Fresh Ideas for 2012

Happy New Year off-campus students!

Along with your New Year’s resolutions, consider this list of tips as you head into winter semester at Michigan:

1) **Meet your neighbors.** Chances are, you don’t know all the people that live next door or across the street, so stop by and say hello! It’s a safety measure as well – if you know your neighbors, you’ll have people to call if you ever need help and be better equipped to identify suspicious behavior on your street.

2) **Go to more sporting events.** Beyond football, Michigan is home to 26 Varsity teams. See how many different types of games you can attend before the semester ends (and be sure to practice your cheers before going to a hockey game!)

3) **Actually use office hours.** Getting to know your professors early can only help you in the long run. Not to mention, they’re often some of the most accomplished, fascinating people you’ll ever meet.

4) **Check out a book from a library...for fun.** Michigan has 19 different libraries throughout campus with over 9.5 million volumes. How many have you read? (Note: checking out a movie from Askwith, although awesome, does not count.)

5) **Go to North Campus.** Even just once. See a Basement Arts show...study at the Dude...spot a deer...enjoy some Quiznos. You’ll find the Diag-to-Diag Express really doesn’t take too long at all.
Chew on This: Campus Dining for Off-Campus Students

Eat what you want, when you want it. That’s part of the freedom of off-campus living. Of course, it’s a freedom limited by the extent of your budget, time for grocery shopping, talent for meal preparation, and willingness to clean dishes. If the joy of cooking eludes you, there is a way to augment your diet with nutritious, varied and convenient meals on campus.

University Housing offers a selection of meal plans to suit the appetites and budgets of off-campus students. Each plan includes a number of “all you care to eat” meals in any of the several dining halls. Plans also include Blue Bucks – electronic cash – to spend in residential dining halls and cafés, Union eateries, athletic concession stands and many other campus locations.

A meal plan enables your Mcard to access residential dining halls during meal hours. You can check out the hours and menus of the dining halls close to wherever you are on campus, day or night. Students who don’t want a meal plan can simply add Blue Bucks to their Mcards. (To access a dining hall with only Blue Bucks, arrangements have to be made with the Housing Business Services Mcard Center.)

Concerned about food allergies or personal nutrition? Try MyNutrition, an online tool for identifying common allergens and evaluating the nutritional values of dining hall offerings. There are a number of other nutrition services available, including consultation with a Registered Dietician. You can select a meal plan or Add Blue Bucks online. For more information contact the Housing Business Services Mcard Center.

By adding a meal plan or Blue Bucks to your diet, it is easier to eat what you want, when you want it – and you don’t always have to make it or clean the dishes.

Contributed by Peter Logan, Communications Director University Housing

12 Days without the Internet

Would you be able to live without the Internet? If you had asked me that question a few weeks ago, I would certainly say no. Internet has become a regular part of my life as I read the news in the mornings, check my email regularly and interact with friends on social media sites. Though I often say that I need to ‘get off’ the Internet more, I seldom find the motivation to do so. How would I survive – especially as a college student – without it?

So, you can imagine my disbelief as I spent the two-week holiday break with my grandma and with absolutely no Internet access. I was suddenly forced to find entertainment through other mediums – ones that I had abandoned after getting my first laptop. Although I was annoyed, my temptation quickly dissolved as I began to enjoy the break without the need to be on my laptop constantly. I suddenly found motivation to do things I never used to ‘have time for’ like finishing a book or going for a stroll.

After winter break, I wouldn’t say that I’m completely ‘free’ from the Internet – having a smartphone certainly doesn’t help…. But if there’s one thing I took away from these two weeks is that the way I use the Internet should definitely change. It’s not about how much I use it, but rather how I use it.

Written by Emily Ho
Seasonal Affective Disorder

Although you may not be able to tell based on this month’s unseasonably warm temperatures, we are headed into the worst of Michigan’s long, cold winter.

During this time, some students may experience seasonal affective disorder (SAD) – a pattern most commonly characterized by depression in the fall or winter for at least two consecutive years. In America, SAD is more common among women than men. Symptoms can include:

- Sleeping more but still feeling tired
- Feeling more anxious or irritable than usual
- Feeling hopeless, depressed, sad or lethargic
- Appetite changes
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Difficulty concentrating and processing information

If you are experiencing two or more of these symptoms, consider talking to a counselor at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). They can suggest strategies to reduce stress, refer students for a medication evaluation, or recommend light therapy treatment at the CAPS Wellness Zone.

