Dear Illinois Parents and Family Members,

I want to extend a warm welcome to you and your students to the University of Illinois community! We look forward to the opportunity to assist our students along their journey of academic and personal growth. As the parent of two college students, I recognize that a child going to college is a significant transition in the lives of both students and their families’ marked by great excitement and hopefulness, as well as some feelings of anxiety and apprehension. While it is almost certain that your students will encounter some obstacles during their college experience, it is important to remember that the process of navigating these challenges is often what promotes growth and the acquisition of important academic and life skills. Because the Office of the Dean of Students (ODOS) wants to support your students as best we can, I’m writing to inform you about the ways we can assist them and partner with you, particularly during times of stress, as well as to identify practices and key campus resources which may help your student be successful.

Working with the Office of the Dean of Students

The Office of the Dean of Students is committed to serving students and helping them to develop skills that will be essential to their success at the University of Illinois and beyond, including being engaged, self-directed, and able to function autonomously and advocate on their own behalf. The various units in the Office of the Dean of Students contribute to this effort in different ways. However, the unit that is most directly charged with educating students about campus resources, policy and procedures, and assisting them in the management of urgent situations or crises is the Student Assistance Center (SAC). Students may call or walk in to the SAC any time during business hours to speak with the dean on duty who will assist them.

We are student-centered in our work, and treat Illinois students as the adults they are striving to become. Our philosophy and federal law (See FERPA- [http://registrar.illinois.edu/ferpa](http://registrar.illinois.edu/ferpa)) require all university units to respect students’ rights to privacy and to make independent decisions about their academic and personal lives. While we are available to offer general guidance and recommendations to you regarding any concerns you may have about your students, we do not disclose specific information about students’ educational records, including academic status or performance, discipline cases, or health information.* Although our standard practice is to work directly with our students, there are rare and extraordinary circumstances in which I, or a member of my staff, will need to contact you. Please encourage your students to list and update parent and/or other emergency contact information in the Enterprise Self-Service System in the event that I need to reach you.

Helpful Practices for Students and Families

It is important for students and parents to understand that many of the basic expectations and norms of this University community may be quite different from high school. As you shift your role from that of caretaker to mentor and coach, as we hope you will, we hope that you will challenge and support your students to recognize and develop the skills they will need to be successful in this environment. Illinois students are expected to: actively seek out information, communicate needs and concerns effectively, and in a manner that does not disrupt or threaten members of the campus community, identify and seek out available resources, understand and abide by the rules outlined in the Student Code of Conduct ([http://studentcode.illinois.edu/](http://studentcode.illinois.edu/)), and accept responsibility and consequences for their choices. It is essential that students understand that while there are a great many privileges associated with being a member of the University of Illinois community, there are also important responsibilities.
I would encourage you to discuss expectations regarding how and how often you and your students will communicate. As students become increasingly engaged in their academic and social lives at the University, it is common that they also become less available for and/or desire less frequent contact. Having a communication plan in place will, hopefully, reduce unnecessary worry about the well-being and safety of your students. Given that they may change residences several times over the course of their college career, you will want to maintain updated local address information for them so that you can share that information in an emergency. Similarly, it is important to know that the only way for officials of the University to locate students in the event of an emergency, is via the local address information provided in the Enterprise Self Service System, which is also the system they use to register for classes. Please encourage them to update their information each time they change residences, and to enter emergency contact information in the system so that we know who they want notified in the event of a health or other emergency.

Some additional practices we encourage among our students and hope you will underscore are to:

Engage in Good Self-Care (e.g., sleep, eat well, exercise, proactively manage ongoing or emerging physical or mental health issues, balance work and play, consider impact of mood altering substances); Address Issues as they Emerge and Before they Become Crises; Ask for Help when you Need It; Seek out Campus Resources; Proactively Communicate with your Professors and Keep Key People Informed about your Plans (e.g., let your roommate and housing staff know if you will be off campus for an extended period of time, discuss needs to miss classes with your professors in advance, inform your family if you will be unavailable for a period of time or are required, need or want to stop out from school, etc.); Practice Resilience and Remember that You can Recover from any Set-Back or Failure in College or Life.

Important Campus Resources

There are many resources available to assist your students with some of the more common problems that college students face, such as establishing social connection, interpersonal conflicts with roommates/friends, clarifying academic interests and meeting rigorous academic standards. And while we continuously work to foster a caring and safe campus community, it is important to be aware that the University is not immune to any of the problems which plague our society at large, including serious health and mental health problems, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual assault and other crimes. Despite our best efforts, we are all subject to unfortunate experiences in life; the best we can do is encourage students to take precautions to try to reduce their vulnerability and risk of harm, and urge them to make use of relevant resources to address problems as they emerge.

For questions about university policy and procedures, academic concerns or campus resources and how to access them, students may contact Student Assistance Center in the Office of the Dean of Students. Students in need of academic or other accommodations due to a chronic health condition or disability (visible or invisible) or temporary medical condition which impedes academic functioning (e.g., mononucleosis, concussion) may register with Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES). DRES also offers longer term counseling services, academic support and case management for registered students. Those seeking general counseling or psychiatric services may contact the Counseling Center, McKinley Health Center. These two resources, along with the Women’s Resources Center can also provide confidential support after a sexual assault or domestic violence incident. To learn more about sexual misconduct support, response and prevention on our campus visit At Illinois WE CARE (http://wecare.illinois.edu/).
Crimes may be reported to the University of Illinois Police and/or the Police Departments of Champaign or Urbana. Students who want to engage the University discipline system may call the Office of Student Conflict Resolution to report any violations of the Student Code of Conduct or to seek mediation services to help resolve conflicts between students. Students who live in the Residence Halls are encouraged to reach out to their Resident Hall Advisors (students) for support for minor issues or their Resident Hall Directors (professional, live-in staff) for more serious concerns.

In closing, I invite you to peruse the Office of the Dean of Students website http://www.odos.uiuc.edu/ as well as the sites of other important campus resources. We look forward to having your students at Illinois in the fall semester!

Sincerely,

Ken Ballom
Associate Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign