MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It is hard to believe that the Parents Program will celebrate our fourth anniversary in March 2014. It seems as though each year has passed by more quickly than the last. Each summer, we begin by welcoming new families through New Student Orientation and Fall Arrival. Not long after, we see many of you returning to State College for Parents & Families Weekend. Now, we are busy preparing to welcome families who begin their Penn State journey in January and planning for next year. Through it all, we continue to spend a majority of time working one-on-one with parents (and by extension your students) to connect them to resources on campus.

Thank you to the more than 9,000 parents and family members who joined us for Parents & Families Weekend. We hope you enjoyed the many events, performances, faculty lectures, and information sessions that were held on Friday October 4 – Sunday, October 6. We are now analyzing your feedback, which will inform our changes for next year. For those unable to attend, we hope you will be able to spend time with your students during Thanksgiving or Winter Break. And, we hope you consider joining us for Parents & Families Weekend 2014, which will be held on October 10 – 12, 2014.

As we head into the final stretch of fall semester, this issue highlights academic advising and tutoring resources as well as on- and off-campus housing, all of which may be relevant topics for your students right now. We encourage you to share these resources as your students come to you for advice.

Please continue to reach out to our office as needed. In the meantime, our best to you during this holiday season.

Jennifer Mallen
Director, Parents Program

JOIN US:
Parents Council Applications Now Available

Each year we welcome a new cohort of parents to the Parents Council. We are currently accepting applications from parents of first-year, transfer, and change-of-campus students. Limited spaces may also be available for parents of returning students. For more information, please see page 7. The priority application deadline is December 6.
ENCOURAGING STUDENTS TO WORK WITH THEIR ACADEMIC ADVISERS
By Deborah Oakes, Senior Undergraduate Studies Adviser

Family support, encouragement, and trust are critical gifts for students to have in college as they increasingly make decisions for themselves, learn how to navigate a large institution’s processes, and begin to manage their own education. In addition to providing support and encouragement, parents can engage their students in instructive conversations by becoming familiar with important educational resources and guiding their students toward experts and tools that can assure their academic and personal success at Penn State and beyond.

Student development and academic decision making
College clearly represents a life-changing stage during which undergraduate students begin appreciating and articulating their own unique journeys. It’s a time of significant personal growth and independence but also a time when students can and should take advantage of professionals, who can guide them through important academic decision-making steps and teach them what a full educational experience means as well as how to customize that experience for themselves. Penn State’s academic advising resources offer students these important opportunities and more.

According to University Faculty Senate policy, “The objectives of the University’s academic advising program are to help advisees identify and achieve their academic goals, to promote their intellectual discovery, and to encourage students to take advantage of both in-and out-of-class educational opportunities in order that they become self-directed learners and decision makers.”

Working with an adviser
An important component of a student’s total academic experience is the relationship he or she forms with an academic adviser, who can help undergraduates learn how to explore majors and minors in existing and emerging areas of interest, develop goals, schedule appropriate courses, and navigate Penn State’s academic opportunities, policies, procedures, and deadlines. Parents can encourage their students to meet regularly with their advisers (at least once or twice every semester), prepare for these appointments, and keep their adviser informed about any concerns and questions along the way or any changes in their academic interests.

Meetings, discussions, and decisions borne out of effective relationships with advisers can help students articulate their goals and plans as well as learn how to advocate for themselves while they find, understand, and utilize an institution’s resources and engage in meaningful events and opportunities. Your student’s involvement in and out of the classroom can translate into real-world experiences and help him or her develop valuable interpersonal skills, both of which serve students well when they enter the work force and become productive, contributing members of the global community.

Your student’s right to privacy
Though at times you may feel certain concerns about your student warrant phone calls to his or her adviser to ask questions or seek reassurance, it is important to remember that the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) gives students in post-secondary institutions the right to disclose their own educational records, meaning advisers cannot discuss their grades or progress with a third party without the student’s documented permission. Advisers can, however, explain policies and procedures in a general sense and offer information to parents and families about resources available on campus. We always encourage students to keep the lines of communication open with their parents and believe strongly that students are most successful when they have strong relationships with their families. With this in mind and to support students’ growing independence and self-awareness, it is usually in your student’s best interests to encourage him or her to personally contact an adviser to discuss any issues of concern.

Academic advising resources
Penn State maintains a number of valuable resources that can assist students, advisers, and families seeking guidance about academic policies. These and other sources of help can provide both context and details surrounding your student’s academic experience during the semester.

