



Parent, Family or Supporter First-Gen Guide

Arkansas Tech University





Welcome

Becoming a college parent/guardian/supporter is a big transition, especially when your student is the first in your family to attend college. It's an exciting, sometimes emotional time, full of pride, hope, and maybe a few uncertainties.

At Arkansas Tech University, where **42%** of our students are first-generation, we celebrate these families and understand the important role you play in your students' success.

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How can you support your student?

You won't have all the answers to your student's questions. While you may want to help them through everything, you may be at a loss about how college works.



Let your student be a student!

You are sending your student into a new environment filled with unfamiliar experiences. As a parent, guardian, or supporter, it's natural to want to monitor their experiences and make sure they are okay. While those instincts come from a place of love, giving your student the space to navigate college on their own will help them grow in confidence and independence.

Continue to check in, encourage, and support your student, but also trust them as they learn and grow. This is a big adjustment for both of you, so be patient with yourself and your student. In the end, you'll both be thankful for the growth that comes from this experience.

What your student may not tell you

First-gen students often feel caught between college culture and home.

They may feel guilty about being away, pressured to send money home, or like they don't belong. This tension is real. Reassure your student that becoming educated doesn't mean leaving their community behind — it means expanding what's possible for all of you. Make it clear you want to know when things are hard — not to fix everything, but to be a real support.

Encourage your student to find Community

Across campus, your student will find welcoming groups and spaces where they can build community with others who know where they're coming from. Encourage your student to get involved on campus by attending events and joining student organizations, in addition to utilizing campus resources when experiencing academic, social, or emotional difficulties. The first step to this can be visiting the **Campus Life** office or connecting with anyone they met during Orientation.



Campus Life

While academic achievement leading to graduation is the reason for attending Arkansas Tech University, the experiences that students have outside the classroom prove to have a lifelong impact. Experiences offered through ATU Campus Life enhance maturity, leadership, time management, friendship, career development, and civic engagement along with many other essential life skills. We have 160+ organizations that students could get involved.



Follow us on social media:
[@atucampuslife](https://www.instagram.com/atucampuslife)



A new chapter for your Family

Starting college is an exciting milestone—not just for your student, but for your entire family. As your student becomes more independent, your role will naturally begin to change. You may not see or talk with them as often, and you may not be part of every decision or campus experience. While this transition can be bittersweet, it is also an important part of your student's growth and development.

Although your involvement may look different than it did before, your support remains one of the most important factors in your student's success. Encourage them to ask questions, use campus resources, get involved, and communicate with faculty and staff needed.

Stay connected by checking in regularly, celebrating their accomplishments, and reminding them that it's okay to ask for support. We also invite families to participate in designated campus events throughout the year, such as **Family Day**, athletic events, performances, and other programs designed to welcome and engage families. Together, we can help your student build confidence, develop independence, and have a successful college experience.

SAVE THE DATE - SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2026

Important Resources

Paying for College

Complete the FAFSA.

Look for scholarships and grants

Accept Federal Grants and/or Loans if needed

Understand the Billing Process

Once your student is registered for classes and has completed the housing application (If applicable), It is time to think about the payment process.

FERPA

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), all privacy rights transfer entirely to the student once they turn 18 or enter a university, regardless of who pays the tuition. Universities cannot release grades, academic records, or disciplinary files to parents without the student's explicit written consent.



Move In Tips

1. Know your room and roommates

- Go to the ATU Residence Life [Housing Portal](#) to find your room assignment and roommate(s) contact information. Whether you know the student you will be living with or not, it is important to get to know each other and find out what you have in common. Because residence hall rooms may be smaller than your room at home, it is also important to discuss what you plan to bring to campus.

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2. Create a packing list: What to bring and Not to bring?

- Take a [360 virtual tour](#) or a [tour in person](#) to get an idea of the layout of your hall and room.
- Take advantage of our vendor partnerships, through them you can purchase: [linens](#), rent a [loft bed](#) and [MicroFridge](#), get a bunk trunk to secure your items, and obtain [student property insurance](#).

