



In this Issue

Student Mental Health	1
Student Quotes	2
New Access to Services	3
Key Dates	3
Dean's List	3
Did You Know?	4
New Websites	4
Parents Enrichment Fund	4
Student Center	5
Madison Initiative for Undergraduates	5
Career Corner	5
First-Year Experience	6
The Wisconsin Idea	6
Badger Family Spring Visit	7

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UW-Madison Parent Program

Parents Play a Key Role in a Student's Mental Health

College is frequently remembered as "the best four years of your life." However, the journey of a college student isn't always easy, often filled with challenges as well as triumphs. New living arrangements, new and changing personal relationships, and rigorous academics may leave students feeling overwhelmed or isolated, impacting their overall health. Issues about mental and emotional well-being among college students are growing concerns, both at UW-Madison and nationally.

A January survey from UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute showed that mental health among freshmen was at an all-time low this academic year. In the survey of more than 200,000 new freshmen at 279 colleges and universities, only 52 percent rated their emotional health high or above average, a drop from 64 percent in 1985 and down 3.4 percent from 2009.

Many factors were cited for the drop, among them growing pressures for success and the increasing cost of higher education in a down economy.

UW-Madison believes that parents can play a major role in supporting student mental health, as well as identifying potential warning signs. It's also important to talk openly about mental health issues to educate the public and erase past stigmas.

Badger Parent recently consulted with Danielle Oakley, the director of Counseling and Consultation services at University Health Services and one of the university's leading mental health experts.

Oakley came to UHS in June 2010, from Fort Collins, Colo., where she served as director of counseling services and strategic initiatives for Colorado State University (CSU).

In addition to her clinical and administrative duties at CSU, Oakley was tapped to be a pioneer member of a suicide prevention task force; she served on the student and employee consultation teams and implemented an integrated behavioral health program.

During her time at the UW, she's already made a mark by expanding UHS mental health services for students.

Badger Parent: What are the most common issues that UW-Madison students are dealing with?

Oakley: Stress is the number-one issue reported by students and can be related to issues such as academic, financial, interpersonal, related to parental expectations, and fears about employment after graduation.

Another is anxiety. This can be related to issues such as fears about the future, feeling isolated or alone, social interactions, and tests or assignments. Some students report a feeling of panic when particular stressors cumulate or when a particular situation they fear gets closer. They may share with you that they feel they are having a break down or feel like they are going crazy.

Depression is significant as it is the number-one contributor to suicide, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for college students. Students may have relationship issues and express concerns about breakups, family problems, roommate concerns, problems with professors, and conflict in friendships. These issues can contribute to students experiencing isolation and poor self-esteem.

Lastly, substance use: We know that a third of student's drinking behaviors result in significant substance abuse problems after graduation. Addressing these issues early on will help students perform better in school and be more successful upon graduation.

BP: What are the best ideas or suggestions for parents who are concerned about mental health and want to support their students?

Oakley: Keep the lines of communication open by letting your student know you are willing to talk about anything. Open communication helps the student feel less isolated and alone when things are not going well.

Focus on behaviors, make observations, and avoid making judgments when your student shares openly with you. Expressing how your student's behavior or your observations impact you provides an opportunity for the student to hear you care about them and their health.

Continued on page 2



Student's Mental Health (continued)

Expect to be rejected if you express a concern. Many students want to be independent and may refuse any attempts that appear to challenge their independence. Tell your student that you realize he or she may feel uncomfortable, but that you are there if he or she ever wants to talk.

Normalize your student's concerns, encourage him or her to seek help, and offer hope. Let your student know that many have difficulties in college with mental health issues and that UW–Madison has a number of resources available (see related article on page 3). Learn about resources ahead of time so that you can speak knowledgeably about them and let them know the resources will help.

BP: It's a difficult subject, but what steps should a parent take when he or she feels that a student is having a severe mental health crisis?

Oakley: If you are concerned about your student's safety, ask about it directly. The number one myth related to suicide is that asking someone about it increases the person's chances of attempting. The opposite is true.

