

Fostering a Campus Environment Supportive of Student Mental Health

Faculty Toolkit



Brought to you by the Towson University Counseling Center

<https://www.towson.edu/counseling/>

410-704-2512

Open Monday-Friday, 8 am – 5 pm

24 hour crisis availability at 410-704-2512

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Introduction

The Towson University Counseling Center (TUCC) recognizes that many of the conversations around student mental health take place outside of TUCC. As faculty and instructors, you have an essential role in supporting student mental health on campus. A brief conversation between a student and a faculty member that encourages the student to get help can make all the difference in the world; an instructor who knows the resources on campus and shares that knowledge with a student can be the “tipping point” for that student to get the help they need; and emphasizing TUCC information on course syllabi as well as other communications with students can normalize help-seeking and help students not feel alone. These are just a few ways to help—there are countless others.

How Do I Use This Toolkit?

Thank you for what you do every day to support our students, and thank you for considering the resources and suggestions contained in this toolkit. This Faculty Toolkit was developed by the University of Michigan Counseling and Psychological Services (UM TUCC) and adapted by the Towson University Counseling Center. UM TUCC conducted multiple focus groups and meetings with University of Michigan students, faculty, graduate student instructors, and others, in which there was an expressed desire to provide faculty and other instructors with additional resources, creative ideas, and best practices for supporting student mental health on campus. We hope this resource will serve as a valuable guide in the following ways:

1. Helping you create a classroom environment that is supportive of student mental health.
2. Providing you with tips on how to identify and help a student who may be struggling with their mental health.

The strategies included in this guide are based on research, as well as ideas, techniques, and tips that University of Michigan faculty and students have found to be effective in supporting student mental health and well-being. However, not all strategies will be the “right fit” for everyone. Think of this resource as you would a toolkit—it provides a variety of strategies and ideas from which to pick and choose. When considering the tools you would like to try, consider your professional role, how you typically interact with students, and other factors that might influence what is most useful for you.

University of Michigan Acknowledgements

U-M TUCC would like to acknowledge and thank the **Baldwin Foundation** for their generous support for this project, without which this Faculty Toolkit would not be possible.

Thanks to the U-M Student Advisory Board, a diverse group of undergraduate and graduate/professional students passionate about mental health. The U-M SAB met over the course of an academic year and shared their student voices to provide vital content suggestions.

We are grateful to the students, faculty, graduate student instructors, and instructors who participated in focus groups and provided invaluable feedback and guidance in developing this resource. Thank you to the Michigan Community Scholars Program (MCSP) and the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (please refer to their Occasional Paper “Supporting Students Facing Mental Health Challenges” for valuable information on proactively supporting student mental well-being: http://crlt.umich.edu/sites/default/files/resource_files/CRLT_no38.pdf).

Special thanks to U-M School of Social Work alum, Carolyn Scorpio, for her time and dedication as Project Manager and to U-M Stamps School of Art and Design student, Jude Boudon, for their creativity and artistic talent with the illustrations.

U-M would also like to thank the University of Texas at Austin “Well-being in Learning Environments” Project for providing a model for this toolkit.

For this second printing (October 2019), we are also grateful for the additional support given by the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, University Health Service, the Medical School, and the Sommers Family.

Towson Acknowledgement

This toolkit has been adapted for faculty by the Towson University Counseling Center from a version generously shared by the University of Michigan's Counseling and Psychological Services (U-M TUCC).

TUCC would like to express sincere gratitude to U-M-CAPS for sharing this valuable resource with other counseling centers nationwide.

What is the Towson University Counseling Center?

The Towson University Counseling Center (TUCC) offers currently enrolled students several different kinds of help, starting with a private and confidential initial meeting with a counselor. The Counseling Center utilizes a Flexible Care treatment model, which is an adaptive, customizable approach to college student mental health. We strive to provide on-demand help as quickly as possible that can meet every student's unique needs.

We offer many types of services including self-help programs, massage chairs, peer support, wellness workshops, meditation services, support groups, therapy groups, same-day mental health consultations, solution-focused support, and referrals services. Many of our services can be accessed without even having to make an appointment with a therapist. For students who would like to meet one-on-one with a therapist, we offer same-day 30-minute appointments available every day throughout the semester. Students can book the same day they call, so that we can help students when they need us the most.

Where is TUCC located?