3. Read the residence hall policy

- Read through your contract and residence hall policy. This way there won't be any surprises and you'll know what's expected or not.

4. Double check the requirements

- Make sure you have completed all the requirements before you move in. It wouldn't be fun if you got to the residence hall and you couldn't get in.

5. Map out your residence hall

- Find your residence hall on google maps before you leave your house. Expect increased traffic and congestion on campus during Move-In Day.

6. Dress to move

- Check the weather on move-in day. If it's going to rain, you might want to bring garbage bags, umbrellas, and tennis shoes to hold as much as the rain off as possible.
- Make sure you wear comfy, light clothes and shoes that don't hurt your feet, because you will be moving and walking a lot. It can get hot in the residence halls on move-in day, and it might be easier to take the stairs too.

7. Take snacks and drinks

- It's always nice to have snack food on long car drives. You'll probably also want to keep yourself hydrated while you're busy moving heavy furniture and decorating your room in a hot residence hall.

Health and Wellness Center

The Health and Wellness Center (HWC) provides confidential medical and counseling services to students. Students can receive treatment for minor illnesses and injuries, lab services, allergy injections, and women's health services. Counseling services are provided to student on a short-term basis with up to 10 sessions per academic year.

Most services are free to all students as they have paid the student health fee in order to receive access to the services. To learn more, please visit www.atu.edu/hwc

Tutoring Center

Our services include Academic Coaching, Peer Tutoring, Online Tutoring, Group Study Sessions, and more. We are located on the first floor of the Ross Pendergraft Library and Technology Center. Come by and see us for help with classes, test taking, study skills, or just navigating university services.

Blackboard Shell

At our university, Blackboard is the online learning platform students use for their courses. In addition to their classes, all first-generation students are automatically enrolled in a First-Generation Student Community within Blackboard. This online resource hub provides easy access to campus services, academic support, financial wellness resources, scholarships, events, leadership opportunities, and important updates—all in one place. Checking the community regularly is a great way for students to stay connected and make the most of the support available to them.

TRIO - Student Support Services

The Student Support Services office at Arkansas Tech University is home to two grant programs: Student Support Services and Teacher Prep Student Support Services. Each program is funded in total (100%) by federal grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education with an annual budget of \$272,364 to serve 140 students on campus. The mission of the programs is to assist and retain eligible students in pursuit of a bachelor's degree and ensure good academic standing of the participants they serve. Participants of the TRIO SSS programs are low-income, first-generation college students, and/or students with disabilities.

Student Support Services (SSS) is all about student achievement and success. Our goal is to help you succeed at Arkansas Tech University, help you attain graduation with a bachelor's degree, and gain the necessary skills to either enter the work force or enter graduate or professional school.

Packing List

Check out the list to answer all your questions about what is allowed or not in the halls.

Pack this:

- Alarm Clock
- Cleaning Supplies
- Clothes and hangers
- Coffee Maker
- Computer
- Desk lamp & Flashlight
- Fan/Battery operated fan
- First Aid kit
- Hair Dryer
- Laundry Bag/Hamper
- Necessary Medication
- Pillows
- Small Microwave (700 Watts or less)
- Small Refrigerator (5 cubic ft or less)
- Toiletries & Towels
- TV/and or Fire Stick or Roku
- UL Approved Surge/Power Protector
- XL Twin Size Bedding for dorms or Full/Queen for UC
- Mattress Topper
- Air Fryer (UC Only)
- Insta Pots (UC Only)

Not this:

- Alcohol or Alcohol Containers
- Ammunition
- Candles
- Combustible Materials
- Electrical space heaters
- Fireworks
- Guns/Firearms
- Halogen Lamps
- Hoverboards
- Hot Plates
- Knives longer than 3"
- Lava lamps
- Open Coil appliances
- Outlet extenders
- Pets
- Scooters
- Suntan Lamps
- Tattoo Guns or needles
- Tobacco
- Waterbeds
- Window Unit air conditioners
- Wireless Routers & printers



Things to Avoid

Don't Choose Their Path for Them

It can be tempting to encourage your student toward a college or major that feels like the "right" choice. Whether it's your alma mater, a career you've envisioned for them, or a path you believe they'll excel in. However, choosing a college and major are some of the first major decisions they will make as young adults.