Be direct and ask your student if he or she is thinking about hurting or killing him or herself. This conveys you are willing to talk openly with about a very difficult issue.

If your student endorses having suicidal thoughts, a plan, means, or intent to complete suicide, call UHS at 265-5600 (#9) to consult with a counselor-on-call; in imminent danger situations, call campus police at 608-264-2677.

UHS is available 24 hours a day to consult and to help parents develop a plan for their student's safety. Students can be encouraged to call UHS any time or to come in between the hours of 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. The number to contact a counselor during a mental health crisis is 265-5600 (option #9).

Although we understand that you want your student to succeed and stay in school, there are times when a break may be necessary. Some students find that taking a break from school and getting treatment allows them to come back and perform to their best ability. Students are often hesitant to take a break, but

are more likely to do so if they have parental support.

For more advice on how you can be supportive, as well as for information about services offered at UHS (including consultation appointments, counseling services, self-help, and additional resources), visit: www.uhs.wisc.edu/services/counseling or contact the Parent Program 1-877-262-3977.

Winter Months: How Do Students Stay Motivated?

The Parent Program recently asked students for their best advice for staying motivated during Wisconsin's long winters. Here's a sampling of their responses:



"I'm looking forward to studying in Paris this summer."

– Caroline R.

"I exercise and play racquetball with friends."

– Neil F.

"Winter is great! I go downhill and cross-country skiing with friends."

– Dan P.

"I work out and study with friends."

– Kate E.

"I take long runs and pretend it's a sunny, 80-degree day."

– Sam R.

"I reorganized my entire room to get excited (or try to get excited) about going back to school."

– Katie K.

"I look forward to Badger basketball. Nothing is more motivational than a fired-up Bo Ryan."

– Joanna K.



Key Dates

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Key Dates

February 15

Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) spring/summer open-enrollment deadline

February 16

Deadline for returning University Residence Halls contract

March 7

Fourth-quarter housing payment due

March 12-20

Spring recess

March 18

Furlough day; campus offices closed

March 20

Classes resume

March 25

Last day to drop courses. Last day to withdraw without repayment of aid for spring term

April 12-13

Countdown to Commencement

April 15

Last day to withdraw without academic penalty

New Programs Ease Access to Mental-Health Services

Counseling and Consultation Services, an arm of University Health Services, recently launched two innovative programs designed to ensure quick and easy access to mental-health counseling services for students.

With the new Access system, www.uhs.wisc.edu/services/counseling/getting-started, students can drop in for a same-day initial counseling consultation, instead of scheduling an appointment and possibly waiting several weeks to talk to a counselor.

"Students were understandably frustrated if they had to wait for two weeks just to have an initial consultation about their options," says Danielle Oakley, director of UHS Counseling and Consultation Services. "The Access system will eliminate that time barrier and make it easier for students to ask us for advice and support.

"Parents can suggest an Access visit as the start of the help-seeking process," Oakley adds. "It's an opportunity for students to talk to a professional about their major challenges and for the counselor to help determine what services would be most appropriate for helping address those challenges—whether those are services available at UHS or elsewhere in the community."

The Access system is just one of the new ways that UHS Counseling and Consultation Services is reaching out to serve more students. Another drop-in program, Let's Talk, lets students chat with UHS counselors in

various sites around campus such as the Red Gym, the Student Activity Center, and Ingraham Hall.

"Making members of our staff available outside our counseling center, in locations where students may be working on class projects or hanging out with friends, helps demystify what it means to talk to a counselor," says Amanda Ngola, director of campus-based services for UHS Counseling and Consultation Services. "The more informal atmosphere makes it easier for students to take that first step forward.

"There are no appointments and no paperwork, and visits are in neutral locations," says Ngola. "We want it to be easy to seek support. We want the students to know that we're there and that our doors are always open, whether at Let's Talk or at UHS."

Let's Talk consultations are available Monday through Friday. Times and room numbers can be found online: www.uhs.wisc.edu/services/counseling/lets-talk.

