



## Herd Path Program Contact Protocol for Visiting Students *who Commute to Campus*

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Our goal is to make these checking-in visits a positive experience for both you and the freshmen under your care. Smile, look and be encouraging and supportive.

- Your first step is to email each of your students separately to introduce yourself, offer help and set up a time and place to meet (we'll provide you with each student's MU email address).
  - Your challenge will be to improvise a private space in a public place, i.e. it is very important that whatever place you suggest for a meeting be open and well-lit because we want the student to feel (and be) safe. For this reason – to reassure the student that you are indeed contacting him/her on behalf of a university program and not for some ill purposes – please cc me on the email.
  - Here is some language to get you started (customize, adapt, revise as you like – the goal is to make a connection):

Dear NAME,

I'm a Senior/Junior here at Marshall majoring in [MAJOR], and I also work with the *Herd Path Program*, a support system for first year students. The first year of college is tough in a lot of ways that aren't necessarily academic – just getting used to a campus and how things work can be overwhelming.

I'm reaching out to you because you have missed a few classes, and missing classes is one of the first signs that a freshmen may be having trouble or is about to have trouble in school.

Can we meet [near the Memorial Fountain/outside of Drinko, etc.] for a few minutes sometime this week? I have a Resource Card for you that outlines the many support systems in place for freshmen at Marshall, and sometimes it's just good to touch base with a fellow student. 😊

Looking forward to hearing from you,  
[YOUR NAME]

PS: I am required to cc Dr. Kateryna Schray, who coordinates this program on behalf of Academic Affairs, as a way to verify that I am a Herd Path Partner.

- When you meet the student, introduce yourself and say that you are with the *Herd Path Program*, a Marshall initiative dedicated to supporting freshmen because the first year of college can be challenging – you’ve been there, you know.
- Tell the student why you are there, something like: “I’m here to make sure you are okay and see if there is anything Marshall can do to help because you’ve missed some classes.”
- The goal of the entire visit is to deliver this three-point message:
  - “When freshmen miss classes, it is usually a sign that they are having OR ARE ABOUT TO HAVE academic problems. We want to get out in front of those problems. We want you to have a great year and a great experience at Marshall.”
  - “Regular class attendance is the number 1 predictor of freshman academic success.”
  - “If you are having any difficulty at all with course materials, please, please talk to your instructor – a lot of freshmen skip this obvious step of protecting their GPAs just because they don’t realize how much talking to your professor can help.”
    - “It is also a good idea to talk to other students about any classes you missed, not just the professor. Don’t be shy about asking classmates for notes – it is a great way to meet people.”
- Emphasize that you’re not checking in on the student to make him/her feel bad about missing class – quite the opposite: even in a university as big as Marshall, *each individual matters*.
  - “The Herd Path Program does not keep any ‘permanent records’ or track attendance once we check on a student. This is purely an effort to make sure you are okay and you know that class attendance is key to success. NO JUDGMENT HERE, just concern.”
- Give the freshman a Resource Card; if applicable, point out a resource that might be particularly useful – circle it with a Sharpie. Cross out “Go” in “Go to Class” and write “Come” instead. If you are comfortable doing so, write your name and email

on the card as well – it's a nice personal touch and may make the difference for a freshman who is homesick or overwhelmed.

- Once you have met with a freshman, fill the spreadsheet and send it back to me. The only reason we do this is so that I know that all the freshmen who might have missed classes recently are okay.

The next pages contain the most common scenarios we've encountered this past year with suggested response. Our guiding principle, however, remains that we check on freshmen because we honestly don't want them to get lost in the crowd and genuinely care about their well-being. Be kind and supportive, and don't hesitate to direct freshmen to contact me either by email ([herdpath@marshall.edu](mailto:herdpath@marshall.edu)), by phone (304-696-2404), or in person (CH 444).

# Common HPP Scenarios

Scenarios from MSU's Training Program (with suggested responses).	
I haven't missed that class.	→ <i>Talk to your instructor about it next class and let him/her know.</i>
My Professor canceled that class.	→ <i>Okay thanks! Our system sometimes can't tell between canceled classes and absences. Just wanted to make sure that you were okay.</i>
I dropped that class.	→ <i>Check your schedule on-line just to make sure. This is really important – sometime students THINK they've dropped a class only to find out at the end of the semester that some part of the process got skipped and retroactively dropping a class is very difficult.</i>  [If you find someone in this situation, you've just done them and their advisor a huge favor.]
I'm not in that class.	→ <i>Check your schedule on-line just to make sure, and check the section number if there is more than one section of that course offered to make sure that you have been attending the right section. Sometimes there are multiple sections of the same class taught at the same time and it can be confusing. If our attendance system has you in this class, that means that the instructor will be expected to post a grade for you at the end of the semester. The Registrar's Office can fix that much easier now than after grades are posted and you find a surprise F on your transcript for a class you didn't even know you had on your schedule.</i>  [If you find someone in this situation, you've just done them and their advisor a huge favor.]
What days did I miss class?	→ <i>I'm not sure, but at least twice.</i>

Is someone else going to tell my parents?

→ *No, we're just here to help (even if we wanted to tell your parents – which we DON'T – we couldn't because of FERPA)*

→ *No, we just want you to succeed.*

→ *No, we just care about freshman students.*

What about this or that? Who? Why?

→ *Call or email Kateryna Schray, she can give you more information.*

→ *Her contact info is on the Resource Card.*

[If you have a sharpie or pen, circle my contact info. Please assure the student that I would love to hear from them and that supporting freshmen is my only goal in this program.]

If you don't know the answer to a question, don't know what to say, or don't know how to respond, simply tell the resident to contact Kateryna Schray: email ([herdpath@marshall.edu](mailto:herdpath@marshall.edu)); phone (304-696-2404); in person (CH 444).