Academic calendar
Parents and families can follow the University’s academic calendar and note important dates, such as deadlines to drop a course or when to file for a conflict final exam or withdraw from the semester, as well as dates when classes begin and end. You can use this information to remind your student to be aware of certain dates or prompt him or her to take action.

Academic advisers and advising centers
While academic advising at Penn State is not a mandatory process, advisers and advising centers continually reach out to students and urge them to make appointments. College advising centers offer drop-in advising opportunities, too, for students who have quick questions; and advisers also welcome emails from students whose concerns or questions can be resolved with short responses. Advising centers and/or colleges also routinely publish news that highlights deadlines, information sessions, special opportunities, and other items of interest and relay them by various means: email, website postings, Facebook, Twitter, other social media, newswire announcements, flyers, etc.
MajorQuest

The majority of students entering an undergraduate program in higher education come to campus with some uncertainty about what they would like to study. Many who begin with specific goals in mind discover or develop new interests that take them in different directions than originally planned. Academic advisers are positioned well to engage students in continual conversations about opportunities to explore options before choosing a major. One exploratory tool that can assist advisers and students relate interests to majors is called MajorQuest, which prompts them to select areas of interest from a menu or enter key words that describe what they might like to study. MajorQuest then sorts and filters Penn State’s 160-plus majors and lists those that include all selected areas of interest. Each major in the list of results also expands to reveal links to important resources: the Undergraduate Bulletin description of the major, the major’s website, its entrance-to-major requirements and recommended academic plan, as well as related student clubs and organizations your student can join.

After using MajorQuest, students can and should discuss the results in person with an academic adviser. Ongoing conversations with advisers can help individual students build meaningful programs of study.

Partnering with your student’s adviser

Advisers routinely partner with parents and families of students and are happy to discuss how you can best support your student as he or she adjusts to college life, explores majors, gets involved on campus, and starts to manage his or her own academic goals. Feel free to use the resources above to learn more about the University and please encourage your student to meet with his or her academic adviser often to plan and discuss ways to experience a full Penn State education and smoothly progress toward graduation.

STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

My experience with advising at Penn State has been unique in that I have been a part of two separate departments. At the beginning of my junior year, I switched from an International Politics major to an Economics major. Despite the transition, my new adviser immediately contacted me to discuss my long-term goals. With his assistance, we developed a broad plan for my final two years at Penn State, including course requirements, research and teaching opportunities, important discipline-related extracurricular activities, and post-graduation options. This approach has been tremendously beneficial: since we first met in my junior year, I have completed all requirements to earn honors in Economics, held both research and teaching positions in the Economics department, and most recently accepted a full-time position with PwC.

Whenever I speak to incoming students, I stress the importance of maintaining a relationship with your adviser. In my opinion, my college experience was not focused enough until I had that discussion at the beginning of my junior year. I strongly encourage others to establish this connection even sooner.”

-- Michael, Class of 2014

I came to Penn State my freshman year as an engineering major, but unsure of which type of engineering that I wanted to pursue. I was assigned an adviser within the college and went to her a couple of times to get advice on which classes to take. She was helpful in helping me get my prerequisites completed, but I definitely think it is important to have a firm grasp on your schedule and use an adviser as a resource to ensure you are on the right path.

I found that it was really helpful for me to make connections with advisers or professors in a couple of the disciplines that I was interested in. Because of their expertise in the field, those professors were able to give me detailed advice and examples of what previous students have done. I think that this is especially important if your student is in the Division of Undergraduate Studies and working their way to entering a college. If your student has their heart set on a specific major, or if they are unsure of what they want to do, they should utilize the resources here at Penn State. Whether that is their assigned adviser, a professor or other faculty, they are here to help your student and ensure that your student makes the best academic choices.”

--Lauren, Class of 2014
If your student is paying for a tutor or wants you to pay for one, say this with a wink and a smile: “And why are you not the one doing the tutoring?!” Then try asking these simple questions, the same ones your parents probably asked you, and they’re still valid:

1. Have you talked with your instructor?
2. Have you invited anyone to study with you?
3. What tuition-supported tutoring and study group options have you explored?

Why start with the instructor? Well, here’s how you might answer: That person knows the most about the learning objectives and how they will be assessed, so talking with the instructor before or after class or during office hours, or sending a note asking for an appointment is a logical first step. Keep it simple—write down a few questions, and take your class materials (textbook, homework, quiz) with you. Yes, you may be nervous, but once you break the ice, you’ll be more relaxed. Before you say goodbye, be sure to ask who else is available to help you. You may be surprised by how many resources are available and how easy they are to access. If this visit is not entirely satisfactory, don’t be discouraged. Persistence and effort are more than half of all learning.

