Greetings from Portland State University. I hope the fall has been a good one for you and your family.

Campus has been bustling with activity as we head into the second half of the term. With finals week less than one month away, students have been turning book pages as quickly as leaves have been falling. One of our central goals is to provide support for students to be successful, not only with their educational goals but also with their personal growth, during their time at PSU. This support comes in a variety of forms: Resource Centers, panel discussions, workshops, and programs to name a few. One of the most recent examples is the newly established Veterans Resource Center featured in the last newsletter. As partners in student success, we hope that you will encourage your students to take advantage of these services.

In this edition of the PSU Family newsletter, you will become familiar with student support services from all of the above mentioned forms. We have highlighted important Housing deadlines and upcoming insurance workshops. You’ll also read about:

- Morgan Burgess, a student veteran and involved member of the Viking Vets student organization
- From Debt to Degree, an event regarding student debt and including remarks by national experts (link to full video of event included)
- Craig Leets, the new Coordinator of Queer Student Services
- PSU’s Four-Year Degree Guarantee
- McNairs Scholars Program, a research-focused program for undergraduates who want to pursue PhDs
- Resources available through the PSU library

If you have suggestions or article ideas, please email these to family@pdx.edu. Your comments and feedback will provide us with direction for future PSU Family articles and contribute towards our ultimate goal for this newsletter—to be an opportunity for a dialogue between members of the PSU extended community. Further, the Office of the Dean of Student Life staff are available to assist your student. You can reach us by calling 503.725.4422 or emailing askdosl@pdx.edu.

Sincerely,

Michele Toppe, Dean of Student Life

---

**Campus Spotlight**

**Four-Year Degree Guarantee**

Portland State University is the only public university in Oregon to offer a four-year degree guarantee. Starting in fall 2014, PSU promises that full-time freshmen who sign an agreement will get the support and courses necessary to graduate in four years—or PSU will not charge them tuition for any remaining required courses. Students pay for only four years. That’s our guarantee!

Here’s how it works:

- Full-time freshmen entering PSU in fall 2014 can indicate their interest in the Four-Year Degree Guarantee before they register for classes.
- Under the agreement, students choose an academic major and work with an adviser to select the required courses.
- Then, as full-time students earning 45 credits a year, they must maintain good academic standing and meet requirements for their majors to stay on track.
- PSU will provide academic advising and the required courses each year. Students may change majors and continue to participate in the Four-Year Degree Guarantee only if they can still meet graduation requirements for the new major within four years of entering PSU.
- If students meet all the requirements of the Four-Year Degree Guarantee but are unable to graduate in four years, PSU will not charge them tuition for any courses needed to complete their degrees.

See our frequently asked questions page for more information.

**Money Matters: From Debt to Degree**

How to make degrees financially sustainable

Total debt from student loans across the United States now exceeds credit card and consumer debt. This debt can create an unsustainable financial situation for new graduates or, even worse, for those students who drop out before completing the degree. What can students, colleges and policy makers do to make college more affordable and reduce spiraling debt?

That was the focus of an interactive town hall discussion hosted at PSU on October 23, 2013, by Portland State University and KGW-TV. The event featured a talk by Mark Kantrowitz, a national expert on student debt and the founder of consumer websites FinAid and FastWeb, followed by remarks from Rohit Chopra, the national Ombudsman for Student Loans at the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Panelists encouraged students to take advantage of the financial literacy resources available from the government and nonprofits, and to limit borrowing to no more than half of what you might earn in that first year after college.

The event was part of PSU Convenes, a series of public events each year spotlighting important issues facing Oregonians.

See the full video of the panel here.
I am returning to the West after four years on the East Coast. I was born and lived in Las Vegas, NV until I graduated high school. I attended Chapman University in Orange, CA, where I majored in Communication Studies and minored in Leadership and Organizational Studies. Afterwards, I moved across the country to College Park, MD, to attend the University of Maryland, where I received a graduate degree in College Student Personnel. In September 2012, I began a new position as the Assistant Director for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Ally Student Resource Center at Penn State University. I coordinated campus-wide events, taught a class for student educators, and collaborated with various departments to continuously improve the climate for queer and ally students on campus. I left Penn State to come to the other PSU—Portland State University!

How did you end up at PSU?

