General FAQs for Family Members

If your question is not answered in our FAQs for Family Members, please don’t hesitate to call the Student and Family Transitions office at (315) 267-2580 or e-mail us at sft@potsdam.edu

Academics

Where can my student purchase textbooks?

Your student can purchase and sell back textbooks at the College Bookstore located in the Barrington Student Union on Barrington Drive. Students can reserve their textbooks before classes even start, by visiting bookstore.potsdam.edu. Your student’s textbooks will then be available for pickup in Merritt Hall when the student arrives on campus. The option to rent certain textbooks instead of buying them may also be an option when your student orders their books. In addition to textbooks, the College Bookstore also has a variety of school supplies, dorm essentials, gifts and SUNY Potsdam memorabilia. For more information about buying or reserving textbooks, you can visit the College Bookstore’s website at bookstore.potsdam.edu.

Where should I refer my student if s/he needs help with study habits or tutoring?

Encourage your student to contact the Academic Advising and Support Office at (315) 267-3447, or visit http://www.potsdam.edu/support/tutoring/index.cfm. They provide group tutoring for a variety of classes that can help in any subject that your student might need help in. There are also other resources like workshops, a laptop loan program, a computer lab, and College Success Strategies that include time management, study skills and note-taking skills.

How can I contact a professor?

Your student should be in contact with their professors. It is a great way for them to stay on top of their studies and grades. When a student is enrolled in the class, the professor gives out a course syllabus with his or her office hours and contact information. Due to federal FERPA law, the professor should only communicate academic related information to your student. So, if there is an issue, suggest that your student contact their professor directly.
What is FERPA?

FERPA stands for Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, which is a United States federal law. This law states that student’s must consent prior to disclosing educational records, which are seen as confidential. These records include: personal information, grades, enrollment records and class schedules. For more information on FERPA, please visit the following website: [http://www.potsdam.edu/offices/registrar/ferpa/](http://www.potsdam.edu/offices/registrar/ferpa/)

What do I do if my student has a disability or needs additional assistance?

If your student has a disability and/or needs further assistance, they should contact the Accommodative Services Office in Sisson Hall. Your student can set up a meeting with the Accommodative Services Office to discuss specific needs and accommodation requests by calling (315) 267-3267 or emailing Sharon House: housese@potsdam.edu.

How can I check my student’s grades?

Unfortunately due to FERPA regulations, parents and/or guardians are not able to access a student’s grades. If you would like to know your student’s grades, you can request your student’s grades directly from the student.

Who does my student need to talk to if they want to declare or change their major?

In order to change a major in The Crane School of Music or to a major in another area of the college, your student should refer to The Crane School of Music publication: “Academic Information Supplement,” for the correct procedure. The Academic Information Supplement can be found on this website: [http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/Crane/current/degree/upload/Undergraduate-Handbook-12-13-2.pdf](http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/Crane/current/degree/upload/Undergraduate-Handbook-12-13-2.pdf)

In order to declare a major in Teacher Education, students should refer to the School of Education and Professional Studies application procedures on page 178 in the 2012-2014 SUNY Potsdam Undergraduate Catalog or click on this website: [http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/catalog/undergraduate/upload/22SOEPS.pdf](http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/catalog/undergraduate/upload/22SOEPS.pdf).

In order to declare or change a major in the School or Arts and Sciences, your student should make an appointment with the chair of the department in which they wish to declare a major. Here is a list of all School of Arts and Sciences academic departments:

**Anthropology**

**Department Chair:** Alan L. Hersker  
**Department Secretary:** Phyllis C. Charleson  
**Department Address:** 124 MacVicar Hall  
**Department Phone:** 2053  
**Department Fax:** 3176  
**Department E-mail:** charlepc@potsdam.edu  
**Webpage:** [http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/AAS/Anthro/index.cfm](http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/AAS/Anthro/index.cfm)
Art
Department Chair: Caroline Downing
Department Secretary: Claudette Fefee
Department Address: 218 Brainerd Hall
Department Phone: 2251
Department Fax: 2085
Department E-mail: downincj@potsdam.edu
Webpage: http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/AAS/Art/index.cfm

Biology
Department Chair: Glenn Johnson
Department Secretary: Marta Whalen
Department Address: 208 Stowell Hall
Department Phone: 2264
Department Fax: 3170
Department E-mail: johnsong@potsdam.edu
Webpage: http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/AAS/biology/index.cfm

