

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Supporting Your Student Through Their First Year

The transition to college is an exciting milestone for students and families alike. As students begin building independence, exploring new opportunities, and finding their place at Mount Union, they are surrounded by a network of people committed to their success.

At Mount Union, we believe student success truly takes a village. Faculty, staff, coaches, mentors, peers, and families all play an important role in supporting students throughout their first year and beyond.

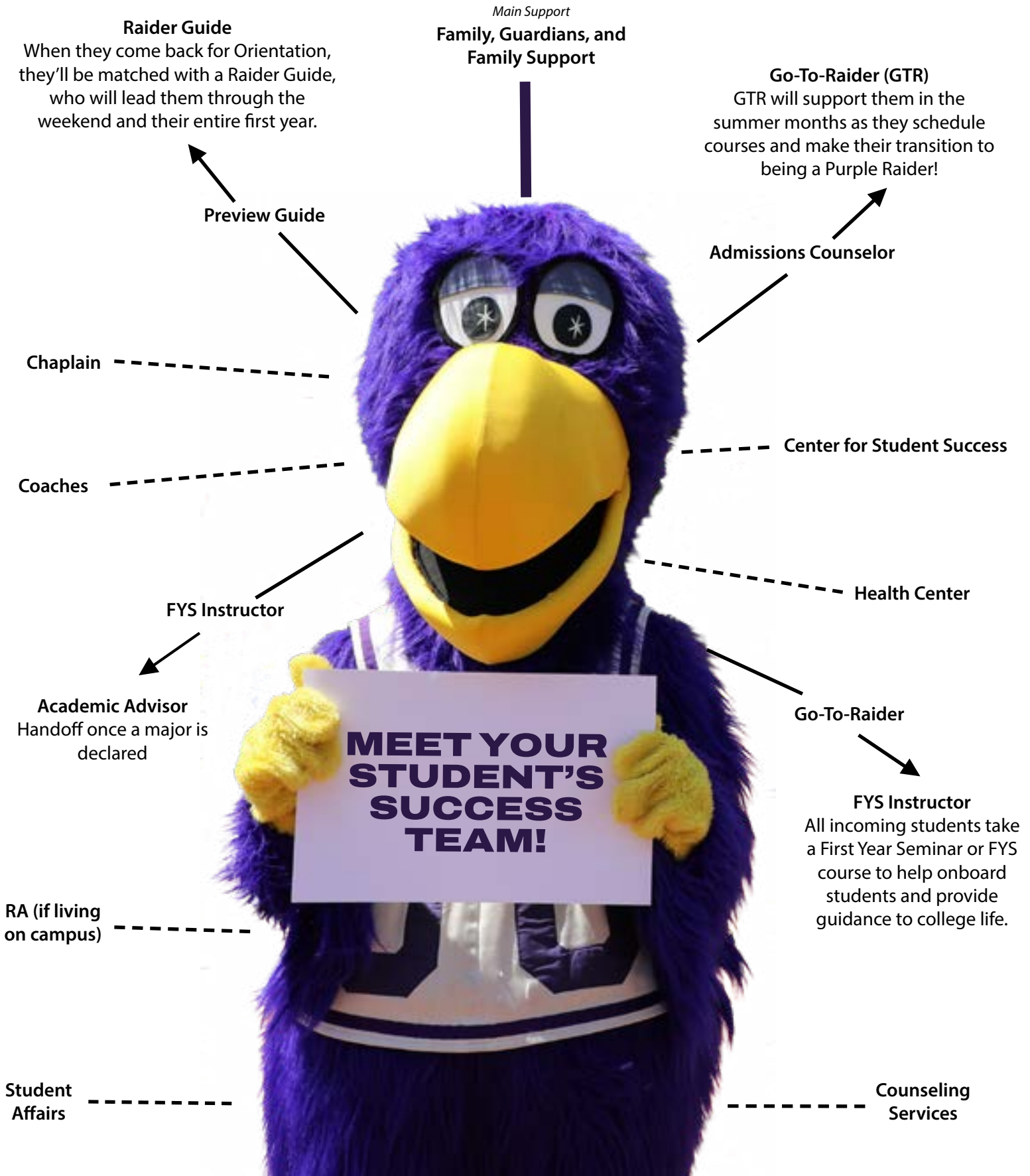
This guide is designed to help families better understand the transition to college, recognize the support systems available to students, and learn practical ways to encourage growth, resilience, connection, and success along the journey.

STUDENT SUCCESS TEAM KEY

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Main supports your student will interact with

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Supports available to your student, should they choose to utilize

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As students grow, so does their support system — these hand-offs are building a network of encouragement every step of the way!