Why ask someone to study with me? The classic answer: If the material challenges you, it will challenge others as well. You may find you know more about some things than your study partner(s), and less about others. Together, you can ask better questions about what you don’t understand than you could by yourself, and that act of asking good questions is in itself constructive. It may also be easier to get started if you have a scheduled time and place to meet and do homework, study for a quiz, or talk about the reading you’ve been asked to prepare.

What “free” tutoring is available on campus? Parents may genuinely need some help answering this one, so here is my stock response: Penn State Learning has a comprehensive new website at http://PennStateLearning.psu.edu/ that provides tutoring and guided study group resources by subject. Just select the appropriate subject icon in the alphabetical list provided, from Accounting to Writing. Each subject page also alerts you to any department or college tutoring resources that may be available elsewhere on campus. If you don’t find the exact subject you need, see if it is under a broader icon—for example, Chemistry can be found under the Sciences icon. If you’re stumped, go to “Contact Us” and submit your question. While on the “Contact Us” page, you may also apply to be a Penn State Learning peer tutor or receptionist by selecting “Employment”: http://pennstatelearning.psu.edu/contact-us.

Employment brings us back full circle to the first humorous response I suggested you give to a son or daughter who wants you to pay for tutoring. Anyone who enjoys a subject and has a good understanding of it can, with due preparation, learn to tutor others in that subject. So by asking, “Why be tutored, when you could tutor?” you are encouraging your student to consider how much more he or she could learn by becoming a tutor. Of course, these are not mutually exclusive activities! Tutors in one subject often seek tutoring in another subject when they are not on the clock. Tutoring is great preparation for almost any career, and employers like to see it on a resume. Many of our tutors and study group leaders have told us their tutoring helped them get into post-graduate programs or provided them an extra boost in job interviews. So don’t let you student miss the irony of your first response, even if the immediate concern is finding a tutor.
Student Testimonial

I went to Penn State Learning last year for help before a calculus exam last fall. In the spring, I went to a review session for Math 220, where they went through an entire exam and answered questions. The thing I like about Penn State Learning is that it is readily available and free for students and has a lot to offer. Sure, you could go to a pay for service downtown, but for weekly tutoring or review sessions, they can get REALLY expensive.”

-- Meghan, Class of 2016

Housing Resources: On-Campus Housing Contract Requests for 2014-15
By Megan Berry, Marketing Project Manager

Living on campus puts students in the heart of all the action. They build long-lasting friendships, discover new passions, and are near events, classes, and numerous dining options. It’s all at their fingertips, just a short walk from the residence halls.

Housing Contract Process
The eLiving Housing Contract System (www.eLiving.psu.edu) opened for requests on October 6. While requests for Eastview Terrace, Nittany Apartments, Suites, and single rooms can no longer be made, students still have time to request a Housing Contract for a residence hall or supplemental housing by request.

If your student is interested in living on campus in a residence hall next year, he or she can submit a Contract Request.

• Requests must be submitted by Noon on January 23.
• Housing Contract offers for regular and supplemental housing are made in three rounds through a random lottery. It is not first come, first served.
• Not all students who request a Housing Contract are guaranteed an offer.
• Some students who request a Housing Contract for the residence hall lottery will receive an offer for supplemental housing.

If your student receives a Housing Contract offer, it must be accepted before the deadline indicated on the offer.

• Expired contract offers cannot be reissued.
• Students who receive a Housing Contract may indicate housing preferences when accepting the offer. Preferences include housing area, building, room type, roommate, and Campus Meal Plan level. Housing preferences are not guaranteed. Preferences can be modified until noon on April 21.
• After the student has accepted the Housing Contract, he or she may add their name to an internal Waitlist for other housing options, such as Special Living Options (www.slo.psu.edu) Eastview, Nittany Apartments, suites, or singles, when the Waitlists open in eLiving at noon on Friday, February 7. Students will be reassigned as space becomes available.

Students who do not receive a contract offer will automatically be placed on a Supplemental Housing (http://www.housing.psu.edu/housing/housing/supplemental-housing.cfm) Waitlist. While on the Waitlist, students can pursue the variety of off-campus living options in downtown State College and the surrounding areas. The Office for Off-Campus Living (www.studentaffairs.psu.edu/offcampus) will host a Housing Fair on Saturday, February 1, 2014 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the HUB.