We are on the 2nd floor of the Health & Counseling Centers at Ward and West

What are the hours of operation?

Monday – Friday, 8am-5pm

Phone:

410-704-2512

Website:

<https://www.towson.edu/counseling/>

TUCC After Hours: To speak with a mental health professional when TUCC is closed, call 410-704-2512

How Do I Promote Student Mental Health & Well-Being?



Illustration by Jude Boudon

Creating an academic environment supportive of student mental health may include open and regular conversations about mental health, reframing what success looks like, and being intentional about course design. Incorporating these practices into your teaching can help alleviate stress for students and be particularly helpful for students experiencing mental health concerns. The instructional practices used in the classroom will vary based on a number of factors, including, but not limited to, the material and subject matter taught and the size of the classroom (i.e. discussion section or large lecture).

- **Include information about student mental health resources in your syllabus.** Consider adding one of the sample syllabus statements below and discussing it on the first day of class.

Students who are experiencing personal difficulties or mental health challenges are encouraged to seek free and confidential assistance at the Towson University Counseling Center (TUCC). Same-day appointments are available, and you can reach a crisis counselor by phone after hours. For more information about TUCC, please visit their website at <https://www.towson.edu/counseling/>. To make an appointment or for after-hours crisis assistance, please call 410-704-2512.

Learn more about how to support peers and get specific tips and a plan for your own self-care by using the digital simulation program, [Kognito](#).

The Towson University Counseling Center (TUCC) provides free and confidential counseling services. For more information about TUCC, please visit their website at <https://www.towson.edu/counseling/>. To make a same-day appointment or for after-hours crisis assistance, please call 410-704-2512.

We all experience emotional distress and personal difficulties as a normal part of life. As your instructor, I am not qualified to serve as your counselor. However, The Towson University Counseling Center (TUCC) provides free and confidential mental health services that are not connected to your academic record in any way. If you are experiencing mental health challenges, I strongly encourage you to take advantage of TUCC's services. For more information about TUCC, please visit their website at <https://www.towson.edu/counseling/>. To make a same-day appointment or for after-hours crisis assistance, please call 410-704-2512.

- **Consider telling students about Togetherall on the first day of class, and remind them about this resource during stressful times of the semester.**
 - Togetherall is a 24/7 communication and emotional support platform monitored by trained clinicians.
 - Tell students that within the Togetherall platform, members are anonymous, so no one will know they are using it unless they tell them. Most members report feeling better and more able to cope as a result of using the service and because it's available 24/7.
 - Consider sharing the Togetherall QR code (available through link below) during your first class meeting and encouraging students to sign up on the spot.
 - For more information about Togetherall and how students can set up an account, click [here](#).

Here are some practices that may be helpful to further support student mental health and well-being:

- **Acknowledge mental health openly throughout the semester to destigmatize it**, e.g., “We are approaching midterms, which can be a stressful time. Please make sure you take care of yourself and know that we have an array of mental health services available on campus.”
- **Check in during stressful times**, such as midterms and finals, or during national, global, or campus events that may increase students' stress.
- **Design a flexible syllabus**, e.g. allowing a certain number of absences without an impact on participation grades, granting extensions, or providing the opportunity to drop the lowest exam grade or make corrections. Allowing for mistakes and flexibility can keep students motivated even if they fall behind or miss class due to health or personal issues.
- **Acknowledge and celebrate multiple forms of learning** by incorporating smaller discussion groups or partner sharing, including a variety of content to accommodate visual and auditory learners, allowing participation points geared toward both introverted and extroverted students, and assigning coursework that incorporates a variety of different learning styles.
- **Create community guidelines** during the first class session, deciding as a class what an inclusive classroom means to them and establishing norms for respectful dialogue, especially around challenging subjects.
- **Prioritize accessibility for all students**, e.g. putting captions on videos shown in class, image descriptions on presentations, setting up the classroom in an accessible way, etc.
- **Close each class with something positive**, for example have students share something they learned or something they are interested in learning more about in the next class.

How Do I Build a More Inclusive Classroom Community?



Social support can have a direct impact on student health and well-being, with students with higher quality social support being less likely to experience mental health concerns (Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009).

Social connectedness can also impact college student retention (Allen, Robbins, Casillas, & Oh, 2008), and has been shown to be positively correlated with achievement motivation (Walton, Cohen, Cwir, & Spencer, 2012). You can help your students' mental health and well-being, as well as their academic performance, by helping to foster connection, encourage inclusivity, and build community.