Chemistry
Department Chair: Clifford Rossiter
Department Secretary: Marta Whalen
Department Address: 208 Stowell Hall
Department Phone: 2264
Department Fax: 3170
Department E-mail: rossitcs@potsdam.edu

Computer Science
Department Chair: Susan Haller
Department Secretary: Ann Winters
Department Address: 219 Dunn Hall
Department Phone: 2206
Department Fax: 2328
Department E-mail: hallersm@potsdam.edu
Webpage: http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/AAS/CS/index.cfm

Economics
Department Chair: Michael J Nuwer
Department Secretary: Ann Winters
Department Address: 219 Dunn Hall
Department Phone: 2206
Department Fax: 2797
Department E-mail: nuwermj@potsdam.edu
Webpage: http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/AAS/Econ/index.cfm
**English & Communication**

Department Chair: Donald McNutt  
Department Secretary: Amy Charleston  
Department Address: 120 Morey Hall  
Department Phone: 2005  
Department Fax: 3256  
Department E-mail: mcnuttdj@potsdam.edu  

**Environmental Studies**

Department Chair: Philip Neisser  
Department Secretary: Lynn Durant  
Department Address: 311 Satterlee Hall  
Department Phone: 2768  
Department Fax: 2743  
Department E-mail: neissept@potsdam.edu  

**Geology**

Department Chair: Michael Rygel  
Department Secretary: Roberta A Greene  
Department Address: 220 Timerman Hall  
Department Phone: 2286  
Department Fax: 2695  
Department E-mail: greenera@potsdam.edu  

**History**

Department Chair: Thomas Baker  
Department Secretary: Bonnie Lawrence  
Department Address: 321 Satterlee Hall  
Department Phone: 4910  
Department Fax: 3336  
Department Email: bakertn@potsdam.edu  
Webpage: [http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/AAS/History/index.cfm](http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/AAS/History/index.cfm)

**Mathematics**

Department Chair: Victoria Klawitter  
Department Secretary: Helen Bush  
Department Address: 222 MacVicar Hall  
Department Phone: 2064  
Department Fax: 2806  
Department E-mail: klawitv@potsdam.edu  
Webpage: [http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/AAS/Math/index.cfm](http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/AAS/Math/index.cfm)
Modern Languages
Department Chair: Oscar Sarmiento
Department Secretary: Sandra G. Larock
Department Address: 215 Carson Hall
Department Phone: 2792
Department Fax: 2656
Department E-mail: larocksg@potsdam.edu
Webpage: http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/AAS/Lang/index.cfm

Philosophy
Department Chair: David C. K. Curry
Department Secretary: Sandra G. Larock
Department Address: Carson Hall 215-217
Department Phone: 2792
Department Fax: 2656
Department E-mail: currydc@potsdam.edu
Webpage: http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/AAS/Phil/index.cfm

Physics
Department Chair: Biman Das
Department Secretary: Roberta A Greene
Department Address: 220 Timerman Hall
Department Phone: 2286
Department Fax: 2695
Department E-mail: greenera@potsdam.edu
Webpage: http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/AAS/Phys/index.cfm

Politics
Department Chair: Philip T. Neisser
Department Secretary: Lynne M. Durant
Department Address: 311 Satterlee Hall
Department Phone: 2768
Department Fax: 2743
Department E-mail: neissept@potsdam.edu
Webpage: http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/AAS/Pols/index.cfm

Psychology
Department Chair: Arlene Stillwell
Department Secretary: Holly Hammond
Department Address: 168 Flagg Hall
Department Phone: 2606
Department Fax: 2677
Department E-mail: stillwam@potsdam.edu
Webpage: http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/AAS/Psych/index.cfm
Theatre & Dance
Department Chair: Donald Borsh
Department Secretary: Leslie E. Delosh
Department Address: 224 Performing Arts Center (PAC)
Department Phone: 2556
Department Fax: 4333
Department E-mail: borshdp@potsdam.edu
Webpage: http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/AAS/Theatre/index.cfm

Also encourage your student to visit http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/majors/index.cfm to find out more about the different majors offered at SUNY Potsdam.

How does my student register for classes?