UHS Counseling and Consultation Services include individual, group, and couples counseling; psychiatry services; eating disorder, ADHD, and alcohol and other drug assessments; and referrals to appropriate mental-health resources in the community. A number of wellness services also are available, including yoga and meditation classes, nutrition consultations, and stress-management counseling.

Spring Dean's List Now Online

The Dean's List is among the ways that UW-Madison recognizes the academic excellence of its students. At the conclusion of every semester, each high-achieving student is included on the list and generally receives a letter of recognition from his or her school or college. The honor is also noted on the student's transcript.

To make the list more accessible to students and parents, the Registrar's Office recently launched a new, searchable website of honorees at registrar.wisc.edu/deans_list.htm.

The site will be updated at the conclusion of each semester.

To be eligible for the Dean's List, students must complete a minimum of 12 graded degree credits dur-

ing that semester. Each school or college sets its own GPA requirements to receive honors.

Due to privacy laws, questions about a particular student's eligibility for the Dean's List should come from the student, and should be directed to the academic affairs section of the dean's office in the school or college in which the student is enrolled.

Questions about the website or eligibility can also be directed to deanslist-registrar@em.wisc.edu.

In addition to the new website, University Communications will continue to send notices of Dean's List honorees to local newspapers across the state and country.

Please note that students must have a valid home address on file with the university for this information to reach a hometown newspaper.



Did you know?

The Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery, which opened in December 2010, is a visionary public-private partnership that creates two world-class biomedical research institutes. The first floor, referred to as the Town Center, is open to the public and is designed to provide visitors with a range of activities. This unique space includes three food venues, two media walls, the second-largest collection of Mesozoic plants in the world, hands-on discovery niches, and more. Visit www.discovery.wisc.edu for details.

To change hometown listings, students should log in to the Student Center module of My UW–Madison at my.wisc.edu and select the Personal Information tab.

Announcements are typically sent to the largest-circulation newspaper in the student's home zip code and take several weeks to process after the end of each semester. The spring list will reach newspapers during the week of June 7 for publication in later June.

University Communications also sends a similar list of graduation announcements.

Questions about newspaper publishing schedules are best directed to newspapers. However, resends or problems related to newspaper distribution can be directed to jplucas@wisc.edu.

New Websites for Careers, Scholarships

More than 3,000 internship opportunities are posted on campus each year, in every field of interest, within the university and throughout the world. A new website, Badger Careers at Careers.wisc.edu, centralizes this information across the schools and colleges, easing access for both students and prospective employers.

A second site, Scholarships @UW–Madison, takes a similar approach with scholarship information, and is searchable by keyword or school or college scholarships. Visit: wisc.edu/Scholarships.

Parents Enrichment Fund Helps Library Improvements

Each year, the University of Wisconsin Foundation organizes an effort to support the Parents Enrichment Fund. The mission of the UW Foundation, the fundraising arm of UW–Madison, is to engage those who care about the university and welcome ways to support teaching, research, and outreach programs.

Since 1989, more than 125,000 parents have contributed a total of \$6.2 million to the Parents Enrichment Fund. In recent years, the funds were used to:

- Provide new chairs for group-study and quiet-study areas, extend weekday hours, and create the Open Book Café at College Library, one of the campus's most popular libraries.
- Add a lecture facility in Memorial Library with wireless Internet connections.
- Provide reserve copies of high-use textbooks.
- Create an information commons in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication.
- Create attractive reading areas for three heavily used collections.
- Add more study space and a computer lab to Steenbock Library.
- Purchase several laptops that students may check out through the library.

Students who work at the UW Foundation will be calling parents soon to discuss this important effort. These students are a great resource for connecting with campus, and they will enjoy talking with you about current events, your son or daughter, and the Parents Enrichment Fund–Libraries.



Update: Student Center

As students begin spring semester, it is important to update emergency contact information, become familiar with student privacy rights, and review other information in the Student Center. Information includes tuition accounts, setting up authorized payers, reviewing holds, and applying for graduation. Parents can help be reminding their students to update this information.