- **Send an email or survey to students before the first day of class** to get to know them. Ask about their backgrounds, interests, strengths, needs, and other topics, and try to adjust the classroom and course content accordingly.
- **Learn the names and pronouns of students** and encourage them to get to know each other by using name tags and/or an icebreaker to begin class sessions.

- **Use Inclusive Language** so that all students feel respected in the classroom. Suggestions and examples can be found here: [APA Inclusive Language Guidelines](#)
- **Incorporate “Welcoming Rituals” at the start of class**, such as playing music, light check ins with students to ask how they are doing, or ask students to share something (if they choose) that happened to them that week.
- **Encourage social connections** by visiting discussion sections and planning outside events to encourage students to make connections with each other and the instructor.
- **Share personal anecdotes and personal connections** to course content, including areas where you've struggled, concepts you were surprised to learn, etc. to help students better relate to the course material and make real-world connections to the course material.
- **Promote small group work** throughout the semester and encourage students to share contact information (if they wish) on the first day to build a supportive network throughout the semester.
- **Reduce power dynamics** by sitting at the same level as your students, arranging desks or chairs in a circle (class size permitting), and/or encouraging students to lead class discussions.
- **Connect or refer students to Accessibility and Disability Services (ADS)** as needed to ensure that you are meeting the needs of all students and providing support and accommodations: visit <https://www.towson.edu/accessibility-disability-services/> or call at 410-704-2638.

How Do I Incorporate Mindfulness & Stress Reduction?

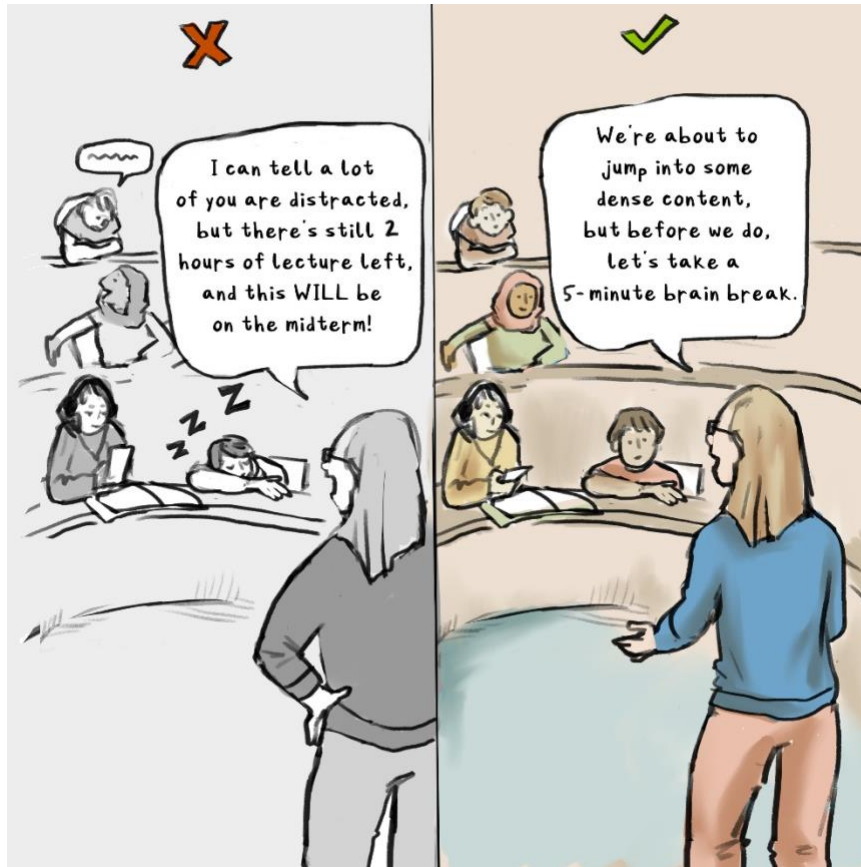


Illustration by Jude Boudon

Mindfulness is the practice of being fully present and attentive to one's inner thoughts and surroundings in an open, non-judgmental way (Kabat-Zinn, 2015). Mindfulness has been linked to many aspects of well-being, from improving memory and testing performance, reducing stress, and encouraging better physical health (Bonamo, Legerski, & Thomas, 2015; Kerrigan et al., 2017). Mindfulness practices have also been shown to assist in the adjustment and reduction of physiological stress levels in first-year college students (Ramler, Tennison, Lynch, & Murphy, 2016) and to be associated with greater psychological health and self-compassion among college students (Bergen-Cico, Possemato, & Cheon, 2013).

