

Vandal Parent Newsletter



December 21, 2010

Happy Holidays!

Final exam week ended with a few tired smiles, some high fives, and quick exits from campus. Parking lots are now empty spaces and campus walkways are deserted. It is amazing how quickly this bustling place becomes very quiet.

I hope that your Vandal is safely home with you as you prepare for holiday celebrations.

Fall semester came to a good end with final exams and a flurry of activity. Winter Commencement took place on Saturday, December 11th, in the Kibbie Dome as 746 new graduates completed their degrees. It feels a little strange to have Commencement before final exams, but it was a wonderful ceremony and warm celebration for families. The night before Commencement, a very large Holiday concert in the Kibbie Dome featured more than 600 voices, a jazz band, an orchestra, and even the Vandal Marching Band.

Fall semester grades are posted on your Vandal's web transcript. Instructors had until Tuesday, December 21st to turn in the grades so most grades should be available. It is time for good conversations about academic progress and career goals.

Encourage your Vandal to check his/her Vandal e-mail account during the vacation. There is important University business taking place in the next few weeks, and much of the direct communication takes place by e-mail. For example, notices about spring semester billing, spring semester opening activities, and communication about academic status will be sent to your Vandal.

In the last year, we have created several programs and initiatives to more aggressively urge students to use resources and strategies to improve their academic success. These actions are yielding good results as fewer students are dropping out and fewer students are being placed on probation. If your Vandal isn't performing at a successful level, then urge him/her to meet with his/her academic advisor, a counselor, or staff at the Academic Support Center. Students are often reluctant to ask for help until their situation reaches a crisis. Often the core issue is about being uncertain about a career path and being in an academic major that really doesn't inspire. Once students find their passion, their concerns about lack of motivation and poor focus often vanish.

Parents of freshmen may want to urge their student to participate in the SOAR program if fall semester did not go well. The SOAR program is for freshmen who have been placed on academic probation after their first semester. It is a one-day intervention to help freshmen create action plans to be more successful spring semester. Students will meet privately with an "academic success coach" and then will attend sessions about time management, academic support services, and academic success strategies. At the end of the day, they will have created an action plan for improvement.

SOAR takes place on Tuesday, January 11th. There is no charge for SOAR. Students can register for SOAR at www.uidaho.edu/soar, by contacting the Dean of Students Office at 208-885-6757, or by e-mailing us through askjoe@uidaho.edu. If your freshman is placed on probation, then urge them to participate in SOAR.

The University of Idaho will be open during most of the holiday season. We will be closed from December 24th until January 3rd.

Spring semester classes begin on **Wednesday**, January 12th. Our residence halls will open on Sunday, January 9th at noon.

You may find the winter break holiday too long for you and your Vandal. You may want to schedule a long overdue wisdom tooth extraction or have some odd jobs ready. There is nothing like a few days of crummy jobs and some well timed nagging to help them be motivated to come back to campus and hit the books. There are some activities that make school look pretty attractive.

During winter break, approximately 30 UI students will be engaged in international service. One team will be going to Ghana and the other to Chile on December 27th and will return in mid-January. Our students who are going to Chile will help a community rebuild from the earthquakes that devastated parts of the country earlier this year. The team that will go to Ghana will work to improve a school for children living in poverty. These students will do much good and will be significantly changed by these experiences. They will simply view the world differently and will learn that they can make a difference. Go Vandals!

This fall semester was particularly positive. Students seemed to be healthier and indicators of academic success are improving. You have been significant partners with our faculty and staff by connecting your Vandals to crucial resources and support services. Thank you for your partnership. It is time to get a little rest and prepare for spring semester.

I wish you and your family warm Holiday Greetings.

Bruce Pitman

Vice Provost for Student Affairs /Dean of Students

The logo for the University of Idaho, featuring the text "University of Idaho" in a serif font, with "University" in a smaller size above "of Idaho". The text is in a dark brown color.

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