Madison Initiative for Undergraduates

UW–Madison students are reaping the rewards of a campuswide effort to boost the value, quality, and affordability of an undergraduate education.

The Madison Initiative for Undergraduates uses a supplemental tuition charge to invest in the quality

of the undergraduate experience, while also vastly expanding the pool of need-based aid available for UW–Madison students and their families.

Now in its second full year, the initiative has achieved the following tangible results:

- 35 projects have been funded
- 54.5 new faculty positions have been added
- 11 new faculty have been hired and are teaching
- 900 students have enrolled in 45 First-year Interest Groups, an increase of 50 percent over Fall 2009
- 6,057 students received grants to offset additional tuition charges, based on family income
- \$5.1 million in need-based financial aid was added in 2009-10
- A series of new programs and services are now operating

To learn more, visit madisoninitiative.wisc.edu.

Career Corner: Exploring Careers through Job Shadowing

Most areas of study do not come with a clear career path. In fact, people no longer go to college to prepare for lifelong careers. The work students do and the skills they learn in their majors prepare them for a wide variety of jobs and opportunities found in an ever-changing job market.

Many students are unsure of what they want to do with their education and how to turn it into a career. Having many opportunities and options available is an exciting prospect, but it can also be daunting as students search for summer internships and full-time positions.

Students can experience an up-close look at a company or industry by “shadowing” professionals through a day on the job. Both the College of Letters & Science Career Services Center and the Business Career Center (BCC) offer job-shadowing opportunities. Job shadowing is a great way for students to network with potential employers and connect with professionals even before interviewing.

The L&S Career Services job-shadowing program takes place primarily during winter recess

and spring break, but can be set up throughout the year. The BCC also has a Sophomore Shadow Program for students in the School of Business. Students can learn more and sign up for job-shadowing opportunities through BuckyNet, by talking to a career advisor, or by visiting www.bus.wisc.edu/career or www.lssaa.wisc.edu/careers.

The Exploration Center offered by the Cross College Advising Service (CCAS) is designed to help students explore majors and careers. The CCAS website offers tools and resources to help students explore how personalities and goals match up with positions inside and outside a field of study. Students may also schedule appointments with career advisors to discuss their questions and concerns. To learn more, visit www.ccas.wisc.edu/explorationcenter.

Students may also network with alumni and discuss careers over dinner through Dinners On Wisconsin, a program sponsored by the Wisconsin Alumni Association. For more information, visit www.uwalumni.com/dinners.

The First-Year Experience

Starting Fresh: Spring-Semester Transitions

Spring semester is an opportunity for students to start fresh — setting new goals academically and socially, seeking out advising to better understand their long-term career goals, and beginning to plan for summer. These spring-semester transitions can seem daunting, but here are some helpful hints to coach your student through the last stretch of the 2010-11 academic year.

As your student continues to mature and evolve into an adult, keep listening, encouraging, and coaching. If your student struggled with academics during fall semester, encourage him or her to access campus resources. House Fellows, in-hall tutors, study groups, and tutoring services such as the **Greater University Tutorial Services (GUTS)** are all excellent resources that are easy to access.

Encourage your student to get to know his or her teaching assistants and professors and to take advantage of office hours. If your student had trouble finding a social niche last fall, encourage him or her to continue reaching out and making friends in classes or in the residence hall, join a student organization, or participate in recreational sports.

Many students begin to consider a major at this point. Keep in mind that only a few academic areas require a student to declare a major during freshman year in order to finish in four years. Many students change their minds and their majors at least once; your student may still be undecided or will want to

change direction. **Cross-College Advising Service** offers a wealth of useful information for students who are undecided or considering changing majors.

Parents play an important role in helping students to explore options. Wren Singer, director of the **Center for the First Year Experience**, advises that these are the best questions you can ask your student: “What classes do you like? What are you good at? What out-of-class learning experiences might give you an idea about an interesting major?” Asking these questions can help your student identify next steps.