- **Take a "Brain Break"** during class sessions and encourage students to take a break from the class content, interact with classmates, stretch or engage in movement, or practice

a breathing exercise. Having a consistent break time each class session helps students be aware there is a break coming and focus more intently during class.

- **Provide a “Mindful Minute”** at the beginning of class or before exams in which you allow students to optionally engage in deep breathing techniques or a short meditation.
- **Encourage quick periods of movement** for students to stretch, move around, or take a brief walk outside before resuming the material.
- **Incorporate mindfulness activities during highly stressful times**, such as before an exam or during midterms or final exams, for example, by encouraging students to visit a quiet space outdoors or to explore the many mindfulness resources offered by TUCC <https://www.towson.edu/counseling/services/meditation-mindfulness.html>.
- **Give students advance notice** about which assignments may be more challenging or take longer to complete in order to reduce last-minute stress and help students plan ahead.
- **Consider granting an extension on an assignment** to the entire class if one or more students have asked for one. If one student is overwhelmed and asks for an extension, it is likely that others feel the same way but might not feel comfortable asking for one.
- **Encourage student self-care when discussing sensitive topics.** It might be helpful to let students know ahead of time if you will address areas that may be challenging or traumatic. Encourage students to take classroom breaks as needed to take care of themselves.

How Do I Foster Resilience & Self-Compassion?



Illustration by Jude Boudon

Resilience is the ability to recover from stress, despite challenging life events that would otherwise overwhelm one's coping ability (Smith et al., 2008). More resilient students tend to have better mental health, wellness, and academic outcomes (Johnson, Taasobshirazi, Kestler, & Cordova, 2015). Self-Compassion is the practice of treating yourself as you would a friend, by accepting your personal shortcomings, but also holding yourself accountable to grow and learn from failure (Neff, 2003). Research suggests that individuals who practice self-compassion may be better able to consider failure as a learning opportunity (Neff, Hsieh, & Dejitterat, 2005).

- **Talk about times you have failed, and how you worked through those failures.** Help your students see how they can use mistakes and failures as learning opportunities for growth and resilience.

- **Use exams and other assignments as teaching tools**, rather than the “end” of learning. For example, instead of handing out grades to students, go over the exam or assignment and discuss areas of common struggle so students can learn from them.
- **Consider allowing students to correct mistakes** and/or re-do assignments or assessments to demonstrate continued learning and mastery of course content.
- **Model how you practice compassion for yourself and others**, for example sharing the strategies you use to show compassion towards yourself and colleagues (e.g. engaging with self-kindness as opposed to self-judgment).
- **Share common experiences with your students**, for example if a student is struggling, share about a time when you had a similar experience and learned from it.
- **Be flexible**, taking into consideration students' lives outside of class and academics, including their families, children, jobs and internships, health, financial situation, other classes, etc.
- **Share ways that you practice self-care** in your daily life, and have students regularly share how they practice it as well. Encourage practices in the classroom to practice self-care, including allowing students to take care of their needs during class (e.g. drinking water, going to the restroom, taking regular breaks).
- **Remind students that they deserve to be here at Towson.** Students may be experiencing impostor syndrome and/or self-doubt due to pressure from classes and competitive academic programs. Hearing this from a faculty member or instructor can help students remember that they do belong and are able to succeed.

How Do I Encourage a Growth Mindset?

