



## Parent and Family Newsletter

### MARCH 2020

Dear parents and families,

March 9 marks the midway point of the spring semester. Mid-term grades are out and — while often a time of celebrating accomplishments — can be a stressful time for students, and sometimes we are left interpreting how our students really are doing. In any case, it is important to continue to support your student and offer positive, constructive advice.

Empower your student to cultivate a relationship with a “go to” mentor on-campus. This person might be an advisor, a professor, or a staff member with whom they connect. Like any successful partnership, communication is the key to good planning. We have excellent faculty and staff ready to have these conversations; encourage you student(s) to reach out and create conversations with the people on campus that positively influence them.

With over 60 student clubs and organizations at Minot State, encourage your student to become involved — or more involved — in a club or student organization. It is always the right time to be inspired and connect with new friends. Please stop and visit with Aaron Hughes in the Student Activities Office on the second floor of the Student Center. Ms. Hughes will point your student in the right direction.

As always, I’m open to fielding any questions or concerns that you may have. I can be reached at [kevin.harmon@MinotStateU.edu](mailto:kevin.harmon@MinotStateU.edu).

Respectfully,

Kevin Harmon  
Vice President for Student Affairs



### IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS

#### March

- 1 – Summer and Fall semester graduation applications due to advisor
- 9 – Midterm grades
- 16 – 20 – Spring Break
- 26 – Last day to withdraw from 16-week classes and receive a 50% refund
- 31 – Education Career Fair, 4 – 6:30 pm, Conference Center

#### April

- 1 – Career Fair (all majors), 10 am – 1 pm, Conference Center
- 3 – Summer and Fall semester graduation applications due to Registrar’s Office
- 7 – 9 – Summer and Fall registration for currently enrolled students begins

View more dates, deadlines, and events at [MinotStateU.edu/calendar](https://www.minotstateu.edu/calendar).

Be seen. Be heard. Be inspired.

## Choosing a Major

By Jo Calhoun, [CollegiateParent.com](http://CollegiateParent.com)



Your student's major will be the academic area that they focus on during their studies.

Students take about 10 courses of increasing difficulty and specialization in the major they choose. Choosing their major can feel daunting! Learning a little more about majors yourself is a great way to support your student and to help take a little stress out of this decision.

### Schools offer a wide range of majors

Majors may be very specific, with the goal of preparing your student for a certain profession — for example, athletic training, elementary education, or nursing — or they may be more general, such as history, economics, or biology.

Your student's academic advisor, and counselors at the campus career center, can help your student learn more about majors and how they connect to possible careers. Your student's choice of major is important, but most majors can prepare your student for a variety of careers, and in the highly mobile 21st century labor market, it's likely that your student will have many careers over the course of their lifetime.

### Tips for being successful in their major

1. Students do best in classes they enjoy. They should study what they love!
2. Early in college is a good time for your student to explore subjects they didn't take in high school as well as subjects they are considering for a major. Your student might discover a passion for psychology, management, or creative writing.
3. Your student should pay attention to deadlines for declaring a major (usually the second semester of sophomore year), but there's nothing wrong with being undecided for a while.
4. It's common to change majors once or twice.

### Other practical considerations

It is certainly appropriate to expect your student to do some self-reflection to understand what kind of work they might want to do after college (if they haven't already decided on a career path) and to start researching the best ways to prepare for these jobs. Their authentic interests should drive their choice of major and choices they make about other activities they will do during college to prepare for life after graduation: volunteering, a campus job, joining clubs and student organizations, summer internships, etc.



Because a college degree is a big financial investment for a family, parents are sometimes concerned that certain majors aren't "practical." Keep in mind that future employers will value the critical thinking and other skills acquired by liberal arts graduates.

If you and your student would like to learn more about the potential value of their college degree (based on where they go to school and what they major in), take a look at the Georgetown University study "The Economic Value of College Majors." The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics is another good resource for information about the kinds of jobs that will be available in the coming decade along with typical salaries.

### Start a great conversation!

- What class do you like the most?
- What's the most interesting paper or project you've done this semester?
- Which department's courses haven't you tried yet?
- When you think about the future after college, what do you dream about?

Want to learn more about the majors and programs at Minot State? Go to [MinotStateU.edu/enroll/programs](https://www.minotstateu.edu/enroll/programs) to see all that we have to offer!

## Student Activities and Events MARCH 2020

1 – Women's Softball, 3:30 pm, Air-Supported Dome

3 – Tuesday Soup, 11 am – 1 pm, Student Center Atrium – free homecooked lunch

5 – M-Life: Daniel Martin, magician, 7 pm, Beaver Dam

7 – Men's Hockey, 7:30 pm, Maysa Arena

10 – Tuesday Soup, 11 am – 1 pm, Student Center Atrium – free homecooked lunch

14 – Men's Hockey, 8 pm, Maysa Arena

15 – Men's Hockey, 7:30 pm, Maysa Arena

17 – Tuesday Soup, 11 am – 1 pm, Student Center Atrium – free homecooked lunch

21 – Men's Hockey, 7:30 pm, Maysa Arena

24 – Women's Softball, 2 & 4 pm, Air-Supported Dome

24 – Tuesday Soup, 11 am – 1 pm, Student Center Atrium – free homecooked lunch

26 – M-Life: Pinterest Night, 7 pm, Beaver Dam

View more events at [MinotStateU.edu/calendar](https://www.minotstateu.edu/calendar).