Instead of making the decision for them, have conversations about their interests, goals, and needs. Finding a college and major that are the right fit for your student helps them feel connected, engaged, and motivated throughout their college experience. Remember, they are the one attending classes, building relationships, and creating their own college journey.

Do Have College Conversations with Your Student

Your role is to guide your student as they make the college choices that are right for them. Try asking open-ended questions about their interests and goals.

Ask more specific questions:

- Where do you see yourself after college?
- What major do you think could get you there?
- What other majors are you interested in?
- Why does this school interest you?
- What else do you like about it?
- What are your concerns about this school/major?
- How can I support you?
- What can I do to help you through this decision?



Don't Call Professors

Parent-teacher conferences are over (unfair, right?). In fact, FERPA makes it illegal for schools to share your 18-year-old's grades or divulge that your child is on academic probation. If your child has a problem, your child must fix the problem. This is why there are academic advisors, office hours, department chairs, and deans of students. Unless your child is unable to speak due to an illness or prolonged absence, let them do the talking.

Don't Cure Homesickness at Home

FACT: 66.6 percent of first-year students admitted feeling homesick or lonely (according to HERI stats, UCLA). The cure for homesickness is not at home. It's finding your people and places on campus. It's being patient and appreciating that change takes time. Remind them. I'll remind them too.

Don't Take over the Experience

Ultimately, it's the student's milestone, not the adult's. "Should you get the 'Proud Mom' car decal? Yes! Should you confidently wear your 'University Dad' shirt at family weekend? Absolutely! But draw the line on the 'we' statements".

That includes statements like:

- We got in!
- We've got a great class schedule this semester!
- We're moving in on Sunday.

While colleges see families as partners and as part of the university community, remember that this is your student's experience, and you should allow them to make it their own. Be proud, but you are now in a supporting role.

Frequently Asked Questions

How is College different from High School?

College comes with much more autonomy than high school, especially for students living away from home for the first time. The ratio of time studying outside class to time spent in class also increases, requiring students to be proactive about time management. Campus Life also offers ways for students to connect, engage, and find their place on campus.

How often should the FAFSA be completed?

You need to complete the FAFSA every year if you want to receive financial aid. The application process opens on October 1 each year.

My student wants to play intramural sports, study abroad and participate in research. Are all these extra activities a distraction from their studies?

Activities like these are so important to your student's growth! Not only will they teach them to manage their time, they also will create a well-rounded college experience. Sports teach discipline and teamwork. Study abroad teaches empathy and adaptability. Research teaches students how to work with professors and how to communicate their findings. All these skills will be vital for creating an outstanding resume and getting a job after college.



Directory

Campus Life

Phone: (479) 880-4455

Email: campuslife@atu.edu

Residence Life

Phone: (479) 968-0376

Email: housing@atu.edu

Campus Recreation

Phone: (479) 880-4455

Ferguson Student Union

215 West O Street

Student Government Association

Instagram: @atusga

Website: www.atu.edu/sga

Veteran Services

Phone: (479) 968-0445

Email: va@atu.edu

Financial Aid

Phone: (479) 968-0399

Email: fa.help@atu.edu

Academic Advising and Career Development

Phone: (479) 964-0843

Academic Advising: adviseme@atu.edu

Career Services: career.services@atu.edu

Public Safety

Phone: (479) 968-0222

Email: dps@atu.edu

Athletics

Phone: (479) 968-0345

Website: arkansastechsports.com

Student Activities Board

Instagram: atu_sab

Email: sab@atu.edu

Parent and Family Relations

Phone: (479) 356-2157

Email: parents@atu.edu

Testing and Disability Services

Phone: (479) 968-0302

Email: disabilities@atu.edu

TRIO Student Support Services

Phone: (479) 880-4122

Email: nedwards4@atu.edu