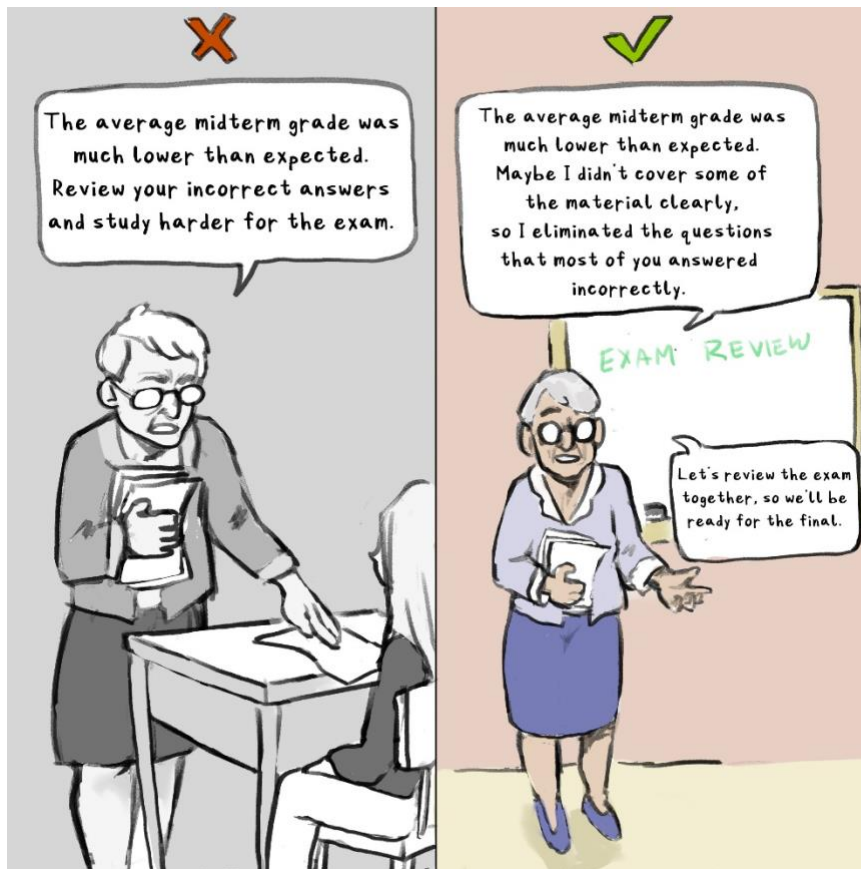


Illustration by Jude Boudon

A “growth mindset” is the belief that talent and intellectual ability can be developed through working hard, trying new strategies, and receiving input from others—rather than being inherent characteristics (Dweck, 2016). Individuals with a growth mindset tend to achieve more than those with a “fixed mindset,” as they typically put more energy into learning (Dweck, 2016). Having a growth mindset has been shown to be positively correlated with student achievement scores (Bostwick, Collie, Martin, & Durksen, 2017) and their ability to bounce back after academic setbacks (Aditomo, 2015).

- **Normalize failure** by letting your students see that you make mistakes too, and modeling how they can use those mistakes to learn and grow.

- **Provide space for students to struggle with concepts as a class** and encourage them to work collaboratively to work through the process.
- **Focus more on learning and mastery of material, as opposed to competition and performance.** Examples include: explaining what the grading curve means; being mindful that students' perceptions of the curve can increase a sense of competition; consider allowing students to retake exams or parts of exams to learn from mistakes; having students take exams both individually and in groups; and giving students choices in how they demonstrate knowledge/mastery of content.
- **Consider building in multiple ways for students to demonstrate that they have learned the course content.** Examples include assigning a variety of assignment types—exams, papers, presentations, videos, etc.; allowing students to choose how they demonstrate their learning within individual assignments (e.g. multimedia/video, writing a paper, giving a presentation); allowing students to choose whether they work on assignments individually, in groups, or with partners.

How Do I Identify a Student in Distress?

How you go about helping a student will depend on several factors: their level of distress, the nature of your relationship, the type of setting you are in, and your comfort level. The following includes the continuum of distress, warning signs, and suggestions on how to help.

Mild / Moderate Distress: Students exhibit behaviors that may or may not disrupt others, but can indicate that something is wrong and that assistance is needed. They may be reluctant or unable to acknowledge a need for personal help. Behaviors may include:

- Serious grade problems or a change from consistently passing grades to unaccountably poor performance.
- Excessive absences, especially if the student has previously demonstrated consistent attendance.
- Unusual or markedly changed patterns of interaction (e.g., avoidance of participation, excessive anxiety when called upon, domination of discussions, etc.)
- Other characteristics that suggest the student is having trouble managing stress successfully (e.g., a depressed, lethargic mood; very rapid speech; swollen, red eyes; marked change in personal dress and hygiene; falling asleep during class).
- New or repeated behavior which pushes the limits of decorum and which interferes with effective management of the immediate environment.
- Unusual or exaggerated emotional response that is inappropriate to the situation.

