

# Parent & Family Connection

A newsletter for Parents and Families about Students by Higher Education professionals. Here to inform and update you on SMU.

## We Are Your Student's Best Resource. Here's How...

We consider parents and families to be partners in their students' SMU experience. This newsletter, and other information posted to the Parent and Family webpage ([www.smu.edu/housing/parents](http://www.smu.edu/housing/parents)) will provide you with the knowledge and resources to answer your student's questions and guide them in the right direction when navigating the SMU campus. Some of the best available resources for your SMU student are the staff present in our residential communities.

Residence Hall Directors (for residence halls) and Residence Community Directors (for apartment communities) are full-time, Master's level professionals who live-in and oversee a residential community. Each of these staff members is dedicated to student learning and growth outside of the classroom. In addition to the training and knowledge gained from their Master's degrees, Residence Hall and Community Directors are trained to connect students to the many resources and opportunities that are available at SMU. They are also responsible to supervise the student staff in each community, serve as conduct officers, and inform students of and enforce policy.

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Residence Life and Student Housing (RLSH) also employ live-in staff that include Graduate Greek House Directors and Student Staff. If your student lives anywhere on the SMU campus, there is a staff member that is available to assist them. Student staff are divided into three specialized positions. There are Resident Assistants (RAs) in the Residence Halls, Academic Resident Assistants (ARAs) who focus on academic initiatives in Residence Halls (see more on page 3 about this staff role), and Community Assistants (CAs) in areas including Hawk, Martin and Moore; Service House; Daniel House; Multicultural House; and the SMU Apartments. These student staff members participate in two full weeks of training and then undergo a full year of hands-on learning while working in residential communities. These high achieving student leaders are your students' best resource on campus.

Navigating the University environment can be a challenge, particularly for first-year students. We encourage you to direct your student to get to know their residential community staff, participate in programs, and get involved on-campus. Finding these linkages, and using resources to the best of his/her ability, can ease your student's transition and forge a sense of belonging with the SMU campus. If your student is an upper class student, encourage them to find opportunities that will allow them to further develop their leadership skills and enhance their academic performance on campus. One of the best things about SMU are the many amazing opportunities provided to students. Encourage them to seek out these opportunities—and if they are unsure where to start—our staff can help. We wish you and your student a successful 2009-10 academic year.

The Department of Residence Life and Student Housing is committed to *creating residential communities that empower residents to value learning, citizenship, and leadership.* You may recognize this statement as a portion of the mission statement that is prominent on the department's website and within our literature. The focus that we provide related to these areas is often referred to as the "Four Cornerstones," which encompass community, citizenship, leadership, and learning. A primary focus in each of our residential communities is made to provide programming, encourage conversations, and facilitate an environment that helps students to grow in each of these areas. Residence Life & Student Housing further works *to advance the goals and objectives of the University,* meaning that staff and students actively promote the academic focus of the University. Clear learning outcomes have been developed to help students know what they will learn while living in a residential community. These outcomes are listed to the right. Encourage your student to be involved in all that their community has to offer—they may be learning more than they think!

## Mission Statement

To advance the goals and objectives of the University by creating residential communities that empower residents to value learning, citizenship, and leadership in comfortable, well-maintained facilities.

## Guiding Principles

- Student focused policies and procedures
- Integrity in all business practices
- Provide services that add value to the residential experience
- Responsive to the internal and external customer
- Balance the good of one with the good of the whole
- Provide experiences that help guide students' success through the University's academic environment
- Treat all people with dignity and respect
- Provide qualified, well-trained staff who enjoy serving others
- Anticipate and plan for change
- Proper balance of challenge and support for staff and students
- Clean, well-maintained facilities
- Provide opportunities for professional and personal growth

## Learning Outcomes

Residents will learn...

- ...To articulate their strengths
- ... To successfully utilize resources, programs and services available on campus
- ...To take responsibility for their actions
- ... To be good citizens of their residential communities, the SMU community, and the world at large
- ...To develop basic life skills
- ... To demonstrate tolerance and appreciation for diverse cultures and to respect differences

## Talking Points

Each issue of the *Parent and Family Connection* will contain suggested talking points for you and your SMU student. These topics will be pertinent to the timing of the academic calendar and reflect things that particularly a first-year student would be experiencing during their SMU career. We encourage you to utilize these suggestions as conversation starters.