Your student should meet with his or her academic advisor to make sure they are on the right track to graduate, and your student will register using their BearPAWS account to enroll in classes. Enrollment times will vary depending on what classification your student is (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, or Senior). For more information on enrolling in classes please visit: http://www.potsdam.edu/offices/registrar/registration/howtoregister.cfm.

I am trying to plan travel for my student to come home for the holidays—when are the school breaks?

For the academic calendar, please visit http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/calendar/index.cfm. This should show you every break the College has throughout the academic year as well as important dates such as course withdrawals, add/drop dates, commencement, and other important dates.

Dining

What exactly is the SUNY Potsdam ID card used for?

This card is used for identification as a SUNY Potsdam student, staff, faculty or employee. It grants security access to buildings, and allows access to meal plans and Bear Express. This card helps seamlessly move students, faculty and staff through daily life on campus. For more information about the SUNY Potsdam ID card, visit: http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/SUNYCard.cfm. Also, in some cases, businesses outside of the college community, like restaurants and stores will accept Bear Express, so students should make sure to carry their ID with them at all times! For a list of participating vendors, please visit: http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/BearExpress/MerchantsList.cfm.
Where can my student eat on campus?

There are multiple dining facilities all across campus. A full list can be found at http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/dining/index.cfm. These dining facilities offer a variety of food options at various times throughout the day.

What's the difference between Flex Credits and Bear Express?

Bear Express is an elective debit system where students, faculty, and staff can add money to their SUNY Potsdam ID card. It can be used at locations around campus including dining and convenience store locations as well some local Potsdam merchants. Bear Express rolls over from Fall Semester to Spring Semester. Flex Credit is a part of your meal plan. One credit equals one dollar. It can only be used for food on campus. Any balance remaining in the Flex Credit account at the end of the semester is forfeited.

What do I do if my student wants to change their meal plan?

Students have until the close of business on the first day of classes to change their meal plan each semester. For more information about meal plans, please visit: http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/dining/MealPlans/terms/index.cfm.

Safety

Where can I find out more about safety on SUNY Potsdam’s campus?

One of our highest priorities at SUNY Potsdam is the safety and well-being of our students, faculty and staff. To achieve this goal, we invest significant resources in a variety of activities and initiatives designed to increase security on our campus as well as our students’ ability to make responsible decisions. We foster a positive relationship with local law enforcement agencies to enhance a safe, secure and healthy community that borders the College. For information on the services offered to students, please visit the University Police Department’s website at http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/safety/index.cfm.

Is there a service that will take my student to their car at night or to other campus locations?

We have a variety of options for your student to be safe while on campus at night. If they need an escort to their car from class or late night studying in the library, your student can contact University Police at (315) 267-2222.

What is NY-ALERT and how do I sign up?

NY-ALERT is an emergency notification system for all college students, faculty and staff. The campus community will be immediately notified of any significant emergency or dangerous situation involving an immediate threat to the health or safety of students or staff. Students can edit their information through their BearPAWS account. For more information, see the SUNY Potsdam Emergency Notification System website at http://www.potsdam.edu/cts/news/nyalert.cfm.
What is the plan for inclement weather?

In the event of inclement weather, SUNY Potsdam recognizes the need to address how such conditions may affect the overall operations of the institution. If classes are cancelled, announcements are sent via the NY-Alert system and a notification is sent to the following media outlets:

**Radio**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WAIH</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>SUNY Potsdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPDM</td>
<td>1070AM</td>
<td>Potsdam, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSNN</td>
<td>99.3FM</td>
<td>Potsdam, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSLU</td>
<td>89.5</td>
<td>North Country Public Radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WMSA</td>
<td>1340AM</td>
<td>Massena, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAC93</td>
<td>92.7FM</td>
<td>Ogdensburg, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WYBG</td>
<td>1050AM</td>
<td>Massena, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WICY</td>
<td>1490AM</td>
<td>Watertown, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WNCQ</td>
<td>102.9FM</td>
<td>Ogdensburg, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIRD</td>
<td>920AM</td>
<td>Lake Placid, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WNBZ</td>
<td>106.3FM</td>
<td>Saranac Lake, NY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Television**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Channel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WWNY-TV</td>
<td>Channel 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPTZ-TV</td>
<td>Channel 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News 10 Now</td>
<td>Channel 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWTI</td>
<td>Channel 50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information on cancelling classes, please visit: [http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/handbook/academic/classcancel.cfm](http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/handbook/academic/classcancel.cfm).