How to help students experiencing mild/moderate distress:

- Address the behavior/problem directly according to classroom protocol.
- Follow up with the student in private and allow them to speak freely about their current situation and the variables that may be affecting their distress.
- Consult with a colleague, department head, Dean of Students Office professional, or a campus counseling professional.
- Refer the student to one of the university resources.

Guidelines for talking with a student with any level of distress:

- Accept and respect what is said.
- Try to focus on an aspect of the problem that is manageable.
- Avoid easy answers such as "Everything will be alright."
- Help identify resources needed to improve things.
- Help the student recall constructive methods used in the past to cope; get the person to agree to do something constructive to change things.
- Trust your insight and reactions.
- Let others know your concerns.
- Attempt to address the student's needs and seek appropriate resources.
- Do not promise secrecy or offer confidentiality.

- Encourage the student to seek help.
- Respect the student's value system, even if you don't agree.

Severe Distress

Students may exhibit behaviors that signify an obvious crisis and that necessitate emergency care. Examples include:

- Highly disruptive behavior (e.g. hostility, aggression, violence, etc.).
- Inability to communicate clearly (garbled, slurred speech; unconnected, disjointed, or rambling thoughts).
- Loss of contact with reality (seeing or hearing things which others cannot see or hear; beliefs or actions greatly at odds with reality or probability).
- Stalking behaviors.
- Inappropriate communications (including threatening letters, e-mail messages, harassment).
- Overtly suicidal thoughts (including referring to suicide as a current option or in a written assignment).
- Threats to harm others.

How to help students in severe distress:

- Remain calm and know whom to call for help, if necessary. Find someone to stay with the student while calls to the appropriate resources are made. **See referral information in next section.**
- Remember that it is NOT your responsibility to provide the professional help needed for a severely troubled/disruptive student. You need only to make the necessary call and request assistance.
- When a student expresses a direct threat to themselves or others, or acts in a bizarre, highly irrational or disruptive way, call Towson University Public Safety at 410-704-4444.

If you are worried about a student's safety:

- When called for, let the person know you are worried about their safety and describe the behavior or situation that is worrisome to you.
- Offer yourself as a caring person until professional assistance has been obtained
- If you are concerned the student may be feeling hopeless and thinking about ending their life, ask directly if they are contemplating suicide. It is important to remember that talking about suicide should be taken seriously and not ignored.
- If a student indicates that they are having suicidal thoughts but denies that they are at risk of acting on those thoughts, strongly encourage them to go to the Counseling Center or to call for after-hours crisis assistance at 410-704-2512. Also, submit a form to the office of Student Outreach and Support (SOS) so that a Student Affairs staff member can reach out to provide support. <https://www.towson.edu/studentaffairs/student-outreach-support/>
- If a student indicates that they are having suicidal thoughts and are at risk of acting on them, consider walking them directly over to the Counseling Center (Monday-Friday, 8

am – 5 pm) or simply call TUPD (410-704-4444) for assistance in helping the student. Additionally, complete an SOS form.

- After the student leaves your office, make some notes documenting your interactions.

KOGNITO: A resource to help you identify, support, and refer a student in distress

- The TU Counseling Center offers a free online resource, Kognito, to help you notice when students show signs of distress, learn how to talk about these signs, practice sharing your concerns and learn how to motivate them to seek help.
- Research shows that people who complete the 45-minute training experience an increase in confidence, an ability to recognize signs of emotional distress in others, approach the subject, motivate others to seek help and discuss a referral to appropriate services.
- To take the online Kognito course, click [here](#)



How Do I Make a Referral to TUCC?

Are You Concerned about a Student?

Often, you will be one of the first to find out that a student is having personal problems that are interfering with their academic success or daily life. The student may come to you for academic advising, visit during office hours, send you an email, and share personal concerns with you.

In these situations, TUCC is available for assistance in a number of ways. If you would like to consult with one of our professional staff to help you figure out what steps might be taken to help the student, please call 410-704-2512 and ask to speak to a counselor about a student of concern.

How Do You Refer a Student to TUCC?