SEASONS OF SUPPORT

You'll see next to each category ways you can:

- **Ask:** Open-ended questions to help students reflect, process, and problem-solve independently.
- **Encourage:** Encouragement builds confidence, resilience, and connection during transition.
- **Remind:** Gentle reminders help students build responsibility, routines, and healthy habits.

Summer

TOPIC	WHAT YOUR STUDENT MAY BE EXPECTING	WAYS TO SUPPORT
Weekly New Raider News Emails	Receiving more communication, deadlines, and information about college expectations while processing that college is approaching quickly.	<p>Ask: What stood out to you in this week's email? What did you think about XYZ in this week's email?</p> <p>Encourage: Ownership of checking email regularly and staying informed.</p> <p>Remind: Communication often happens through email. Building this habit now is important.</p>
New Student Checklist	Pressure to complete everything correctly. Uncertainty about next steps.	<p>Ask: How are you feeling about the progress on the checklist?</p> <p>Encourage: Celebrate completed tasks and progress.</p> <p>Remind: It's okay to ask questions if something feels confusing.</p>
Following Preview	Often begin imagining themselves at UMU more realistically, bringing both excitement and nervousness about what's ahead.	<p>Ask: Who did you connect with today? What are you most looking forward to?</p> <p>Encourage: Reflection and conversation about the experience.</p> <p>Remind: Transition feelings are normal and may change throughout the summer.</p>
Housing and Roommate	Anxiety about sharing space, making friends, and fitting in.	<p>Ask: What do you think living with someone else will be like?</p> <p>Encourage: Encourage early communication with their roommate.</p> <p>Remind: Roommate relationships take time and communication.</p>
Accessibility and Accommodations	Uncertainty about advocating for support independently.	<p>Ask: What support helped you most in high school?</p> <p>Encourage: Early connection with Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Remind: Students are encouraged to advocate for themselves and seek support early.</p>
Life Skills and Independence	Excitement about independence mixed with uncertainty	<p>Ask: What responsibilities do you feel most confident about?</p> <p>Encourage: Practice budgeting, laundry, time management, etc.</p> <p>Remind: Independence develops through experience and practice.</p>

Family Reminder: Your student does not need to feel fully prepared before arriving on campus. Confidence and independence grow through experience, support, and connection! Encourage them to reach out to their Admissions Counselor, Go-To-Raider, or Preview Guide at any point if they have questions!

Early Fall

TOPIC	WHAT YOUR STUDENT MAY BE EXPECTING	WAYS TO SUPPORT
Before Move-In	A mix of excitement, uncertainty, anticipation, and emotional ups and downs as they prepare to leave familiar routines and environments behind.	<p>Ask: How are you feeling about moving in?</p> <p>Encourage: Openness to new experiences and relationships.</p> <p>Remind: Feeling nervous is normal, even for confident students, and check the "What Not to Pack" list.</p>
Early Arrivals	Excitement to start their fall commitment, eager to get started, but unsure what campus will be like without the rest of the students.	<p>Ask: How are you feeling about the progress on the checklist?</p> <p>Encourage: Attendance at early arrival programs and events to meet others on campus.</p> <p>Remind: It may feel unfamiliar before the full campus returns, but don't forget that campus support services are available now.</p>
Move-In and Orientation	A mix of social overwhelm, exhaustion, comparison to others, and excitement.	<p>Ask: What's been your favorite part so far?</p> <p>Encourage: Participation and meeting new people.</p> <p>Remind: Most students are still figuring things out too - no one is behind!</p>
Week 1	Adjusting to new routines, balancing freedom, and feeling homesick.	<p>Ask: What's been easier or harder than you expected?</p> <p>Encourage: Keeping dorm doors open to meet new people, attend events, and ask questions.</p> <p>Remind: One difficult day does not mean the transition is failing!</p>
Week 2	Continuing to build social connections, adjust to classroom expectations, responsibility, and involvements are in full-swing.	<p>Ask: Who have you connected with so far? Labor Day is this weekend, are you doing anything fun on campus for the long weekend?</p> <p>Encourage: Encourage involvement and routine building.</p> <p>Remind: Relationships and routines take time to develop.</p>
Weeks 3 and 4	The excitement of something new may begin to fade. Figuring out routines and establishing a sense of belonging.	<p>Ask: How are you managing your time? Are you ready for your first exams?</p> <p>Encourage: Attend office hours and tutoring, and continue to take care of themselves.</p> <p>Remind: Don't be afraid to ask for help or support. Everyone is there to help you succeed.</p>

Family Reminder: Students often share their hardest moments with family first. Listening calmly and encouraging problem-solving can help students build confidence and resilience. One difficult situation or day does not mean they're failing!