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**Housing**

**Who can I contact about on-campus or off-campus housing?**

You can contact the Residence Life office for on-campus housing by phone at (315) 267-2350 or e-mail at reslife@potsdam.edu. Their website is [http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/ResHalls/index.cfm](http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/ResHalls/index.cfm). For off-campus housing, students can refer to the following website: [http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/ResHalls/offcampus/findinghousing.cfm](http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/ResHalls/offcampus/findinghousing.cfm).
What are the on-campus housing options and prices?

Information about housing rates and options can be found [http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/ResHalls/CampusLiving101/roomrates.cfm](http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/ResHalls/CampusLiving101/roomrates.cfm). All of the on-campus housing options are a short walk to classes and offer many ways for your student to get involved SUNY Potsdam community.

Does my freshman student have to live on-campus?

SUNY Potsdam recognizes the benefits students receive from living on campus their first two years of college. Therefore, all single freshmen under twenty-one (21) years of age are required to live on campus in a residence hall, or live in their parent or legal guardian's permanent home. Students who are admitted to SUNY Potsdam as a transfer student from another post-secondary institution, and who have completed at least 24 credit hours at that institution are not required to live on campus.

How do I send my student a care package or gifts?

Gifts, flowers, and packages may be delivered to the Student Union during office hours. Packages that fit in the student's private mailbox are placed in their mailbox upon delivery. Items shipped must be addressed properly and accurately in order to arrive in a timely manner. Make sure to contact your student and ask for their complete mailing address. The packages may be picked up Monday through Friday from 9:30 am-4:00 pm and on Saturdays from 10:00 am to 3:00 p.m. Students must present a picture ID to pick up items. For more information on the SUNY Potsdam Mailroom, please visit: [http://www.potsdam.edu/current/mailroom.cfm](http://www.potsdam.edu/current/mailroom.cfm).

What should I advise my son or daughter to do if there is conflict with his/her roommate?

If your son or daughter is having a conflict with his/her roommate, you should encourage them to talk to their Residential Assistant (RA) who will offer strategies on conflict resolution. RA's are well trained to solve such issues and will make sure that your student and their roommate discuss the issues they are having. If problems continue to persist, encourage your student can request a room change. For more information, please visit: [http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/ResHalls/CampusLiving101/RoomIssues.cfm](http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/ResHalls/CampusLiving101/RoomIssues.cfm).

My student has received a referral to our student conduct office (Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards). What does that mean and what should I do?

This means that the Office of Student Conduct received information that your student may have been involved in a violation of our Student Code of Conduct. A letter has been sent to the student's university address notifying them to contact this office. Due to the FERPA policy, parents should contact their student for details, as the staff at the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards will not be able to talk to parent(s) about violations. Parents are encouraged to ask your student to read the letter to you. Please note that your student can have representation at any judicial hearings s/he will attend. For more information, please visit the following website: [http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/studentconduct/codeofconduct.cfm](http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/studentconduct/codeofconduct.cfm).
What do I do if my student is struggling with homesickness?

It is normal for some students to struggle with homesickness, especially if this is the first time they have spent a significant period of time away from home. One of the best ways to combat homesickness is to encourage your student to get involved in campus activities. There are so many opportunities on campus to get involved and make friends, so your student has all the support they need. Your student should talk with his or her Resident Assistant (RA) to see what activities are going on in their residence hall. Also, encourage them to visit http://www.potsdambears.com/sports/2011/8/5/Intramurals.aspx?tab=intramuralshome to find out more about intramural sports. Having a couple of close friends seems to help ease homesickness. If your student is not interested in sports have them visit: http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/clubs/index.cfm/ to attend a meeting and possibly join a Student Organization, and if they don’t see one they like...they can create one!

Involvement

How can my student get involved on campus or learn more about campus involvement?

If your student is looking to get involved, encourage them to visit http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/index.cfm. This gives your student a list of events going on around campus as well as the different student clubs and organizations as well as the Student Government Association. Joining an on campus Registered Student Group is also a fast and easy way for your student to meet new people and get involved on campus.

What kinds of career planning and placement services does SUNY Potsdam offer?