### Safety and security

Southern Methodist University works in partnership with students to facilitate safety and security on campus. Students should ensure that they are following safety guidelines, such as not propping exterior doors or allowing students to “tailgate” into their residential community. SMU PD is active in monitoring campus safety. Students may provide information to SMU PD anonymously through the silent witness tip line at 214.768.2TIP.

### Alcohol and Drugs

The challenge of navigating the college environment is an ongoing journey for all students. Peer pressure and the desire to formulate new friend relationships can place pressure on students to make decisions about alcohol and drugs. Talk regularly with your student about their knowledge of student alcohol and drug use, their participation in use of such substances, and how to find other avenues to participate in SMU. All students are encouraged to follow the law, SMU policies, and to be responsible citizens.

**Call for Help Program.** If any student is in need of medical assistance, we encourage them to call for help immediately. More information about the Call for Help Program can be found at <http://smu.edu/studentaffairs/alcohol/callforhelp.asp>.

### Academics

**Class attendance, when going to class is not required:** Unlike high school, all professors may not outline in their syllabus that class attendance is required. However, we know that even simply attending class regularly can help a student to get a better grade. **GO TO CLASS!**

In addition, this may be the first time in a student's life that they have not had a regular schedule that was managed for them. Encourage your student to make a schedule and stick to it. If they need help, their Academic Resident Assistant or the LEC can help.

## Academic Resident Assistants

The semester may have just begun, but it's never too early to get organized and make a plan for the semester. In fact, prior preparation can be key to academic success.

Encourage your student to utilize an important resource that they can find within their residential community. All traditional residence halls have a Resident Assistant that is designated as the Academic Resident Assistant, or ARA. The ARA is trained to teach time management, study skills, test preparation, test taking techniques, and much more.

Academic RAs hold workshops on a monthly basis; they also can provide individual one-on-one counseling and referral to students about academic questions and issues. Students who want to get a head start, have a question, or need to learn new study techniques may benefit from contacting their ARA. If additional assistance is necessary, the Academic RA may refer a student to a free tutor in the LEC or another staff member in the LEC that can help them.

Students should also take advantage of workshops and FREE tutoring available through the Learning Enhancement Center (LEC). Visit the LEC website at <http://smu.edu/alec/> for more information about services and tutoring schedules.

## Living with a Stranger

No one would argue that being a parent was easy, and clearly the manual that was supposed to come with the child did not arrive once they were delivered. However, as with all things, there is one innate skill that comes with the parent title; this includes flexibility and the knowledge that we can teach our children valuable lessons from those that we have learned along the way. As a parent, there are many obstacles to overcome and the easy button is never conveniently located. Nonetheless, the transition to college is probably one of the hardest yet most rewarding for both the parent and the student.

A big part of transitioning into college is living on-campus. For most students this will be the first time that they are living with a roommate; for most parents this will be the first time that they will have to coach their child through dispute resolution. Living with a complete stranger can be a difficult adjustment, but in the grand scheme of things, it can be a defining moment for your child. We all want our children to be well-rounded individuals who are able to adjust socially and to accept and respect people regardless of their differences. Having a roommate is one of the first real experiences with diversity that your student will have. Being supportive and encouraging students through differences is probably one of the best lessons you can teach your son or daughter.

# Family Weekend @ SMU

Family Weekend will be held November 13-15, 2009. More information regarding Family Weekend registration and a full schedule may be obtained at [www.smu.edu/sf](http://www.smu.edu/sf). Many events fill up quickly, so be sure to save your spot now!



If you are not planning to attend Family Weekend, consider finding another way to connect with your student. Find a time to talk to them on the phone or send a special care package from home. A reminder of the support students have from home can be a boost for their success.

Be sure to “save the date” for other Student Foundation events that are occurring during the fall semester.