Mid-Fall

TOPIC	WHAT YOUR STUDENT MAY BE EXPECTING	WAYS TO SUPPORT
Weeks 5 - 6	Settling into routines, gaining confidence in some areas while continuing to balance academics, involvement, friendships, and personal responsibilities.	<p>Ask: How are you taking care of yourself and managing everything on your plate?</p> <p>Encourage: Balance, healthy routines, and using support resources before stress builds.</p> <p>Remind: It's normal for motivation and energy levels to shift throughout the semester.</p>
Weeks 7 - 8	Managing competing priorities, midterm exams and projects, handling stress, and looking forward to fall break.	<p>Ask: How are you feeling about your midterms and your workload right now?</p> <p>Encourage: Normalize using tutoring, faculty office hours, study groups, and taking time for themselves to de-stress.</p> <p>Remind: One exam grade or difficult assignment does not define their potential to succeed.</p>
Weeks 9 - 10	May begin feeling more confident and connected, though some may still experience fatigue, homesickness, or stress related to balancing commitments and academics. Beginning to think about course scheduling for the spring.	<p>Ask: How did your meeting go with your advisor? What classes are you most excited about?</p> <p>Encourage: Thoughtful conversations around interests and goals as they begin preparing for spring registration.</p> <p>Remind: It's okay if plans, majors, or interests continue to evolve. If they haven't declared a major, remind them to meet with their FYS instructor so they're able to schedule courses.</p>

Family Reminder: Struggle and stress are normal parts of transition and growth. Encourage progress, effort, and persistence, not perfection.

Late Fall

TOPIC	WHAT YOUR STUDENT MAY BE EXPECTING	WAYS TO SUPPORT
Weeks 11 - 12	Feeling mentally and physically fatigued while balancing preparation for the end of the semester with involvements and coursework, while looking ahead and scheduling spring courses.	<p>Ask: Do you need any resources or support to finish this semester strong?</p> <p>What classes are you most looking forward to taking next semester?</p> <p>Encourage: Healthy study habits, sleep, breaks, and realistic time management strategies.</p> <p>Remind: Rest and balance are important for success.</p>
Weeks 13 - 14	Feeling emotionally and academically drained while trying to stay motivated and manage remaining assignments, deadlines, and final push to finish the semester successfully.	<p>Ask: What are your plans for balancing finals preparation and rest along with involvements, teams, etc.?</p> <p>Encourage: Access tutoring, faculty office hours, study groups.</p> <p>Remind: They were selected to be part of the Mount Union community because we believe in their ability to succeed here.</p>
Week 15	Feeling emotional exhaustion and stress in the final push of the semester.	<p>Ask: What support do you need right now?</p> <p>Encourage: Confidence and self-care.</p> <p>Remind: Progress matters more than perfection.</p>
Week 16	Anxious while awaiting final grades, relief, mental fatigue, excitement or sadness to leave for winter break	<p>Ask: What are you most looking forward to over the break?</p> <p>Encourage: Reflection and celebration on accomplishments and growth.</p> <p>Remind: Rest, reflection, and recovery are important after a busy semester.</p>

Family Reminder: The first semester is filled with adjustment, growth, and learning for students and families alike. Celebrate resilience, progress, and the steps your student has taken throughout the journey.

IMPORTANT DATES AND TRANSITION MOMENTS

Supporting Your Student Throughout the Semester

While every student's journey will look different, there are several key moments throughout the semester that often bring excitement, stress, growth, and adjustment. Below are a few important dates and transition points where your support and encouragement can make a meaningful impact.

TIMEFRAME	WHAT'S HAPPENING	WAYS TO SUPPORT
Leading up to Move-In Day	Realization of transition is setting in, excitement, anxiety, and eager to start something new.	<p>Ask: How are you feeling?</p> <p>Encourage: Realization of transition is setting in, excitement, anxiety, and eager to start something new.</p> <p>Remind: Check the 'What To Bring & Not To Bring' packing list and register for a parking pass.</p>
August 21-23 Orientation	Meeting many new people, including their Resident Assistant and Raider Guide, and FYE cohort.	<p>Ask: Have you made any connections in your residence hall or Orientation group?</p> <p>Encourage: Encourage participation and being present during sessions and optional activities throughout the weekend.</p> <p>Remind: Be open minded to trying new things! Growth happens in times of discomfort.</p>
August 24-30: Week of Welcome	Week of free experiences and activities for students to engage in and make connections.	<p>Ask: What events will you be attending?</p> <p>Encourage: Step out of their comfort zone and try something new.</p> <p>Remind: Pick up their books from the bookstore (located in HPCC).</p>
August 25: Raiderfest Involvement Fair	Anxious while awaiting final grades, relief, mental fatigue, excitement or sadness to leave for winter break	<p>Ask: What are you most looking forward to over the break?</p> <p>Encourage: Reflection and celebration on accomplishments and growth.</p> <p>Remind: Rest, reflection, and recovery are important after a busy semester.</p>
September 7: Labor Day	No classes! Students may be excited for the day off and long weekend, feeling uncertain whether to stay on campus or go home.	<p>Ask: How have the first two weeks been so far? What are your long weekend plans?</p> <p>Encourage: Stay on campus and engage with other students and programming offered.</p> <p>Remind: They'll become acclimated and more comfortable the more time they spend on campus.</p>