Information from University Health System (UHS) and Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

This Year’s Resolution

New Year’s is a time for people to spend with friends and family. For many, the of calendar year is also viewed as a great opportunity to leave behind all the mistakes of the past year and start anew. According to recent research, about half of Americans typically set a New Year’s resolution; however, of these people, only eight percent accomplish their resolution goal. In fact, around 24 percent of Americans who consistently make a New Year’s resolution have failed in achieving their set goals every year. Don’t let that discourage you, though!

Beyond the Diag conducted a poll to see which goals were most popular with U-M students:

If you are still looking for inspiration, here are some of the most popular resolutions for Americans: spend more time with family, exercise more/ live a healthier lifestyle, lose weight, experience something new, and get out of debt/ spend less, help others, and get more organized.

All in all, data suggests that people who are unsatisfied with things in their lives are more likely to make a resolution. If you are looking to make a change in 2012, we hope the New Year brings fresh motivation and success.

Written by Wen Ning
It’s the most wonderful week of the year! (and no, I’m not referring to Shark Week). The biannual Restaurant Week is upon us once again in Ann Arbor!

If you’re not familiar, here’s how it works: Restaurant Week happens twice a year -- once in January and again in June. From Sunday - Friday this week (the 15th through the 20th), you can enjoy some of the best restaurants Ann Arbor has to offer for a low, fixed price. All three-course dinners are $25 while lunches are only $12. Many options offer two-for-one pricing as well, meaning, for example, that you can enjoy an entire three-course dinner at Sava’s for as low as $12.50!

It is recommended that you make reservations ahead of time since tables fill up quickly throughout the week. To make a reservation, simply visit the website of the restaurant you’re planning to attend. Keep in mind that the costs of beverages, tax, and tip are not included in pricing. Also, all restaurants provide a specific Restaurant Week menu from which you can make your selections. To find a full list of participating restaurants and their menus, visit annarborrestaurantweek.com.

Splurge a little this week and treat yourself to a dinner you normally couldn’t afford. Ann Arbor has some of the best restaurants in the state, and it would be a shame to miss out on all of its finest offerings before graduating from Michigan.

Written by Josh Buoy
Get Ready to Go Abroad

You researched programs all last semester or even over the summer or last year. You worried about what to put down as your language level – intermediate or fluent – on your application and who to ask for a recommendation. Then you stressed about whether they lost your application as you waited to hear back. Finally, you get your acceptance letter for a study abroad or internship program, your ticket to the world! Only now you have a million other things to research... DON’T PANIC! Here is a timeline of the important steps to take before you leave Ann Arbor:

PASSPORT: Required for all international travel. Normal processing time for a passport is 4-6 weeks; expedited, for an extra cost, takes 2-3 weeks. Unforeseen hiccups can always lengthen the process through http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html

FLIGHTS: Rule of thumb, book your flight as soon as you can commit to your travel dates because it is expensive to change. While flights can go down in price the few months before departure time, there is no guarantee in finding your dates. While this site focuses on Europe, Rick Steves raises many good points to look into: http://www.ricksteves.com/play/htp/fly-to-europe.htm
My own personal trick: I fly out of Toronto. Canadian flights are cheaper and there is less wait time in security.

Landing: Know where you are going once you land. Research transportation available. Have a definitive way to get from the airport to your first place of lodging and book your lodging before you get there. Even if you are staying in hostels, you don’t want to be searching for one while you try to get your bearings in a new city and find out that they are already booked. BEWARE OF JETLAG! I got stranded in Paris because I was out until two without realizing it. (The city never sleeps) and spent an hour trying to find a cab that would take me just out of the city limits because the metro stopped at two on Sat.

VISA: If you will be paid you probably need a visa, but many countries require a visa for different reasons. http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1262.html
While this site is helpful, it is best if you check with your program advisor or someone else who has experience with your program.

ICE: Email copies of all your documents (tickets, passport, program info) to yourself and family and leave copies with them. Also, make sure someone knows your itinerary.

INSURANCE: UM requires their students to have travel insurance and provides it for very cheap! http://www.uhs.umich.edu/ tal/

SAFETY: Make sure you have some cash in hand for which ever country you are landing in because the exchange rates in airports suck. Make SURE to let your bank know you will be traveling so they don’t freeze your account. Also, avoid making many withdrawals because there are usually fees each time. So take a larger amount out as long as you can safely carry it with you.

For more safety tips and information about Beyond the Diag, visit studentsafety.umich.edu

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Still have questions? E-mail us at beyondthedimag@umich.edu