Dear Parent(s) and Family Member(s):

Texas A&M University is rich in history, tradition, and concern for our students. We are especially concerned about those students who engage in high-risk behavior that may jeopardize their ability to achieve their fullest potential while attending the University. Activities or personal actions associated with the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs, as well as engaging in acts of high-risk behavior, take away from the academic and co-curricular activities that are the foundation of the Aggie experience.

You may remember that we briefly discussed some of these issues during the parent and family (College 101, Partners in Success) session during New Student Conferences. We hope the information in that session, as well as this letter, will help prompt or facilitate a conversation between you and your Aggie(s). With this goal in mind, I hope you will take some time to familiarize yourself with the information highlighted on the next pages.

Special Points of Interest:

- Alcohol and Other Drugs
- Parental Notification
- Additional Areas of Concern: Sexual Violence & Hazing
Alcohol and Other Drugs

In order to promote a campus environment that is free of alcohol abuse, illegal drug use, and other negative behaviors, I am writing you to ask that you partner with us in addressing the increasingly risky behavior of college students. It is our hope that a strong message from parents and family will give many students reason enough to make responsible choices in the best interests of their health and safety. In fact, research shows that parents who communicate an expectation that their student does not drink have far less episodes of binge drinking than those students whose parents do not communicate such an expectation.

Consequences such as harassment, physical abuse, sexual misconduct and personal injury are often connected with alcohol and other drug abuse. Preventing such occurrences requires collaboration and commitment from all stakeholders (parents, guardians, family members, University faculty and staff).

Parental Notification

Although we understand that students are adults and need to assume responsibility for their own actions, we know that parents and families still play a very important role in their development. Texas A&M University is concerned about students who improperly use alcohol and other drugs and the effects that these substances may have on their health, their academic performance, their relationship with others, and their future.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) provides the opportunity to inform parents/guardians of students under the age of 21 when their student has been found responsible for a Texas A&M University Student Rules violation related to Alcohol and/or Illegal Drugs and Controlled Substances. Should your student be in this situation, you may receive a letter from me indicating that your student has been found responsible for this type of rule violation.

In cases where a student is found responsible, a range of sanctions is possible, including, but not limited to: educational workshops, referral to Student Counseling Service, and periods of Conduct Probation. The sanction of Conduct Probation places a student “not in good standing” with the University. The designation of “not in good standing” results in a loss of eligibility to hold an office in any recognized student organization, inability to represent the University at any official function, and may impact a student’s ability to receive a university-administered scholarship.

So that you may become more familiar with the University Student Rules and the conduct process, we encourage you to review the Texas A&M University Student Rules at http://student-rules.tamu.edu/ and the conduct process at http://studentlife.tamu.edu/scrs/scs.

Additional Areas of Concern: Sexual Violence and Hazing

There are two additional areas that we encourage you to talk with your student about: sexual violence and hazing.
We encourage all students to practice universal safety precautions such as being aware of their surroundings, staying in groups, being cautious about how much personal information they make available online, making sure that they have money for a cab if they are out and need to get home. Additional information about crime prevention and methods in which students can enhance their personal safety is available via the Texas A&M University Police Department website at http://tamu.edu/upd.

Sexual assault is a crime of motive and opportunity and is never the fault of the victim. Offenders are always responsible for the choice to assault someone else. The only person who can prevent this crime from occurring is the perpetrator. It is important to know that approximately 90% of the sexual assaults reported by college women are perpetrated by someone the victim knew; about half occur on a date (Abbey et al., 1996a; Koss, 1988). The attacker is usually a classmate, friend, boyfriend, ex-boyfriend, or other acquaintance (in that order) as reported in The Sexual Victimization of College Women available at https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/182369.pdf. Victims of sexual assault can be women or men, and sexual assault can occur between individuals of the same sex or gender. While more than 90% of victims are women, men are also sexually assaulted, usually by other men; 98% of men who rape other men identify themselves as heterosexual (Tjaden and Thoennes, 1998).