From résumé services and mock interviews to job fairs and career planning events, SUNY Potsdam’s Career Planning Services Office works with students to help them find the careers they want. We encourage our students to start planning from the very first semester. For more information, visit http://www.potsdam.edu/offices/career/index.cfm.

How does my student join a Fraternity or Sorority on campus?

First semester students are NOT allowed to join a Greek Organization. There are 12 Greek lettered organizations that students can join on campus. If your student is interested in joining a Greek organization, they will need to go through the recruitment process. For more information, visit the Greek Life website http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/greeklife/. If you have any specific questions about fraternity or sorority life, your student should contact the Coordinator of Greek Life at (315) 267-2947.

Health Services

If my student gets sick, what’s the best place for them to go?

SUNY Potsdam’s Watkins’ Health Center is a great, convenient place for your student to seek treatment. They offer primary care, immunizations, an on-site laboratory and a self-care center. For more information about Watkins’ Health Center, visit their website at http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/healthservices/index.cfm. If your student falls ill after the Student Health Center’s regular business hours, students are encouraged to visit the Canton-Potsdam Hospital Emergency Room or call University Police at 315-267-2222.
What is the nearest hospital to SUNY Potsdam?

The closest hospital to the SUNY Potsdam campus is Canton-Potsdam Hospital. It is located at: 50 Leroy Street, Potsdam, NY 13676. More information can be found on their website at http://www.cphospital.org/.

Where can my student work out?

The Shane T. Shaul Fitness Center in Maxcy Hall or the fitness center in Lehman Hall are two ideal places for students to work out, lift weights and/or attend a fitness class. For more information about the Fitness Centers, please visit their website at http://www.potsdam.edu/athletics/fitnesscenter/index.cfm.

Our family has experienced a recent tragedy or loss of a family member. What can I do to help my student adjust/cope?

Losing a family member or friend while they are away at college can be very difficult for your student. They may experience feelings of guilt, anxiety or depression. If you are concerned about your student’s physical and/or mental health at any time, you may direct them to the College Counseling Center located in on the 1st Floor of Van Housen Hall. The College Counseling Center meets with members of the SUNY Potsdam community concerning a variety of topics, including: stress management, relationship issues, and tragedies and crisis. They can make an appointment with a consultant by calling (315) 267-2330 or by dropping by Monday-Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. More information concerning College Counseling Center can be found at http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/counseling/index.cfm.

Transportation

How can my student get a parking permit for campus? What are the different options?

All vehicles that park on campus need a parking decal. Your student can purchase a parking permit on BearPAWS: https://bearpaws.potsdam.edu/pls/prod/potbpark.P_Park_Reg_Setup or they can go to the University Police office on the 1st floor of Van Housen Hall between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Parking permit options are: on-campus student, and off-campus student. Visitors to the campus will also need to get a parking permit. More information about parking policies, permits and guest parking can be found at http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/safety/parking/.

What is the Bear Bus?

SUNY Potsdam offers the Bear Bus for students who are going home to Albany, Rockland County, New York City and Long Island during each of the academic breaks. For more information about the Bear Bus, please visit http://www.potsdam.edu/current/bearbus/index.cfm.

Financial Aid/Student Accounts

How do I pay tuition and fees for my student?

Tuition and fees will be on your student’s BearPAWS account. In order to access this, your student has to give you guest access to their BearPAWS account. Your student needs to go to http://www.potsdam.edu/offices/studentaccounts/guestaccess.cfm and follow the directions. For more information, contact the Office of Student Accounts at (315) 267-2137 or visit their website at http://www.potsdam.edu/offices/studentaccounts/index.cfm.
Where can I view an estimated cost of attendance for SUNY Potsdam?

An estimated cost of attendance per semester, including tuition and fees can be found at http://www.potsdam.edu/admissions/financial/cost.cfm.

What is the FASFA and how do I fill it out?

FAFSA stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This form is used to determine the amount of financial support a family is expected to contribute to the price of attending a postsecondary institution. The results of the FAFSA are used in determining student grants, work study, and loan amounts. To begin the FASFA, encourage your student to visit http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/ and begin their application. Helping your student fill out the form is advisable, since the amount of funding depends on the accuracy of your student’s answers. Some of the questions included in the FASFA pertain specifically to you, the parents and/or guardians of the student, which may prove difficult for your student to answer. For more information, please visit http://www.potsdam.edu/admissions/financial/upload/FAFSA-Information.pdf.