TIMEFRAME	WHAT'S HAPPENING	WAYS TO SUPPORT
September 7-October 2: Transition Dip	Newness and excitement may have worn off. Students are having their first big assignments and exams and receiving their first real academic feedback which they may or may not be prepared for. They're also getting into the routine of college life and starting to miss aspects of home.	<p>Ask: What has been feeling most manageable lately? What has been more challenging than expected?</p> <p>Encourage: Continued involvement, connection, and use of support resources.</p> <p>Remind: Transition dips are common and temporary. Many students are still adjusting socially, academically, and emotionally during this time.</p>
October 10: Family Day/ Homecoming/ ArtFest/ Alumni Weekend	This is a great opportunity for students to share what their experience on campus has been like so far with their family members while experiencing campus traditions together.	<p>Ask: What has felt most rewarding or meaningful so far in your college journey?</p> <p>Encourage: Share their favorite places, people, experiences, and accomplishments from their first few months on campus.</p> <p>Remind: How excited and proud you are of them and sharing this experience with them.</p>
October 15-18: First 8-Week Exams and Fall Break	No classes! Students taking an 8-week course will have exams on October 15. They may be studying and preparing to wrap up their first course for credit and looking forward to rest and relaxation with family and friends while also feeling more independent and wanting more freedom when they're at home.	<p>Ask: What has surprised you most about college so far? What are you enjoying? What's been challenging?</p> <p>Encourage: Rest and relaxation before heading back to campus for the second half of the semester.</p> <p>Remind: Home may feel a little different for both students and families during breaks and that's a normal part of growth and independence.</p>
October 19: Returning from Fall Break	May be feeling refreshed and excited to reconnect with friends while also adjusting back into routines, coursework, and responsibilities after time away. They may start feeling homesick again after a visit with family.	<p>Ask: How are you feeling heading into the second half of the semester?</p> <p>Encourage: Re-establishing routines and staying engaged socially and academically.</p> <p>Remind: It's normal for energy to fluctuate after breaks and transitions.</p>
October 20: Founder's Day - 180 Years of UMU!	Can participate in campus traditions, celebrations, and events that help build connection, pride, and a sense of belonging within the Mount Union community.	<p>Ask: Did you attend any Founder's Day events?</p> <p>Encourage: Participation in traditions and experiences that help build memories with their peers.</p> <p>Remind: Why they chose Mount Union, and what they loved about it when deciding to attend.</p>

TIMEFRAME	WHAT'S HAPPENING	WAYS TO SUPPORT
Weeks 9 -11: Course Registration	Thinking ahead about academic goals, interests, majors, and future opportunities. Can be a stressful time if their interests have changed or they're not quite sure of their major yet.	<p>Ask: Have you met with your advisor yet?</p> <p>Encourage: Honest conversation around interests, strengths, and future goals.</p> <p>Remind: It's okay if they don't have it all figured out yet. They don't have to declare their major until the end of their sophomore year.</p>
November 2: Last Day to Withdraw with a "W"	Sometimes students struggle with a specific topic or course. They may be worried about how they're doing in a class, and unsure of what to do. If they intend to retake the class, they can withdraw and show a W on their transcript.	<p>Ask: How are you feeling about your classes right now? Have you talked to your professor or advisor about how things are going if you're struggling?</p> <p>Encourage: Utilize faculty office hours, support in the Center for Student Success, and conversations with advisors before making academic decisions independently.</p> <p>Remind: Asking questions is important in learning to advocate for themselves.</p>
November 25-29: Thanksgiving Break	No classes! Ready for rest and family time after a busy semester while starting to stress about finals period.	<p>Ask: What are you most proud of this semester?</p> <p>Encourage: Rest and meaningful downtime spent together is important.</p> <p>Remind: Students may seem more independent, more tired or both, and that's normal.</p>
December 6-10: Finals Period	Balancing exams, projects, presentations, deadlines, and emotions that come with finishing their first semester of college. Stress, relief, excitement, and sadness to be done are all normal.	<p>Ask: How are you feeling your exams are going so far? What course do you have to prepare the most for?</p> <p>Encourage: Take breaks, sleep, hydrate, and use support resources when needed. Focus on progress and doing their best!</p> <p>Remind: They've worked all semester for this, and they've achieved so much already. They've got this!</p>