While alcohol consumption and sexual assault frequently co-occur, alcohol is not the cause of sexual assault. On average, at least 50% of college students’ sexual assaults are associated with alcohol use (Abbey et al., 1996a, 1998; Copenhaver and Grauerholz, 1991; Harrington and Leitenberg, 1994; Presley et al., 1997). Koss (1988) reported that 74% of the perpetrators and 55% of the victims of rape in her nationally representative sample of college students had been drinking alcohol.

Sexual assault remains the most drastically underreported crime as 95% of attacks are unreported, making sexual assault the “silent epidemic” (Fisher et al., 2000). Texas A&M University acknowledges the importance of officially reporting all crimes and will provide assistance with reporting. The University also knows that reporting a crime is different from pressing charges. The University stresses the importance of supporting victims in whatever decision they make with regard to pressing charges. Services are available to help victims whether or not they choose to press charges. There are campus and community resources and additional information related to sexual violence listed on the Student Assistance Services website at http://studentaffairs.tamu.edu/sas/saprotocol.

Finally, parents/guardians are also encouraged to discuss the potential risks associated with hazing. Hazing is a violation of Texas State law and of Texas A&M University’s Student Rules. Texas A&M defines hazing as: Prohibited acts committed for the purpose of initiation, admission into, affiliation with, or as a condition for continued membership in a group or organization; or as part of any activity of a recognized student organization, student group, Corps of Cadets, Corps outfit, Corps unit, or Corps Special Activities.

Prohibited behavior includes any act that endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student, or that destroys or removes public or private property;
and/or assisting, directing, or in any way causing others to participate in degrading behavior and/or behavior that causes ridicule, humiliation, or embarrassment; and/or engaging in conduct which tends to bring the reputation of the organization, group, or university into disrepute.

Previously relied upon “traditions,” (including Corps, fraternity/sorority, or any other group or organization activity, practice or “tradition”) intent of such acts, or coercion by current or former student leaders of such groups, or former students will not suffice as a justifiable reason for participation in such acts. It is not a defense that the person (or group) against whom the hazing was directed consented to, or acquiesced to, the behavior in question. Examples of such behavior include but are not limited to:

- Misuse of authority by virtue of one’s class rank or leadership position
- Striking another student by hand or with any instrument
- Any form of physical bondage of a student
- Taking of a student to an outlying area and dropping him/her off
- Forcing a student into a violation of the law or a university rule such as indecent exposure, trespassing, violation of visitation, etc.
- Any form of “quadding”

Having firsthand knowledge of the planning of such activities or firsthand knowledge that an incident of this type has occurred and failing to report it to appropriate university officials (The Dean of Student Life and/or the University Police Department) is also a violation of Student Rules.

Please encourage your student to report hazing if he/she encounters the behavior. Hazing is often disguised as a “team building” or a motivational activity for students. As your student is discussing his/her involvement with various groups, we encourage you to ask specific questions related to their activities in the group. For example, “How did you become part of the group?” “What are the requirements for membership?” For more information, please review the information at http://stophazing.tamu.edu/.

**Resources**

In order to assist you as a parent/guardian with the conversations that you will have with your student regarding ways to mitigate high risk and dangerous behaviors that he or she might become involved with we have provided several resources on the Texas A&M Aggie Parents website at http://parents.tamu.edu.
THANK YOU

Thank you for taking the time to read through this letter. Please consider partnering with us in promoting responsible and safe decision making among our Aggie students before a problem occurs. Inappropriate alcohol and other drug use, along with associated high risk behavior, not only affects the student who is directly involved, but those who are closely affiliated with the student as well.

Congratulations on your student becoming an Aggie and welcome to the Aggie Family. If the Offices of the Dean of Student Life can assist you, please do not hesitate to call on us. Your family calendar should be a resource to you and is available on-line at http://parents.tamu.edu. You may also call 1-800-719-1793 for information in Spanish.

Sincerely,

Anne Reber, Ph.D.
Dean of Students

The Offices of the Dean of Student Life strives to enhance student opportunities to participate fully in the University experience. We do this by providing information, services, programs and involvement opportunities that facilitate responsible life choices and promote awareness of self and community. Each of the offices has a specific mission but one common goal: to provide education, outreach and support.