

The Campus Link

A newsletter for parents & families

January 9 2009



Inside this issue:

Handling Academic Concerns ..... 2

Comparing "Key Happenings" ..... 2

Student Participation in Research ..... 3

Seasonal Student Issues ..... 3

Valentine's Day ..... 3

Setting Goals in a New Year ..... 4

What Would You Do? ..... 4

Don't Underestimate Teens' Access to Beer and Prescription Drugs ..... 4

Money-Saving Ideas ..... 5

Grants-to-Go ..... 5

Inauguration Day Celebration

Niagara University will observe Inauguration Day with a number of events taking place from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the upper level of the Gallagher Center. A tentative schedule of events includes:



- **Poster tables presented by various student clubs and groups on topics related to the inauguration starting at approximately 9:30 a.m.** Student clubs from a diverse range of interests are working on educational poster boards to illustrate a number of key issues that we face as a nation at this time: environmental issues, issues in higher education, and immigration, among many others. Other posters will introduce students to the members of the new cabinet.
- **A preinauguration event starting at approximately 10:45 a.m.** The Rev. Joseph L. Levesque, C.M., Niagara University's president, will give an invocation, which will be followed by brief comments on the significance of the event from three of our students, and a brief address on the significance of the presidency by Dr. Christopher Lee, associate professor of political sciences
- **A broadcast of the swearing in ceremony and inaugural address on a large screen, which will begin at approximately 11:45 a.m.**
- **A post inauguration celebration until 2 p.m.** with our best rendition of "Chicago-style" pizza, a drum circle and poetry performance, special commemorative pins for attendees, and other events for all to enjoy.
- **Evening film showing of "Unbought and Unbossed" and discussion session at 6 p.m.,** with Dr. Seneca Vaught, assistant professor of African and African American history, in Dunleavy Hall Room 127. Encourage your student to attend one or more of these events and help us celebrate the inauguration of the 44th president of the United States.



## Handling Academic Concerns

Now that grades have been distributed and your student is preparing for a new term ahead, there may be some academic concerns to face.

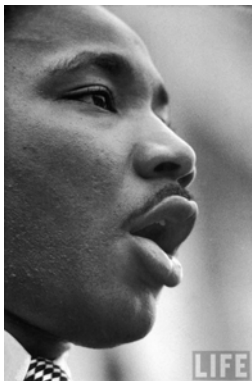
- **Reconsidering a Major/Minor.** Some questioning may occur, as your student rethinks his/her major or minor. Talk through the pros and cons, while also suggesting a meeting with an academic adviser and/or another trusted faculty/staff member.
- **Failing a Class.** Does your student need to retake a course? If so, encourage him/her to be attentive from day one and to engage the professor should assistance be needed. There's absolutely nothing wrong with that!
- **Shaken Confidence.** Not doing particularly well academically can shake students' confidence. Hard work and smart work will help them get back on track. The learning center and campus counselors can help with a confidence crisis, too.

- **Needing More Study Time.** Lower grades often mean that students need to study more — and to learn how to maximize their study time. Folks in the learning center can provide tips. Help your student reconsider where he/she studies, too. If it's on a bed, the temptation to nap can be great. If he/she studies in a noisy lounge, the distractions can be great. Brainstorm other options, from library cubicles to the laundry room, as your student takes a good look at the alternatives.
- **Focusing Too Much on Grades.** If your student is focusing only on grades, rather than what he/she is learning, he/she is not getting the most out of academics. So, ask him/her about classes from a "What are you learning?" perspective now and then. Sometimes having to verbalize it can help students really take a look at what they're getting out of a particular class.

- **Not Approaching Professors.** Most faculty members have office hours and stick around after class because they want to be available to students. Encourage your student to seek clarification in person. Face-to-face encounters are often much more valuable than e-mailing professors because students become known that way, in a positive light.

Academics don't have to be a taboo subject. Reserve judgment when possible so that you can be open to helping your student examine his/her current approach, both what's working and what's not.

If your student wants assistance in identifying academic issues and strategies for addressing those issues, Niagara University's Office of Academic Support is available to help. Students can schedule an appointment by calling 716-286-8072. Encourage your student to make this call early in the semester so that he/she will have the best possible start for the new year!



## Comparing “Key Happenings” with your Student

As Martin Luther King Jr. Day approaches this Jan. 19, it can be a good time to talk with your student about “key happenings” in one another's lives.

For instance, you may suspect that 9/11 had the most profound impact on your student so far in life. By talking, you may find that other incidents have impacted worldviews, values and ambitions.

And when you share your “key happenings”— perhaps including Martin Luther King Jr.'s actions,

speeches or assassination — you're letting your student see a part of your history and heart, too.

Extend this conversation to include grandparents and other elderly family members or friends as well. An

intergenerational discussion about the events that shaped your lives can be invaluable as you and your student learn more about what makes each other tick.