In March, students will receive an e-mail that includes the earliest appointment times for summer and fall enrollment. Encourage your student to plan ahead and make an appointment with an academic advisor to discuss course selection well before his or her assigned enrollment time. Even though some students are not required to see an advisor to register, it is always helpful to consult with advisors — either through group advising sessions or a one-on-one meeting — when making course decisions. Parents are discouraged from contacting advisors and actively selecting courses for their students.

It's not too early to start asking your student about plans for the summer: will he or she return home, get a job or internship, or stay in Madison to take classes? These questions will help your student plan ahead and consider different options, and can influence your own summer planning, too.

Wisconsin Idea

Go Big Read, UW–Madison's common reading program, got off to a vigorous start this fall. More than 5,000 copies of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, by Rebecca Skloot, were given away in September at the Chancellor's Convocation for New Students. In addition, all students in participating classes received complimentary books. The book has proven valuable in classrooms across the campus; it was used in 53 courses during the fall semester, from Afro-American studies and history to plant pathology and sociology. This semester, 21 courses are participating in the program, including a course in kinesiology, where the discussion will look at cultural barriers in access to the health care system.

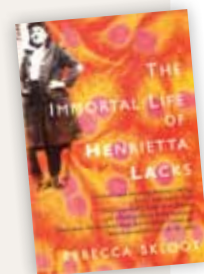
Following upon the success of an “Evening with Rebecca Skloot,” held at the Kohl Center in October, Go Big Read events for the spring semester include a

lecture in March by Harvard University professor Henry Louis Gates, and a day of panels and discussions at the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery in April.

“There is lots of excitement about the book,” says Jeanine Mount, associate dean of Academic Affairs at the School of Pharmacy. “There is so much in it: culture, race, health disparities, doing science, research and ethics.”

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks was named a Notable Book for 2010 by the *New York Times* and the Best Book of 2010 by Amazon.com.

For more about Go Big Read activities on campus, visit www.gobigread.wisc.edu.



BADGER FAMILY SPRING VISIT

APRIL 2011

www.parent.wisc.edu/visit

Badger Family Spring Visit

Badger Family Spring Visit is back! Registration is now open for another activity-filled, family-oriented April. Free or low-cost, family-friendly events are featured throughout the month. Choose a weekend in April that works for you, and take advantage of these entertainment options while enjoying the beauty of springtime in Madison. Here's a sample of the many events taking place:



Wisconsin Film Festival (April 1-3): View more than 150 films, showcased in 10 downtown Madison theaters.

The Peking Acrobats at the Overture Center (April 2): Experience the spellbinding performance of this elite group.

Science Expeditions (April 2): Participate in hands-on explorations of science and technology.

"Redefined" performance (April 9): Listen to the dynamic sound of a UW co-ed, a cappella performance group.

Undergraduate Symposium (April 12): View the displays and presentations that showcase creativity, achievement, research, and service learning by more than 400 students.

Humorology (April 14-16): Enjoy this musical comedy, presented each year by UW's sororities and fraternities.

UW Band Concert (April 14-16): Delight in the extravagant performances of a top collegiate band.

Study Abroad Open House (April 16): Visit the Study Abroad Resource Center to talk with peer advisors and professional staff about study abroad.

Dane County Farmers' Market (April 23 and 30): Shop at the largest producer-only farmers' market in the country.

The Badger Football Annual Spring Game

(April 23): Support the team, Jump Around, and take part in the fifth quarter.

Crazylegs (April 30) Attracting fans of all ages, this run/walk event raises money for Badger Athletics.

Henry Vilas Zoo: Visit many exotic animals at this free, public zoo.

Just by registering, you'll receive a **complimentary welcome bag** filled with Wisconsin giveaway items; coupons for parking, and area shopping and dining; and much more.

Don't miss out on these events and attractions, as well as the opportunity to connect with your student. View the complete list of weekend events and reserve your welcome bag by registering at: www.parent.wisc.edu/visit.

Discounted hotel reservations can be made by visiting www.parent.wisc.edu/visit; click on "hotel reservations."

For more information about this event, call 1-877-262-3977 or e-mail your questions to parent@uwmad.wisc.edu.

See you in April!