  
*You are invited*  
*to join the students of SMU at the following events*

\*  
MANE EVENT  
MAY 1, 2009

HOMECOMING  
NOVEMBER 1-8, 2009

FAMILY WEEKEND  
NOVEMBER 13-15, 2009

CELEBRATION OF LIGHTS  
DECEMBER 6, 2009

FOR MORE, VISIT [WWW.SMU.EDU/SF](http://WWW.SMU.EDU/SF)

*Presented by the  
Student Foundation*



# SECURITY ISSUES PARENT CHECK LIST

*Make sure your student follows these basic steps recommended by the SMU Police Department and the Dean of Student Life Office.*

1. **Lock it up or risk losing it.** Residential rooms, cars, book bags, and bicycles should be secured at all times. Almost all thefts reported on campus occur because students forget or neglect to lock room doors, leave their valuables inside parked vehicles, or leave their property, like book bags and purses, unattended.
2. **Plan on attending a crime prevention/personal security briefing.** Sessions are held throughout the year in residence halls and Greek houses.
3. **Become familiar with the emergency call boxes “blue light phones” located around campus.** These devices are directly linked to the SMU Police Department and may be used to summon help or notify police of a crime in progress.
4. **Use the security escort service.** The SMU Police Department will provide rides to students who need assistance due to security-related matters. Call 214/768-3388 to request a security ride. *The university reminds students that this service is provided to enhance security, not for convenience.*
5. **Know your SMU Police Department numbers.** Emergency – dial 911 from any campus telephone and 214/768-3333 via cellular telephone. For non-emergency requests for police services, dial 214/768-3388.
6. **Record identification numbers from your valuables.** Keep a list of serial identification numbers from your computers, electronic equipment and other items of value. SMU PD will loan students an engraver if needed. Having serial numbers or engraving high value items may make it easier for police to identify and recover stolen or lost property.
7. **Take a self-defense class through the Wellness Program.** Visit [www.smu.edu/wellness](http://www.smu.edu/wellness) for schedules on a variety of classes.
8. **Report suspicious acting people to SMU Police.** Everyone is responsible for the security of our campus community. Call police immediately if you see someone committing a crime or acting in a suspicious manner.
9. **Evacuate during a fire alarm.** Be familiar with the nearest building exits and evacuate immediately if the alarm activates. There are stiff penalties for people who fail to evacuate a building for any reason.
10. **Visit the SMU Police Department web site.** Available at [www.smu.edu/pd](http://www.smu.edu/pd), this web service provides crime prevention tips and other “need to know” information provided for you and your student’s benefit.
11. **Anonymous Reporting System.** The SILENT WITNESS program allows the SMU Community two ways to anonymously report criminal activity or other police-related information. The Anonymous tips line (214-SMU-2TIP) is an unmonitored, voice-recorded phone line. This phone line is checked daily for new information. Alternately, community members may provide information anonymously through our online SILENT WITNESS reporting form at [www.smu.edu/pd](http://www.smu.edu/pd).

# Safety & Maintenance

Residence Life & Student Housing (RLSH) is committed to safety and safety education. To meet this end, RLSH conducts safety maintenance inspections each semester. During these inspections, Residence Hall/Community Directors and Facilities staff enter each residential room to inspect for dangerous or illegal items. If unapproved items are found, they are immediately removed and the occupants are given notice of the confiscation. In some cases, occupants are documented through the conduct process as a result of their unsafe materials and/or assessed a fine. RLSH has several educational opportunities through which residents can learn about safety and maintenance and where residents can reduce the cost of their fine through an educational option or fire safety class. RLSH’s ultimate goal is to provide as safe an atmosphere as possible; this includes addressing safety and maintenance concerns. A full listing of permitted and not permitted items are available online via the housing website. Students are also encouraged to refer all safety questions to their Residence Hall/Community Director.

## Parent and Family Connection

These links may provide you with more information from this newsletter edition:

Residence Life & Student Housing  
<http://smu.edu/housing/>

Commitment to Academics/Academic Resources  
<http://smu.edu/alec/>

Alcohol and Drugs  
<http://smu.edu/studentaffairs/alcohol/callforhelp.asp>  
<http://smu.edu/healthcenter/alcoholeducation/>

Fire Safety Brochure  
[http://smu.edu/housing/fire\\_safety.asp](http://smu.edu/housing/fire_safety.asp)

SMU PD  
<http://smu.edu/pd/>  
[http://smu.edu/pd/silent\\_witness.asp](http://smu.edu/pd/silent_witness.asp)

Additional resources may be found at the Residence Life & Student Housing Parent and Family webpage:  
<http://smu.edu/housing/parents.asp>