I found out about the Coordinator position through my sister who lives in Portland. I was excited by the urban campus, the strong connections to the Portland community, and the commitment to serving others. Additionally, I was excited about the opportunity to work with queer students in the Queer Resource Center (QRC) and help this organization continue to grow on campus.

What is the most fulfilling aspect of the work you do for PSU?

When I was an undergraduate student, I did not feel like my university supported my identity as a queer student. As Coordinator of Queer Student Services, I strive to create opportunities for queer students to feel connected to campus even before they arrive at PSU. Whether speaking to an incoming student at orientation, connecting with students during Viking and Welcome Weeks, or talking with a student who has come to the QRC, I hope to help queer students and their allies to feel like they have a home at PSU. I am most fulfilled in my work when a student feels a strong connection to campus because they can express all parts of themselves, including their queer or ally identities.

What is your vision for the QRC regarding supporting student success and providing a unique college experience?

My vision is to create a space where students are able to succeed to their fullest academic and personal potential at PSU. In the QRC, students can find support with their academics and their personal lives. They can spend time with their friends or hold meetings for the group projects they have in their classes. On any given day, a student might engage a dialogue with their peers in the QRC about current events, course topics, or deep philosophical quandaries. Regardless of their need, students should be able to find support from the staff of the QRC, and when graduating, will hopefully reflect back on their time at PSU and consider the QRC an essential component to their success.

What advice would you give students and families of PSU students or individuals thinking about attending PSU?

The opportunity to study at a great institution like PSU should not be taken for granted. There are so many ways to get involved, and I encourage each student to take full advantages of the things that are offered! Take a class that excites you; apply for an internship that will help you make a positive impact on the Portland community; do research with your favorite professor; join a student organization; seek out a student leadership position; visit the various centers on campus; go to an event to learn about somebody who is different—do as much as you can! Always remember that your first priority on campus is to be a student and excel in your academics, but try to find ways to get involved outside of the classroom!

What PSU event are you looking forward to this fall?

I’m looking forward to PSU’s Trans Awareness Week (November 18–22). Also, I am especially looking forward to the events that will recognize World AIDS Day being held on November 28 sponsored by the QRC, the Multicultural Center, and Student Health and Counseling. These events will include an interactive AIDS history timeline, rapid HIV testing, and a documentary screening.
University Housing and Residence Life

Housing Updates/Reminders/Deadlines

Important Upcoming Dates
November 11 Veterans Day: PSU Closed
November 27 Victor’s Closes after lunch for Thanksgiving
November 28 Thanksgiving
December 1 Victor’s Reopens for dinner
December 6 Winter Meal Plan Change Deadline
December 13 Victor’s closes after lunch for Winter Break.

Withdrawals from PSU
If students are not planning to attend PSU for Winter Term 2014, their move-out date will be December 14.

Additional information about Housing and Residence Life is available on our website or visit us in our office in the Broadway Building, Suite 210. We are available to answer questions by email at housing@pdx.edu or by phone at 503-725-4375.

Resource Spotlight
Joan Petit, PSU Library

Recent research shows that your sons and daughters are likely to ask you for help when they are struggling with a research assignment. As a parent, that puts you in a great position to let your students know about a fantastic university resource: PSU librarians. Almost all students know about the library building: they study here (often late!), enjoy coffee and snacks from our coffee cart, borrow laptops, use study rooms, and find books in our stacks. The PSU Library also provides an incredible range of academic resources well beyond those offered even in the best high school libraries. Yet, many students never think to ask a librarian for help with tricky research questions. Some of them never check the library website and try to do all of their research on their own through Google.

A big misconception is that “everything is online” and that today’s students are pros at finding information. Students today do have many skills; they’ve always known the Internet and can text faster than we can think! But being able to surf the web and play computer games isn’t the same as navigating the complex world of academic research. As librarians, our job is to help bridge the gap between the information students need and the skills they need to find that information.

We offer help in many ways:
- At the Reference Desk on the 2nd floor of the Library
- Via 24/7 chat reference
- By phone
- By text
- By email

You can find all of our contact information on the library website. Students often tell us, “I spent hours looking for this, and you found it in a minute!” We are friendly, helpful folks who are glad to answer just about any question students bring to us. So when your son or daughter says they need three scholarly articles and they don’t know what to do, please suggest they ask a librarian.