While many students seek help on their own, your exposure to students increases the likelihood you will identify signs or behaviors of distress in a student, or that a student will ask you for help. If this occurs, you can make a referral to TUCC or other resources using the following tips:

- Actively listen and validate your student's experiences.
- In addition to TUCC, know about other campus resources and encourage your student to seek them out (e.g., SOS Office, Center for Student Diversity, Military and Veterans Center, Accessibility and Disability Services).
- Encourage a recommendation to TUCC if they are experiencing mental health distress and reassure them that it is an act of strength to seek help.
- Let them know that they can schedule a same-day appointment by calling TUCC at 410-704-2512 or online: [Counseling Center Online Scheduling](#).
- Remind them that campus counseling resources are free and confidential.
- Mental health stigma can be a factor and your student may be ambivalent about seeking help. Exploring the TUCC website together can be helpful. <https://www.towson.edu/counseling/>
- Sometimes students need extra support in making the next step. Ask your student if it would be helpful to make the call or schedule online from your office.

What to Expect After Your Student Makes an Appointment at TUCC

Students will be provided with a link to complete paperwork online. They can also choose to complete the paperwork in the Center, but should plan to arrive about 20 minutes before their appointment if they have not yet completed the paperwork. A front desk receptionist will greet them upon arrival.

What Happens at an Initial Appointment?

The TUCC therapist will learn more about the concerns that the student is experiencing and will

work together to determine best next steps (e.g., use of online resources, psychoeducational workshops, support groups, therapy groups, brief solution-focused individual therapy at TUCG, a referral to a resource on campus or in the community, or any combination of these and other resources).

It is important for members of the campus community to understand that the meetings conducted with students at TUCG are confidential. Information or content of those sessions cannot be released or discussed without the student's written permission. TUCG staff adheres very strictly to ethical and legal parameters of confidentiality. **Read more about student confidentiality in the next section.**

How Do You Follow Up with a Student?

Depending on your role and the nature of your relationship with your student, it can be helpful to check in with them after making a referral to TUCG.

- Check in with your student to find out how they are doing through a follow up email, or by speaking with them after class.
- Be supportive and compassionate while remembering to maintain healthy boundaries with your student.
- If your student decided not to pursue help at this time, remind them that there are resources available to them in the future and encourage them to seek them out.
- Depending on your role, you may want to consider flexible arrangements that may be supportive to your student (e.g. extensions on assignments or exams).



What Do I Need to Know About Confidentiality?

As someone who cares about students and their well-being, it is completely understandable that you may want to know specifics regarding the services that a student might be participating in at TUCC. However, as mental health-care providers, TUCC staff are legally and ethically required to uphold standards of confidentiality and the laws regarding privileged communications.

Treating information confidentially means that TUCC cannot release any protected and privileged information to professors, advisers, parents, or concerned friends without the student's consent. Confidentiality also prohibits TUCC staff from confirming that a student has made an appointment or attended sessions at TUCC without the student's explicit permission.

Our staff recognizes that this may be difficult for those concerned about a student; however, our duty is first and foremost to our student clients, and we at TUCC must maintain confidentiality consistent with our professional guidelines and mental health laws. The practices and operations regarding confidentiality utilized by the TUCC staff are informed and guided by law and by our professional ethical standards.

Without confidentiality the therapeutic process has little chance of being effective. There are narrow exceptions to the mandate to keep confidentiality, including when we consider the student-client to be a threat to self or others; to protect children, elders or vulnerable adults from potential abuse; or if court ordered by a judge in a current proceeding.

- **Check in with the student.** If you have concerns about a student's health, well-being, and/or participation in therapy, one of the ways to communicate your concern is to follow up with them. Most students consider this helpful, supportive, and caring. A simple "check in" (e.g., how is it going, did you ever have a chance to connect with someone at TUCC?) can be very supportive.
- **Be aware of other campus resources,** such as connecting with the SOS office to express your concerns about a student with them.
- For information on the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** and how it applies to you, please consult with your department or click [here](#).

What Else Should I Consider?

Understanding a student's background (e.g., culture, family, academic track, multiple social identities) and developmental stage in their academic career can help bolster awareness of what students may be experiencing in the classroom, increase empathy, and help build community. Students' comfort in disclosing personal information may vary, which may impact their access to resources. While each student is unique, below are some examples of what students may be experiencing.