### Financial Aid: Know What You Owe

If your student has borrowed a federal student loan or has received a Federal Pell Grant, they have a federal student aid history. Their federal student aid history is available for them to view online at [nslds.ed.gov](https://nslds.ed.gov). By logging in with their Federal Student Aid (FSA) ID and password, the same ones used to file the FAFSA, they can view their borrowing history, contact information for their Federal Direct Loan servicer, and their Pell Grant history. Although students are not required to make payments on their student loans while

they are enrolled on a half-time or greater basis, borrowers or their parents can choose to make early payments on the principle or interest (if the student has borrowed an unsubsidized loan) at any time. Keeping track of amounts borrowed and Pell Grant usage can help students keep loan debt reasonable, and it can also help them avoid exhausting their eligibility before they complete their program. For more information about federal student loan limits, visit [studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/loans](https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/loans).

## Is it the “Winter Blues” or Seasonal Affective Disorder?

By Amanda Taylor, [CollegiateParent.com](http://CollegiateParent.com)

When your college student was home for winter break, the two of you spent many evenings talking about everything from dating to difficult professors to their favorite diner in their college town. It was a joy to have them home!

However, towards the end of break, you noticed something a little off. They were quieter at family meals, didn't want to see their old friends, and slept a ton — even more than when they first got back and were still exhausted from final exams.

Thinking about it, you remember that you observed the same thing last winter. Then, you chalked it up to the fact that they were still settling in at their new college. The more you mull it over, though, the more you realize this pattern stretches back into their high school years ... and that you yourself tend to follow a similar pattern each winter. You're used to it, though, and have learned to cope with the “heaviness” of the season by focusing on the fact that the days are already getting longer and just around the corner you'll be feeling more light-hearted and energetic.

The winter blues are a common phenomenon for as much as 10–20 percent of the United States population. Symptoms vary and will often include sluggishness, cravings for sweets and carbohydrates, weight gain, poor sleep with difficulty waking in the morning, poor concentration and sometimes withdrawal from family and friends.

For about half a million Americans, the winter blues become winter depression, also known as Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD. SAD symptoms are the same as above but more severe and last longer, sometimes up to five months. Women are more affected than men, but men tend to have more severe symptoms.



The winter blues and SAD — both forms of depression in varying degrees — tend to run in families and usually begin in early adulthood. If you have a close family member with SAD, you may be more susceptible to seasonal depression.

Although there is not one exact cause, here is what experts believe leads to winter blues or SAD:

- Melatonin, a naturally occurring hormone in the body, affects sleep patterns. When there is a decrease in exposure to natural light, the body produces more melatonin, causing a person to feel sluggish and sleepy.
- Serotonin, another naturally occurring hormone in our body that helps to regulate mood, sleep and appetite, can be affected by decreased exposure to natural light. Researchers have recently found that serotonin transporter (SERT) proteins increase in people affected with SAD, leading to depressive symptoms.
- Circadian rhythm, our body's natural internal clock that tells us when to sleep and wake, is also affected by decreased exposure to natural light.

If you or your student is having any of the above symptoms, do not fret. Try these proven ways on the next page to beat the blues!

### 1. Lighten your day

As with any new routine, it's always best to check with your health care provider before beginning. That said, light boxes and light lamps have been scientifically proven to help decrease depressive symptoms associated with winter blues or SAD. Another option, and one you can use in tandem with the light lamp, is a dawn simulator. It is a cheap and easy way to simulate the morning arriving gradually in your room, helping you wake up naturally rather than being abruptly awoken by an alarm while it's still dark outside.

### 2. Exercise

This is the one of the best ways to boost your serotonin levels and get natural energy (as opposed to several cups of coffee). Regular exercise has been shown to decrease depression and help sleep at any time of the year; boosting exercise routines as winter approaches will benefit anyone who is especially affected by the winter blues. Even just getting outdoors for some fresh air can help alleviate depressive symptoms. The tree-huggers don't have it all wrong!

### 3. Cook wholesome meals

Maybe cooking isn't your thing, but putting together a meal with complex carbohydrates (think lots of veggies) and lean proteins while leaving out simple sugars and carbs can greatly boost a tired and sad mood and balance serotonin. You will also notice better digestion and less anxiety as you cut out processed foods. As for dessert, there are current studies underway that confirm what we were hoping: a little dark chocolate works on neurotransmitters to help boost mood and alleviate the pain of SAD.

### 4. Clear the clutter

You might think this should be saved for a "Spring Cleaning" article, but clearing out the old can be quite liberating and give you a sense of accomplishment and spaciousness. Whether it's kicking a bad personal habit or going through your closet or file cabinet, removing clutter decreases stress. Princeton neuroscientists have found that an excess of things can have

a negative impact on your focus and ability to process information, so go on and say good-bye to what no longer serves you.

### 5. Connect with a friend or family member

Talking and processing feelings with someone you trust over tea or taking a hike with a buddy can be extremely therapeutic. Sometimes we think we are the only ones going through a specific life event. You will find that sadness, feeling down in the dumps, poor sleep and so forth are all quite common to the human experience. Whether it's advice you seek or just validation from someone you trust, reaching out is beneficial.

### 6. Seek treatment

If adverse symptoms don't decrease with your efforts, or if they impact your ability to function normally, it's time to seek the counsel of your doctor or a therapist trained in evidenced-based treatment for SAD. There are both holistic and conventional approaches to help treat the symptoms of winter blues and SAD. You are worth it, and before you know it winter will thaw, your mood will improve and it will be time to celebrate spring and rebirth.



*The rock wall in the Minot State Wellness Center is a great way to get a physical energy boost!*