Student Spotlight
Morgan Burgess
Meet Morgan Burgess, a Junior majoring in Biology. Morgan is involved in the NAAACP, WRC Women Veterans’ Outreach Project, and Viking Vets where she’s the Women’s Veterans Liaison/Social Media Guru.

Where are you from and why did you choose to study at PSU?
I’m originally from Manzanita, OR. My mother owned a restaurant there for 18 years just south of Cannon Beach. After I joined the Navy, I lived on the East coast for five years before coming back home. I chose to attend PSU because of the Biology Department and their scholastic and research opportunities. The professors are not only teaching what they love, they are doing what they love. Their passion is reflected in the success of PSU students.

How do you balance the demands of your academics? Are there any campus resources you utilize?
During the first week of school the President of Viking Vets introduced me to the Veterans Resource Center (VRC). There they introduced me to the Resource Center for Students with Children. I was awarded the Jim Sells Scholarship and half of my son’s childcare cost will be covered this school year. If you haven’t visited the fourth floor of the Smith Memorial Center I strongly encourage it. PSU is full of people and groups that want to help you become successful. Opening yourself up to one group can open other doors you were blind to. Another great tool is OrgSync; there you can navigate all the different clubs and organizations on campus and find your niche.

What is your dream job and why?
Working as a Bioinformatics Scientist in a research environment developing analytical techniques to process data. I found out when I was pregnant with my son that I was a carrier for Cystic Fibrosis (CF). Upon further investigation we discovered that my paternal grandma lost her first two children to this disease. I would love to work along a lab that is aimed at understanding the genetic basis of respiratory and digestive diseases such as CF.

What are your plans for the future?
Graduate from Portland State University and apply to OHSU’s Bioinformatics program. In addition to raising a well-rounded little boy, let’s just say free time isn’t in my future!

What advice would you like to share with families who are supporting new students, particularly veterans?
Transition to civilian life, or student life, isn’t easy. You are going from one stressor to another in a relatively short amount of time. When I got out of the Navy I had to find my identity again. The best advice I have for with families who are supporting new students is be there for moral support. Helping them with the admissions process and settling into their new environment will relieve a lot of stress. A phone call from my family always makes my day.

What is your favorite Fall activity in Portland?
This fall our family enjoyed all the extra sunlight Portland was spoiled with. We took advantage of all the harvest festivals including the Apple tastings in Portland, the Sauvie Island corn mazes and pumpkin patch, and ‘Halloween’ at the Oregon Zoo. We also decorated my front yard as a haunted house for all the neighborhood kids. We take Halloween seriously!
### Portland Law School Fair

**When:** Saturday, November 9 from 11:00am–2:00pm  
**Where:** PSU Smith Memorial Student Union (355)  
**What:** A unique opportunity to talk to over 60 Law School representatives about their school’s programs.  
For more info visit: [www.pdx.edu/sls](http://www.pdx.edu/sls)

### The School of Theatre & Film Invites You to Our Fall Mainstage Production

**Our Town by Thornton Wilder**  
- **Direction:** Lorraine Bahr, Guest Director  
- **Scenic & Lighting Design:** Daniel Meeker  
- **Costume Design:** Alison Heryer  
**Preview:** Thursday, November 14, at 7:30 pm  
**Performs:** Friday–Sunday, November 15–17 (Friday & Saturday at 7:30 pm, Sunday at 2:00 pm)  
**Wednesday–Saturday, November 20–23** at 7:30 pm in Lincoln Performance Hall  
**PSU Box Office:** 503-725-3307, or visit our [webpage](http://www.pdx.edu/sls).  
**Ticket Prices for Mainstage Productions**  
- **Previews $6 | PSU Students $6 in Advance, $8 at the Door**  
- **General Admission $12* | PSU Staff/Seniors/Students $8**  
*Service Charges Apply

### National and International Networks

Just because you are not in Portland does not meet you cannot connect to the Portland State community. There are Portland State Alumni networks in over ten major US and international cities that current students and their parents are invited to connect with. Is your student thinking of moving to one of these cities? Do you already live there? This is the perfect place to network, stay connected and keep in touch.  
Visit [pdx.edu/alumni/alumni-networks](http://pdx.edu/alumni/alumni-networks) to find out more.