Fostering a Campus Environment Supportive of Student Mental Health

Faculty Toolkit

Adapted from University of Michigan
CAPS Faculty Toolkit
Illustrations by Jude Boudon



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What is Counseling and Psychological Services?



"My professor opened the first day of class with a slide on CAPS resources and it made me feel that they were genuinely invested in the student's well being." -Anthropology Student

"It is helpful when professors take time on the first day of class, when going over the syllabus, to make CAPS known as a resource to students in distress, as well as the professor themselves, so students feel comfortable seeking help when needed."
-Student

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides confidential services at no additional charge for currently enrolled SMC undergraduate and graduate/professional students. Part-time students may be seen on a limited basis for evaluation and referral to community resources. We strive to provide the following services in an atmosphere that is welcoming, comfortable, and multi culturally sensitive for all students:

- Brief Individual Counseling
- Group Counseling
- Couples Counseling
- Consultations
- Urgent/Crisis Services
- Case Management and Referrals
- Community Engagement & Outreach

Where is CAPS located?
Ground Floor of Augustine Hall

What are the hours of operation?
Hours: M, T, W, F, 9am - 5pm
Th 10am - 5pm
Closed daily 12pm - 1pm

Website:
https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/student-life/health-wellness-safety/counseling-psychological-services

Phone: 925-631-4364

Urgent/Crisis Walk-In Services: Urgent sessions are available daily M-F. Please call or come in to schedule.

After Hours: TimelyCare is available to provide counseling services 24/7. For more information see the CAPS website.

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



"My professor made a point of identifying and contacting students who were struggling in their large class to see if they could help."
-Anthropology Student

"It is helpful when a stressful event happens on campus and the professor acknowledges it and opens up as a safe space for students to voice their concerns."
- Student

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 the recommended syllabus statement and discussing it on the first day of class.

SMC is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. If you or someone you know is in need of support, counseling services are available at no cost to students. To schedule an appointment, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (925)631-4364, or come to the office (ground floor of Augustine Hall), or email caps4364@stmarys-ca.edu, or visit our website: https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/student-life/health-wellness-safety/counseling-psychological-services/schedule-appointment

The following practices have been found 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,** 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 stay 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?



"A few of my professors have made it clear that their office hours are open to anyone with any questions - whether class-related or not. Even though I never went for anything other than homework help, it was comforting to know that their door was open and they care about their students."

- School of Business Student

"The professor for my communications first-year seminar made the classroom environment very safe and open for asking questions and having discussions. He was also very understanding of our other commitments and allowed extensions and flexible deadlines."

- Student

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 of students** and encourage them to get to know each other by using name tags and/or an icebreaker to begin class sessions. Be sure to include pronouns (e.g., she/her/hers or they/them).

- **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.

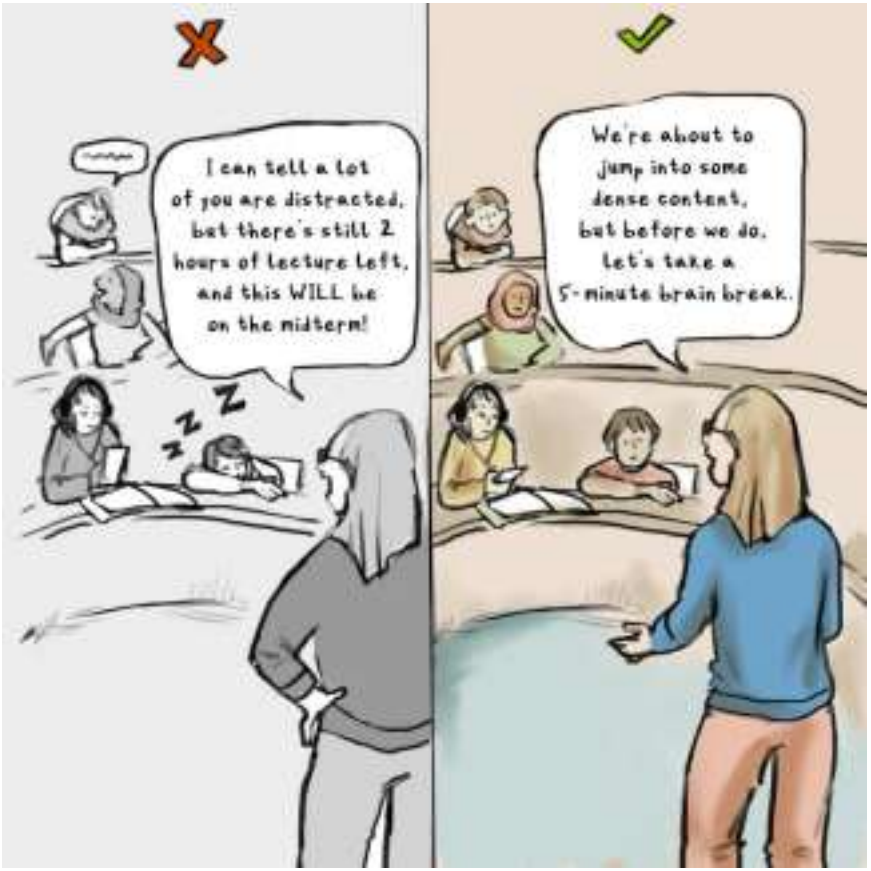
- **Promote small group work** throughout the semester and encourage students to share contact information (if they wish) on the first day in order to build a supportive network throughout the semester.

