assignments Office in writing by email or by fax and must make arrangements to remove personal belongings from the residence hall.

If you have any further questions, contact the Department of Residence Life at 979.845.4744.
Preparations to consider for winter break:

☐ Pay all bills before leaving or have them forwarded.

☐ If your student desires to have mail forwarded while gone, fill out a change of address card a few weeks before leaving or contact the post office to have them hold mail, which they will do for up to 30 days.

☐ Notify apartment manager of absence during the winter break.

☐ Discuss plans for the break with roommates and agree on what needs to be done before leaving.

☐ Take your valuables home with you (laptops, gaming systems, flat screens, etc.)

☐ Take pictures of the serial numbers on your valuables with your phone camera so you have them with you if you need to report something stolen.

☐ Secure/store away items usually kept outside such as lawn mowers, BBQ grills, furniture, and bicycles.

☐ For security purposes, put lights on a timer while gone and alternate them to mimic actual usage.

☐ Latch and lock all windows, and close all blinds.

☐ Report any suspicious activity to your police department. If you see something, say something!
Winter Break at Home

Written by Trisha Sheffield, Aggie Parent and Family Advisory Council member

Whether you cried tears of sadness or joy in August, most families feel their level of excitement build as the holidays approach. For the first time since the start of school, you get to have your Aggie home for more than just a long weekend.

For this mother’s heart, the anticipation of having my daughter back home for an extended amount of time was palpable, and as the first break approached, I cleared my calendar preparing for all of the mother-daughter-family bonding I had planned. And that, my fellow Aggie families, was my first mistake. In all of my excitement, I failed to have a conversation with my daughter about what she needed from her time at home, and the result was disappointment, tension and hurt feelings (all mine).

For the student who has been sharing space (perhaps for the first time in their life) in a residence hall all semester, having time alone in their room might be a needed respite. While you may have grand plans full of activity, your student might be looking forward to downtime. Maybe they plan to see every high school friend imaginable, which conflicts with your expectations of time spent with family.

The point is this: talk about expectations before your college student arrives home. Discuss what each of you thinks is important to do over the break and allow for some compromise. However, this doesn’t mean they get to do whatever they want, and you have to go along with it. Remember, you still are the family member, and although your student has been living independently for a short time, the space they come home to is yours.

Every student and family is different, but like many things in life, communication is key. With clear expectations and shared understanding, your student’s extended breaks at home can be a positive experience for everyone.
Tips for a Smooth Visit at Home

**Acknowledge that your student may need to recharge.**
“Students often view home as a refuge from the madness of college life. Let your home be that refuge. Give them their space to relax and decompress. Have their favorite foods and other familiar treats available. Expect that they may want to do little, except visit with their friends.” - Mitch Kreindler, Aggie Parent & Family Advisory Council

**Discuss expectations for the visit.**
If you are planning an event in which you expect your student to participate, let them know ahead of time when it's scheduled and how long it will take.

**Talk to your student about new “home rules.”**
Start with the rules in place when your student left. “Give them more freedom than they had in high school, but also set some “adult” rules, such as deadlines to be home by, use of family car(s), etc.” - Bruce Bradley, Aggie Parent and Family Advisory Council

**Don’t let yourself be taken advantage of.**
Your student has newfound independence after their first semester. Acknowledging independence can free parents of taking care of every need, such as laundry, cooking meals, etc.

**Prepare for changes in your student.**
“Be aware that this is not the ‘child’ you dropped off in August. They have had a few months of independent living. Not to say that they shouldn’t live by the house rules when they return, but you just need to realize that you're dealing with more of an adult now.” - Jim Tirey, Aggie Parent and Family Advisory Council

**Discuss the possibility of alternative break plans.**
Some students choose to stay in College Station or plan trips with friends rather than coming home for winter break. Make sure you ask your student their plans so you aren't surprised!

**Engage in conversations with your student.**
“As parents, do your best to appreciate all of the ‘new’ experiences your student tells you about. An interested audience leads to much more sharing. Helping them navigate through their thoughts on the positives and negatives in their new world will help them feel refreshed and ready to hit the ground running when they go back to school.” - Kristi Baker, Aggie Parent & Family Advisory Council
Staying Healthy

End-of-the-semester stress combined with cooler temperatures often leaves many students with colds, coughs, or the flu. To have the best chance of avoiding sickness, your student should:

**Get a flu shot:** Students can set up an appointment to get their flu shot with Student Health Services (SHS) online at [shs.tamu.edu/appointments](http://shs.tamu.edu/appointments) or by calling the SHS Appointment Line at (979) 458-8250. Flu shots are now available at SHS for $25, but prices and availability are subject to change without notice.

**Wash hands** as often as possible, and use antibacterial hand sanitizer.

**Sleep:** It is recommended that adults get 7-9 hours of sleep each night; many students do not get this amount.

**Exercise:** Whether it is a group aerobics class at the Rec Center, or simply taking a walk for relaxation, experts recommend at least 30 minutes of physical activity five days a week.

**Eat healthy:** Eat nutritious and balanced meals. A diet based on a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, and dairy products provides the best nutrition. Visit [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) for more information and tips on how to eat healthy on a daily basis.