Living on campus is very popular and a one-of-a-kind experience. Your student will make friendships and memories that will last a lifetime. Make sure your student doesn’t miss out on the opportunity to request an on-campus Housing Contract through eLiving (www.eLiving.psu.edu).

For more information on housing and the process timeline, visit www.UPcontract.psu.edu. Additional information about roommate requests, the self-assignment process, and the Waitlist process is also available on the website.
OFF-CAMPUS LIVING RESOURCES TO ASSIST STUDENTS IN THEIR SEARCH PROCESS

By Shaina Abrams-Kornblum, Parents Program Graduate Assistant

The off-campus living process could be overwhelming for students and parents, but with proper planning it does not have to be. There is a lot of information to sift through. If you are a parent of a first year student, you may have already started to ask your student about housing options for next year. Understandably, parents do not want to commit to a lease or become a co-signer unless they fully understand what they have been asked to sign and the same should be true for your students. We hope you will encourage your students to do the research on property management companies and area landlords. We want your students to feel they are making informed decisions about their off-campus housing choices. As such, we want to share with you some resources at University Park to help you and your students find the right fit.

The Office of Off-Campus Living (http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/offcampus/) has great resources for both parents and students. The office is knowledgeable about local resources and hosts its own online classifieds section. The online classifieds section allows you to search for housing, sublets, and roommates as well as create your own post in the search for housing and roommates. Each spring, the office sponsors a housing fair, which will take place on Saturday, February 1, 2014 from 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. in Alumni Hall at the HUB-Robeson Center. The Housing Fair offers students the chance to speak with property management companies and landlords face to face and learn more about living off-campus.

Student Legal Services (SLS) offers an informative Landlord/Tenant Learning Module. The module covers everything from getting a lease to tenants’ rights and responsibilities and can be viewed at https://www.sa.psu.edu/workshops/SLS/Tenant/player.html and I would encourage both parents and students to review it before signing a lease. SLS is also available to sit down with your student and review their lease. Please visit their website at http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/legalservices/ to learn more about their services and how to schedule an appointment.

Living off-campus can be a great learning experience, but it is important for students to be informed since a lease is a legally binding contract. We know your students see you as a primary support in their housing process and we hope that these starting points will help you in guiding your student as they begin to explore their options for living off-campus.

Off-Campus Housing Fair
Saturday, February 1, 2014
11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Alumni Hall,
HUB-Robeson Center
In August 2010 we brought our son, Mike, to Penn State to begin his college experience as a freshman. As we helped him move into Simmons Hall, watched him get acquainted with his roommate and joined him for lunch at the HUB, our apprehensions melted away. He settled comfortably into this new home which had been expertly arranged for him by the school.

Through the next two years, we enjoyed visiting Mike in Simmons Hall. In sophomore year, Mike began to formulate a plan to live off-campus and he and his future roommates searched off-campus for accommodations to meet their needs. We were very impressed with the support they received from the Office of Off-Campus Living, particularly the annual Housing Fair. This is a great way to learn about moving off-campus. Landlords, property managers, etc. come together in one forum to answer questions about local housing options. After careful consideration, they chose an apartment. The Office of Off-Campus Living continued to support them with detailed information on everything from roommate and lease agreements to security deposits and credit checks.

In August 2012, we helped Mike move to his off-campus abode. It was rewarding to see him take on this new responsibility with such confidence. His cooking skills have dramatically evolved - an unexpected benefit of this new arrangement! He and his roommates have happily occupied the same apartment for both junior and senior years.

In his senior year, Mike secured a spot in the parking garage for an incremental fee and brought his car to campus. He has enjoyed being the driver for various off-campus adventures. His decision to move off-campus has been a valuable learning opportunity that has prepared him for life after college. As graduation approaches, I know he is more than ready for the challenges ahead.

By Karen Huwyler, Parents Council
Parent of Mike, Class of 2014

My son, Pete, pledged a fraternity during his freshman year, and from day one he knew he wanted to move into the fraternity house for his sophomore year. He is happily living in the house now, but the process was a bit “loose” for my taste.

As I saw Penn State announcements about Off-Campus Housing Fairs and other programs in the Office of Off-Campus Living, I kept asking my son for info about living in the fraternity. Was his spot guaranteed? What was the cost? What were the deadlines? Details were sketchy and I had to relax some of my control-freak tendencies. I hoped for the best and kept asking questions.

