Dear Parents and Family:

As a parent of a first-generation college student, I want to congratulate you and your family on your student’s acceptance to USF. This accomplishment is, no doubt, the pinnacle of both your student and your family’s hard work, and you should be commended for this grand occasion.

I am happy to share with you an invitation we recently sent to your student. Your student received an email inviting them to apply for the Muscat Scholars Program. The Muscat Scholars Program (MSP) is designed to provide a challenging and rewarding experience that will help prepare your student to succeed as a first-generation college student.

Some students graduating from high school may not feel fully prepared for the rigorous academic work required for success at USF – that’s where MSP comes in. Each MSP participant will have the opportunity to develop his or her skills in critical thinking, writing, math, problem solving and effective study methods and thereby gain the proficiency and confidence needed to be successful at USF.

College life can also be challenging outside the classroom. Adjusting to life as an independent adult in a strange environment full of new demands and opportunities can be overwhelming. MSP Scholars become acquainted with the campus through intentional meetings, visits to important offices, and introductions to key individuals – this provides them with the strong foothold needed to avoid some of the first semester problems first year students often face. MSP Scholars will have a head start on learning about how to become an effective and successful USF Don.

The academic component of the Muscat Scholars Program includes coursework in writing, math, contemporary issues in multiculturalism, information literacy and college success skills development. Current USF faculty members, librarians, and staff from Student Life teach these classes. Participants receive 2 units of elective course credit for successful completion of MSP. Each student is assigned a peer mentor, a former MSP student who has upper class standing; the peer mentors lead the cultural, social and recreational portion of the program, provide tutoring and mentoring for the duration of the program. Each student will also be assigned a Staff Mentor. If your student becomes a Muscat Scholar, I will be serving as their Academic Success Coach for the next four years at USF.

By bringing Scholars to USF two weeks prior to Orientation, our goal is to enable each MSP graduate to have a successful transition through their first year at USF. MSP begins on Sunday, August 7, 2016 and ends after
graduation on Friday, August 19, 2016. Scholars must completely commit to the Muscat Scholars Program during this time – the program in effect will be their “full-time” job for these two weeks including weekends. The daily schedule begins in the early morning and, on most days, extends through the evening hours. Required activities are also scheduled over the weekend (August 13/14). We have arranged for all students to live in Hayes Healy and provide them with food during the program at no additional cost. Students who will be living on campus in the Fall can remain in their assigned MSP rooms. Students who will be living with family during the school year will be living with us in Hayes for the duration of the two week summer program.

There are two benefits of the program that I wanted to share with you. In collaboration with Student Housing and Residential Education, one of the benefits of MSP is on-campus housing. MSP Scholars are guaranteed housing for first and second year; Scholars will be given priority lottery numbers for on campus housing for years three and four. This is a huge benefit for students in San Francisco's competitive and expensive housing market. In collaboration with Information Technology Services, MSP students who meet financial aid guidelines will be able to given a refurbished laptop at no cost that they will be able to use during their stay at USF. Limited hardware support will be provided by ITS.

MSP continues during the school year with students taking two courses: Psychology of Success in the Fall and Career Exploration in the Spring. These two classes, along with a retreats held in October and February, will give students the opportunity to develop a plan and a program for the transition from college to career. Throughout the year, MSP will have socials and gatherings to help continue to build community and foster connections.

An invitation to apply for MSP was e-mailed to your son or daughter and is also available online at www.usfca.edu/Muscat. You can also find out more information via our Brochure posted on the site. To apply, students need to submit the completed online application; you will also need to fill out the online parent/family feedback form and return it to us electronically. **These two items are due by May 1st, 2016 (applications are considered on a space available basis).** We have a limited amount of spaces to offer, and we don’t want your student to miss out! Upon confirmation, Scholars are asked to pay a $100 program fee.

Please note - because MSP students are housed together, we ask that applicants for MSP not choose a roommate at this time, and you will be matched with a roommate from MSP. If you have chosen a roommate, and the roommate would like to attend MSP as well, you are welcome to both submit an application. If you do not have a roommate, you will be matched with one from MSP.

If you have any questions or would like more information about the Muscat Scholars Program, please contact me at 415-422-6841 or via email: lobo@usfca.edu.

Sincerely,

Charlene P. Lobo Soriano, Ed.D., NCC
Program Director, Muscat Scholars Program
Academic Success Coach, Director of Academic Development and Technological Innovation in Advising
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