## MLK, in His Own Words

For the full text, video and/or audio of Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous speeches to share with your student, you can log on to [www.americanrhetoric.com](http://www.americanrhetoric.com). Click on the search feature atop the left-hand menu and you'll find links to speeches such as:

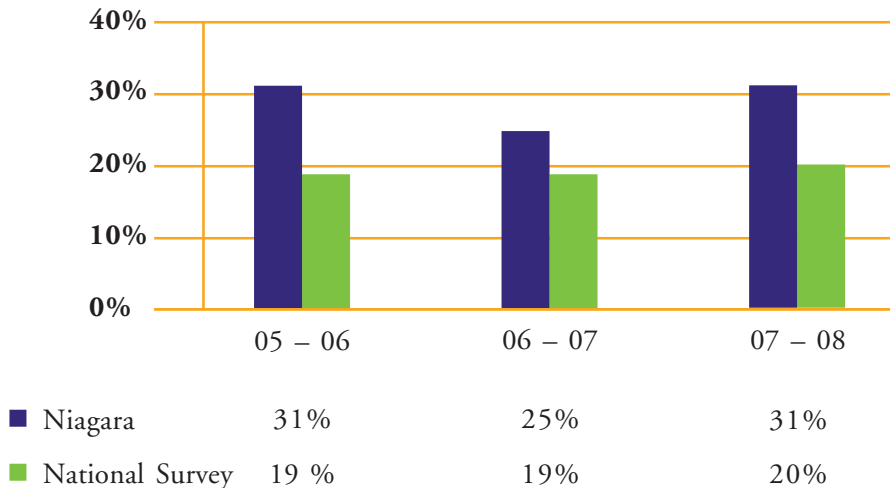
- “I've Been to the Mountaintop”
  - “I Have a Dream”
  - Robert F. Kennedy's remarks on the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.
- You can also go to YouTube for links to his speeches, a video that goes with U2's tribute song “Pride” and more. Just head to [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com) and enter “Martin Luther King Jr.” into the search bar.

## Student Participation in Research

Many colleges and universities offer students an opportunity, outside of course or program requirements, to work on research projects with faculty members.

Each year seniors and first-year students across the country participate in The National Survey of Student Engagement. One of the questions asks students about their participation in this kind of research. Compared to other institutions, NU students participate in research at a rate much higher than other institutions.

Student Participation in Research at Niagara University



## Seasonal Student Issues

There's a seasonal ebb and flow when it comes to student issues. Here's some things your student may be experiencing this month:

- Feelings of happiness/restlessness from break.
- Unwanted weight gain from the holidays.
- Winter weather blues.
- Few social activities scheduled.
- Possible roommate changes.
- Renewed interest in classes and activities.
- Resolve to do better academically.
- Wedding plans for those who got engaged over break.
- Anxiety and uncertainty for those who just arrived at a new school.
- Contentment being back with friends after a few weeks away.

## Valentine's Day ... It's Not Happy for All

The New Year has barely begun, yet stores are already dotted with red and pink cupids, lacey hearts and lovey paraphernalia aplenty. It can only mean one thing ... Valentine's Day is nigh.

This can be a tough time of year for some students, as they choose to focus on not having a partner or the difficult times they're going through with a current partner, rather than the love that is in their lives.

You can help by reminding them about the various "loves of their lives," including:

- **Pets.** A photo of his/her favorite furry friend may be just what's needed to get out of a "woe is me" funk!
- **Friends.** Encourage spending time with good friends as a reminder of how lucky he/she is.
- **Sibling.** Drawings, phone calls or funny e-mails from brothers and sisters can be great distractions.
- **Grandparents.** Who doesn't love a Valentine's card from Grandma or Grandpa?
- **You.** In your own way, let your student know how much you love him/her. It can really make a difference, especially during this cupid-happy time of year! And also realize that, despite your best efforts, your student may still feel lonely and depressed this Valentine's Day. If you sense this, encourage a visit to the campus counseling center, where he/she will find good folks who love students and want to help them live happy, healthy lives.

## Heart Health

Valentine's Day can be a good time for you and your student to focus on your heart health. This might include:

- engaging in aerobic activity and reporting back to one another
- seeing the doctor for a check-up
- reading publications like Prevention magazine
- learning the warning signs of heart attack/stroke
- taking a CPR course
- comparing notes on heart-friendly foods

Learn more from the American Heart Association at [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org).

## Setting Goals in a New Year

Call them resolutions or call them goals — either way, they're things we'd like to accomplish in the next few months. It's important that students head into a new year with some goals in hand. Perhaps they have to do with:

- **Academics.** Now that grades are out, what are the plans for the upcoming semester academically?
- **Involvement.** Is there a club or organization he/she is interested in joining? If so, this could be the time!
- **Relationships.** How do you meet new people while staying connected to old friends?
- **Wellness.** What good things can be done for his/her health in the new year?
- **Career Exploration.** What types of internships are available? What can be done to get a resume in shape?