Eventually, all was revealed. Some of the things we learned. In his fraternity:

- Spots in the house were determined by “house points,” which are awarded for participation in various activities, attendance at meetings, and other things.
- Furniture in the rooms is varied – there are beds, for sure, but that’s about all that’s guaranteed. Dressers, desks, futons, chairs, shelves...all these were up for grabs. Our son “grabbed” some things and we got others at Wal-Mart and thrift stores.
- His room fee includes meals. We did not purchase any meal plan on campus, but made sure he had LionCash for when he doesn’t have time to return to the house to eat.
- Fraternity life offers even more distractions than residence hall life — everyone around you is a friend and someone is always goofing off. More studying takes place outside the house (library, etc.).
- Those fraternity houses are gorgeous on the outside...mixed on the inside. What can I say...they TRY to keep them clean!

Of course, these comments only apply to my son’s fraternity...others may be different... so be sure to keep asking questions and have a little faith in your student!

By, Laurie Goodman, Parents Council
Parent of Pete, Class of 2016

The Parents Program is currently accepting applications for membership to the Parents Council.

The Council provides general guidance for the Parents Program, the Vice President for Student Affairs, and the Vice President and Dean for Undergraduate Education, by providing perspectives on student and parent issues. Members also volunteer at various University events throughout the year to share their experience with other Penn State families. To learn more visit parents.psu.edu/involvement.shtml.

The Parents Council strives to recruit a diverse group of parents and family members who reflect the undergraduate student body. In particular, we are looking for parents of first-year, transfer, and change-of-campus students. The Council meets twice annually at University Park campus. Limited spaces may also be available for parents of returning students. The priority application deadline for the 2013-2014 academic year is December 6, 2013.
KEY DATES:

Academic Calendar: Fall ‘13

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date &amp; Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall Break: Residence halls CLOSE on Sunday 11/24 at 10am</td>
<td>November 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residence halls open at 10:00 am</td>
<td>December 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring Tuition Due</td>
<td>December 6</td>
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<td>Classes End</td>
<td>December 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study Days</td>
<td>December 14-15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finals week</td>
<td>December 16-20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commencement</td>
<td>December 20-21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall semester ends: Residence halls close on Saturday 12/21 at 4:00 pm</td>
<td>December 21</td>
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Spring ‘14

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<tr>
<td>Residence halls open Saturday 1/11 at 8am for NEW students</td>
<td>January 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residence halls open Sunday 1/12 at 10am for RETURNING students</td>
<td>January 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring Semester: classes begin</td>
<td>January 13</td>
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<td>Martin Luther King Day: NO CLASSES</td>
<td>January 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring Break: Residence halls CLOSE Saturday 3/8 at 12pm</td>
<td>March 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring Break: NO CLASSES</td>
<td>March 9-14</td>
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<td>Spring Break: Residence halls OPEN on Sunday 3/16 at 10am</td>
<td>March 16</td>
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<td>Classes End</td>
<td>May 2</td>
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<td>Study Days</td>
<td>May 3-4</td>
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<td>Finals Week</td>
<td>May 5-9</td>
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<td>Commencement</td>
<td>May 9-11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring Semester Ends: Residence halls close Sunday 5/11 at 4pm</td>
<td>May 11</td>
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Community Events:

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<tr>
<td>Downtown Tree Lighting Ceremony</td>
<td>November 21, 2013</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.visitpennstate.org/calendar/index.php?event=Downtown_Tree_Lighting_Ceremony_2274">http://www.visitpennstate.org/calendar/index.php?event=Downtown_Tree_Lighting_Ceremony_2274</a></td>
<td>5:30 - 7:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Menorah Lighting and Community-Wide Hanukah Celebration</td>
<td>December 9, 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.statecollegepa.us/">www.statecollegepa.us/</a></td>
<td>5:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Santa Express</td>
<td>December 20 --</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.bellefontetrain.org">www.bellefontetrain.org</a></td>
<td>6:00 - 8:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>noon, 2:00 p.m.,</td>
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<td>4:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Night State College</td>
<td>December 31 and</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.firstnightstatecollege.com/">www.firstnightstatecollege.com/</a></td>
<td>January 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>THON</td>
<td>February 21 - 23, 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.thon.org">www.thon.org</a></td>
<td>6:00 p.m.</td>
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For more information on community events, please visit the Central PA Convention and Visitor’s Bureau site at http://visitpennstate.org and click on the “local events” link.

Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity and the diversity of its workforce. This publication is available in alternative media upon request. U.Ed.STA 12-82