

Letter from Dean Mischke

October 16, 2015

Dear Parents,

It's a time of transitions here in New England, as the weather makes a marked turn toward cooler nights and shorter days, and the leaves begin to change. It may also be a time of transition for students, who are well into the adventure of the 2015-16 school year. Your children have likely had papers, tests or quizzes by now and may be feeling some degree of stress from time to time.

Transitioning to the rigor of life at Exeter can be difficult at times. Beyond the normal challenges of adolescence, attending a boarding school where expectations are high and school days long can take some getting used to, especially for Exeter students: They want to try every club, excel in all of their classes and stay up all night hanging out with their friends. There is A LOT going on and sometimes it's hard to keep up!

I wanted to share some thoughts on what you might be noticing with your child and outline the resources that we have available to help you both.

What are some signs that your son or daughter might need help transitioning to the new academic year, particularly if they are new students? Are you hearing from your child significantly more or less often than usual? Perhaps you've noticed a changed emotional state when they're talking to you. Maybe they are having a hard time getting out of bed in the morning or unable to fall asleep at night. Attendance issues can be a red flag for the deans, so advisers will often ask how much sleep their advisees are getting or find out whether they are managing their work well. If your child reports missing a lot of classes or is spending time "resting" over at the Lamont Health and Wellness Center, that might be a cause for concern for us as well as you. Ultimately, you know your child best, and you will often recognize when they are struggling before anyone else does, but we will let you know if we see anything that concerns us.

Always share your concerns with your child's adviser first. Supporting your child at Exeter is a partnership and advisers are the main conduits through which you can understand your child's experience here. The adviser might have some additional information to either support your concerns or alleviate them. Parents and advisers can and should work together to discuss issues and generate possible remedies.

For physical concerns, **The Lamont Health and Wellness Center** has 24-hour medical care for students. We also have two school doctors, both of whom are trained in adolescent medicine and have extensive experience working in boarding schools. Students can make appointments to see a school doctor or physician's assistant just like they would at home. Feel free to contact these medical professionals as well should you have a concern or issue about the physical health of your child.

Occasionally, adjustment and transition issues may require the skills and training of a mental health clinician. The four full-time clinicians in our **Counseling and Psychological Services Department** have an excellent knowledge of adolescent behavior and development. Our counseling staff is available to meet with students, for a single session or regular weekly sessions, at no additional cost. Counselors are often asked to help deal with issues of time management, school-life balance, homesickness, attention issues, changes in mood or other personal matters.

While the majority of students who utilize the counselors are self-referred, Exeter parents are welcome to speak with one of our counselors whenever concerns arise. The counseling team works closely with advisers, teachers, deans and others. Additionally, we have a consulting psychiatrist who supports the work of our counselors and is available to meet with students for assessments and medication management as needed.

There are a number of other adults on campus working closely with our health center professionals to support our students:

- Students can meet with our **nutritionist** to discuss dietary choices, a food allergy, the dining hall menu options, or advice on safely losing or gaining weight.
- Three full-time licensed athletic trainers staff our **Athletic Training Center**. Athletic trainers support our extensive inter- and intra-scholastic athletics programs, staff all athletic contests, and work individually with student athletes to help them rehabilitate from surgeries and injuries.
- **Pam Parris** organizes **peer-tutoring** for students, available every school night in the Academy Library, and she offers individual guidance and training on study skills, time management, effective test preparation, and introductory language and writing skills development.
- Finally, our team of **deans** provides direct support to students having academic, attendance and behavior issues, and they work hard to support the advisers, dorm heads and teachers in their efforts to nurture and educate your son or daughter.

While no single resource will be right for every student or situation, we hope that by working in partnership with you, we will find the right constellation of support and services to help make your child's experience at Exeter the best it can be. (For information on how to contact members of our support staff, please consult [*The E Book*](#).)

Exeter's faculty and staff look forward to welcoming many of you to campus today for the start of Family Weekend. I encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to check in with your child's teachers, advisers, coaches and dorm parents.

Warmly,

Melissa Mischke