- **First-Year Student:** New geographic location, roommate relationships, transition to college, navigating independence, living on their own for the first time.
- **Graduate Student:** Additional responsibilities, autonomy, financial considerations, impostor syndrome, isolation, parenting and caregiving.
- **Non-Traditional Student:** Readjustment to academic setting, finances, worry about succeeding, developing a TU community.
- **Transfer Student:** Adjusting to rigor of TU, transition to a new setting, building community, feelings of belonging.
- **Student Veteran/Military-Connected:** Adjustment to civilian life, experiences of trauma, stigma around help-seeking.
- **First-Generation Student:** Culture shock, possible lack of support or understanding from family, pressure to succeed.
- **International Student:** Cost of tuition, uncertainty around jobs and visa situation, culture shock, language barriers, homesickness, challenges or barriers to returning home for breaks / holidays.
- **Low SES Student:** Lack of fallback option or safety net, financial considerations, guilt associated with attending school, travel costs during breaks/holidays.
- **Students of Color:** Lack of representation and diversity on campus. Feeling like the "only one" in the classroom which may increase pressure to represent an entire group and be the group's spokesperson. Impact of micro-aggressions and macro-aggressions.
- **Students with Diverse Religious/Spiritual Beliefs:** Navigating the academic calendar with religious holidays, lack of representation, micro-aggressions and macro-aggressions, not knowing if there are safe spaces to practice/express beliefs.
- **Gender Non-Conforming, Non-Binary, Trans Students:** Navigating use of pronouns and names, self-expression, establishing community and support, micro-aggressions and macro-aggressions.
- **Students in the LGBTQIA+ Community:** Development of identity while navigating academic and life demands, self-expression, establishing community and support, micro-aggressions and macro-aggressions.
- **Students without Documentation:** Stress over immigration status and impact of political events and decisions.
- **Students with Visible and Invisible Disabilities:** Navigating campus and classroom environments that may not accommodate neurodiversity (e.g., ADHD, autism spectrum,

learning disabilities, etc.); sensory, psychological and emotional challenges; physical disabilities; chronic health conditions.

Cultural differences around mental health and help-seeking behaviors may impact your interactions with students experiencing a mental health issue. Some students may not feel comfortable discussing mental health due to stigma, language, family messages, cultural barriers, or other factors, whereas other students may feel very comfortable doing so.

Classroom size will also impact the ways in which faculty and other instructors are able to address student mental health concerns, as it is likely easier to build community and get to know students in small discussion sections or classes as compared to large lectures. Additionally, it is important to remember that each unit/department on campus is different, and will have a different culture, expectations of success, resources, etc.

Reflecting on your own experiences and how your background and multiple social identities affect interactions with students can be also helpful. Acknowledge your role in student interactions and reflect on how it may impact your relationship with the student and your ability to help.



Additional TU & Community Resources

For additional campus resources, please visit [Student Support Resources at Towson](#).

If you have questions or are unsure about a student, please call one of the resources listed below. Each of these agencies serves as consultants and resources to faculty and staff:

In case of emergency or if you feel unsafe, please call TUPD at 410-704-4444.

Towson University Counseling Center

410-704-2512

<https://www.towson.edu/counseling/>

Student Outreach and Support

410-704-2055

<https://www.towson.edu/studentaffairs/student-outreach-support/>

Towson University Public Safety

410-704-4444

<https://www.towson.edu/public-safety/>

Accessibility and Disability Services (ADS)

410-704-2638

<https://www.towson.edu/accessibility-disability-services/>

International Students and Scholars Office

410-704-2421

<https://www.towson.edu/academics/international/isso/>

Center for Student Diversity

410-704-2051

<https://www.towson.edu/studentdiversity/staff.html>

Student Success Programs

410-704-2051

<https://www.towson.edu/student-success/>

Health Center

410-704-2466

<https://www.towson.edu/healthcenter/>

TU Community Provider Database (search engine for local therapists):

<https://towson.rints.com/>

Food Insecurity and Foodshare Programs

<https://www.towson.edu/studentlife/housing/dining/food-insecurity-foodshare-programs.html>

Faculty Mental Health

As faculty, you may also experience your own challenges with mental health and well-being. Taking care of yourself and receiving the assistance you need is an essential component of being able to be there for your students. Please visit

<https://www.towson.edu/hr/current/benefits/employee-assistance.html> for more information on what mental health services are available for you.

Faculty Academic Center of Excellence at Towson

FACET was created by and for Towson University faculty to support an inclusive and collaborative faculty community and foster a culture of excellence in scholarship and teaching.

<https://www.towson.edu/provost/initiatives/faculty-center/>

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