If your student does get sick and needs medication, SHS offers prescriptions and over the counter medications for Texas A&M students. The SHS pharmacy is located on the first floor of the A.P. Beutel Health Center, and is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

For more information on how your student can utilize Student Health Services visit [shs.tamu.edu/parents](http://shs.tamu.edu/parents).
Student Counseling

Just as important as a student’s physical health is their mental health. Students new to Texas A&M are likely to have many adjustments to make during their first semester in College Station. Hopefully, most experiences will be positive; however, some difficulties are likely to be encountered. The stress of final exams and their ongoing transition to college can sometimes lead to feelings of anxiety, loneliness, and disconnect.

If your student experiences difficulty with the transition or too much stress, Student Counseling Service is an excellent resource. SCS provides a full range of professional services, including personal and career counseling, academic skills enhancement, testing, outreach programming, psychiatric services, consultation, and crisis intervention.

If your student would like to schedule an appointment, go to scs.tamu.edu and click on “Register for Services.” Appointments are available weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Limited evening services are sometimes available in the fall and spring semesters.

Your student can visit the Student Counseling Service website or call Student Counseling Services at 979.845.4427 to learn more about the variety of services offered to students.
Your student is nearing the end of their first semester and will soon experience their first round of final projects and exams at Texas A&M University. This can often be a stressful time for students who are still adjusting to the rigorous academics at Texas A&M University and the new level of responsibility in preparing for these projects and exams.

As a family member of an Aggie, you have the important role of being a supporter and encourager during this stressful time. Luckily, you are not the only one wanting to help your student succeed! On the next page is information about some of the academic support resources available to Texas A&M students. Please share this information with your Aggie, and encourage them to take advantage of all the FREE help available to them!

One key to managing final exams is proper time management. The last day of classes at Texas A&M is Wednesday, December 5. Thursday is termed a reading day, in which there are no classes so students can prepare for exams. Many students feel overwhelmed and, rather than using the reading day to study, they will use this “downtime” to focus on socializing. To help your student avoid this common pitfall, encourage them to begin devising an exam study schedule well in advance. The fall final exam schedule is posted online at registrar.tamu.edu.

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**Here are some tips to pass along to your student:**

- **Plan a study schedule.** Studying for an hour each day until the exam is more effective than studying several hours the night before.

- **Take breaks when studying.**

- **Take care of yourself:** Nutrition and rest are essential for mental functioning!

- **Utilize academic support resources such as professor’s office hours, Supplemental Instruction classes, drop-in tutoring, the Writing Center, and the Academic Success Center.**
The Academic Success Center’s mission is to help all Aggies enhance their academic performance. The Center’s holistic approach helps students identify roadblocks to academic success and ensures that all students have access to comprehensive resources. Students admitted to Texas A&M are among the best in Texas, the United States, and the world. Still, talented students sometimes find college-level academics challenging and stressful.

The ASC offers a variety of programs to fit the needs of each individual student. For more information about the ASC and the programs offered, your student can email at successcenter@tamu.edu or visit successcenter.tamu.edu to learn more.

**Programs Offered:**

**Academic Coaching:**
Academic Coaches are full-time professionals who work with Aggies one to one. Coaches guide students into becoming the most effective, self-regulated learner possible. The Academic Coach identifies your student’s strengths and weaknesses and individualizes appropriate activities. Students can make an appointment to meet with a coach here: successcenter.tamu.edu/Academic-Coaching

**StudyHUB:**
On-campus academic support is available all across the Texas A&M University campus. StudyHUB, sponsored by the ASC, connects students to those resources through its searchable database. You can identify and locate on-campus resources by subject area, type of support offered, and location. Students can access this resource at studyhub.tamu.edu
Student Involvement

The number one priority set by Texas A&M for its students is academic success; however, research has shown that a student’s involvement in co-curricular activities may enhance their academic performance and their connection to the institution. After their first semester, many students may have already identified opportunities to get involved both on and off campus. If your student has not found something yet, it is never too late!

Encouraging Your Student to Get Involved
As there are multiple opportunities for involvement, some students find themselves overwhelmed by the possibilities. “Continue to encourage your student to get involved somewhere. While I think it’s important to engage in major-specific organizations, the opportunity to get plugged into an organization related to interests and hobbies often provides an outlet for fun and connects your student to a potential friend base with common interests.” - Trisha Sheffield, Aggie Parent and Family Advisory Council

OrgSearch
The Department of Student Activities offers a variety of involvement resources on their web site, studentactivities.tamu.edu, to help students make the most of their involvement at Texas A&M University. The website features OrgSearch, a tool that allows students to search for involvement opportunities based on interest.

MSC Open House
Students can also attend the Spring MSC Open House on Sunday, January 20 from 1-5 p.m. in the Memorial Student Center. Student organizations will have tables set up with information about their organizations. The groups that choose to participate in the Spring Open House are typically the ones who are taking new members for the spring semester.
Important Dates

December:
7th, 10th-12th: Final Examinations for all students.
14th-15th: Commencement and Commissioning.
24rd-28th: Faculty and Staff Holiday. University Closed.

January:
1st: Faculty and Staff Holiday. University Closed.
14th: First day of spring semester classes.
21st: Martin Luther King Jr. Day. University Closed.

Join us for Family Weekend!

April 12-14, 2019
Family Weekend is a tradition that has existed at Texas A&M University since 1919. This special time is dedicated to Aggie parents and families and gives students a chance to express their gratitude to those who have impacted their lives.

Visit familyweekend.tamu.edu to learn more!