These are just a few of the categories your student may be considering. You can let him/her know that successful goals often include the following traits:

1. **They're Achievable.** Set goals that are realistic within the context of your life. Too often the reason any of us fail is that we set unachievable goals.
2. **They're Measurable.** Use quantifiable words in your goal lingo rather than fluffing them up with concepts that are too general.
3. **They're Short.** Keep your goals to short paragraphs. That way, they're easier to commit to memory and always keep in mind.
4. **They're Positive.** State those goals in a positive manner that makes them appealing. It's a good way to motivate yourself mentally.
5. **They Begin and End.** Determine when you will start working on each goal and when it should be achieved. This will help you focus ... and succeed!

By discussing goal setting, you're helping your student create a guide for a fresh start in 2009!

## What Would You Do if You Knew You Could Not Fail?

A popular query showing up on everything from T-shirts to paperweights these days is: "What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?"

This can be a fascinating conversation starter to use with your student as you explore issues including:

- Career goals
- Interests
- Passions
- Things they're participating in out of obligation rather than desire
- Confidence or a lack of confidence
- Taking risks
- Where they'd like to be in five to seven years

As you ponder this question, consider sharing your answer(s), too. The process can help both you and your student think about what you'd like to accomplish in the year ahead — and how you can support one another in this pursuit.

## Don't Underestimate Teens' Access to Beer and Prescription Drugs

Ask teens in a recent study how easy it is for them to buy prescription drugs and 19 percent will say they are easier to access than marijuana, cigarettes or beer. Yet, ask their parents and only 8 percent will say that prescription drugs are the easiest for their teens to buy. Looks like there are some misperceptions when it comes to these abused substances.

Prescription drug abuse is a problem among some of today's students, as they access substances including Oxycontin, Percocet, Vicodin and Ritalin for what some perceive as a "safe" high. This isn't the case. Students often buy prescription drugs from friends, dealers or through the Internet, all without a

prescription. As a result, they can never quite be sure what has been mixed into the pills that they're receiving. Plus, prescription drugs, when abused, can do a great deal of physical harm.

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University's National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XIII: Teens and Parents (August 2008) spotlights parental misperceptions about a variety of substances. In addition to the prescription drug discrepancy, 15 percent of teens said beer was the easiest for them to access, while only 9 percent of their parents thought that was the case. And then 39 percent of these same parents thought cigarettes were the

easiest substance for their students to access, when only 25 percent of students thought the same. It seems continued conversation and awareness is necessary to help teens and parents get closer to the same page.

Source: Center for Substance Abuse Research at the University of Maryland, College Park, [www.cesar.umd.edu/cesar/cesarfax/vol17/17-46.pdf](http://www.cesar.umd.edu/cesar/cesarfax/vol17/17-46.pdf).





## Money-Saving Ideas for College Students

Chances are that money is on your mind during these uncertain economic times. It's likely on your student's mind, too. Here are some ways to weather the financial storm:

- **Update That Resume.** Have an updated resume ready to apply for any scholarship at any time. Too many students lose out on free money by being unprepared!
- **Say No to Credit Come-ons.** Don't sign up for "free" credit card offers — many credit companies prey on college students, leading to deep debt that can take a long time to undo.
- **Maximize Meal Money.** Maximize your campus dining plan rather than opting for costly takeout. Learn about initiatives in place to meet scheduling needs without shelling out additional money.
- **Do Free Stuff!** Check out free and low-cost programs on campus sponsored by the student activities office, academic departments and many others. There's a wealth of great affordable stuff right here!
- **Track Texts and Calls.** Watch your cell and text minutes. Determine if you're on the smartest plan.
- **Print Twice.** Use both sides of paper when printing, whenever possible, to conserve money — and resources!
- **Save Some Ink.** Print on the fast draft or black and white setting so you're not using up ink so quickly.
- **Be Closet Conscious.** Take good care of clothes so they don't have to be replaced as often. Don't scald them in the dryer. Hang up delicate items to air dry. And try to steer clear of dry-clean-only items when possible — caring for them can get expensive!
- **Scholarship Search.** Keep an eye out for scholarship postings through the school newspaper, the financial aid and scholarship offices, and other campus communication sources. There's a lot of money to be found!
- **Cut Restaurant Bills.** Don't order drinks and dessert when you go out to eat. It'll likely cut costs almost in half.

Being smart about money choices is an important habit for students to get into now. Help them look for options and determine wants vs. needs as they head down the road to a positive financial future.

## Grants-to-Go

A wide variety of grants are available to help today's students pay the bills. Government agencies, private organizations, colleges, and others offer grant money. It's just knowing where to look for it!

The College Scholarships site offers a comprehensive page of 101 grant options at [www.collegescholarships.org/grants/101-grants.htm](http://www.collegescholarships.org/grants/101-grants.htm). Categories include:

- Women
- Students with Disabilities
- Minorities
- Federal Grants
- State Sponsored Grants
- Nontraditional Students
- Unique Grant Programs
- Students with Severe Medical Conditions/Diseases

Plus, there are a good number of profession-specific grants in areas such as:

- African Studies
- Agriculture
- Anthropology
- Arts
- Athletics and Recreation
- Business
- Computers/Technology
- Hospitality
- Journalism/Communications
- Math
- Music
- Nonprofit Management/Public Sector
- Photography
- Religion
- Sciences

As you and your student check out the options, you may just find some "found" money to consider!