- **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 Student Disability Services (SDS)** as needed to ensure that you are meeting the needs of all students and providing support and accommodations: https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/offices-services/student-disability-services or call 925-631-4358

How Do I Incorporate Mindfulness & Stress Reduction?



"I had a professor who would allow us to upload funny, lighthearted videos to Moodle and she would play one or two during our break halfway through class. This really eased the room during dense material and offered a time for students to collect themselves."

- School of Business Student

Mindfulness is the practice of being fully present and attentive to one's inner thoughts and surroundings in an open, non-judgmental way (Kabit-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 with a CAPS mindfulness workshop, or by encouraging students to visit the art museum or a quiet space outdoors.

- **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?



"It is helpful when instructors find a balance of attention between the professionalism of goals (academic benchmarks) and personal progress and nourishment. Also being open and reflective of one's own struggles as a person and academic."

-School of Education Student

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, Taasoobshirazi, Kestler, & Cordova, 2015). Self-Compassion is the practice of treating yourself as you would a friend, by accepting your personal shortcomings, but also holding oneself 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 SMC.** 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?



"In lecture, the professor acknowledged that they made a mistake in the previous lecture and asked us to notify them of any future mistakes."
-Anthropology Student

"One of my instructors encouraged students to talk to her with concerns, granted extensions, and verbally acknowledged stressful times in the semester."
- Student

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?



"I had both professors and counselors check in on me and how I was adjusting to workloads after expressing my academic distress. My professors and counselors validated how our program is challenging."

-Student

As faculty or staff, you have significant contact with students, and you are often well-poised to recognize signs that they are in distress or experiencing difficulties. Students often turn to faculty and staff for advice and support. Because of your position, you can play a critical role in supporting students 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 Distress: Students may exhibit behaviors that do not disrupt others, but may indicate something is wrong and that assistance is needed. 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).

Moderate Distress: Students may exhibit behaviors that indicate significant emotional distress. They may be reluctant or unable to acknowledge a need for personal help. Behaviors may include:

- · Repeated requests for special consideration, such as deadline extensions, especially if the student appears uncomfortable or highly emotional while disclosing the circumstances prompting the request.
- · 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.
- · Allow the student to speak freely about their current situation and the variables that may be affecting their distress.

· Consult with a colleague, department chair, Dean of Students Office professional, or a campus counseling professional.
· Refer the student to one of the university resources.

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).
· Threatens 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.**
· If possible, provide a quiet, private place for the student to rest while further steps are taken.
· Talk to the student in a clear, straight-forward manner.
· Try to talk slowly and softly.
· If the student appears to be dangerous to themselves or others, make certain the student is not left alone or unattended.
· Make arrangements for appropriate intervention or aid through Campus Safety, Dean of Students Office, or CAPS.
· 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 911 or the Campus Safety: (925) 631-4282.

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.
- If you are concerned the student may be feeling hopeless and thinking about ending their life, ask if they are contemplating suicide. It is important to remember that talking about suicide should be taken seriously and not ignored.
- Offer yourself as a caring person until professional assistance has been obtained.
- After the student leaves your office, make some notes documenting your discussion and the interactions.
- Consult with others.
- If possible, provide a quiet, private place for the student to rest while further steps are taken.
- Talk to the student in a clear, straight-forward manner.
- Try to talk slowly and softly.
- If the student appears to be dangerous to themselves or others, make certain the student is not left alone or unattended.
- Make arrangements for appropriate intervention or aid through Campus Safety, Dean of Students Office, or CAPS.

Here are suggestions when meeting with a potentially violent student:

- To create more safety for yourself and the student, you may wish to alert a colleague that you will be meeting with the student, have a Campus Safety Officer on stand-by or with you, keep the door of your meeting place open, or position yourself so that you can exit the room quickly.
- End the meeting immediately if you feel unsafe or if the student becomes belligerent or is unable to calm him/herself down.
- Ultimately, do not meet alone with any student you believe to be a threat to your personal safety.
- It is best to refrain from touching any student, especially if they are potentially violent. Never attempt to restrain a student or prevent them from leaving.

Note: When a student is talking about suicide or violence, or behaving in violent ways, it is always a good idea to address these behaviors directly. Avoid assuming that the situation will pass without taking action or that the student just wants attention, or that your sympathy and support will be enough. A student who talks or behaves in suicidal or violent ways may need your sympathy and support, but they also need immediate intervention.

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.

Know Your Limits

An integral part of our Lasallian mission and culture involves a student centered educational experience. This includes wanting to get to know our students more personally, and reaching out to them to provide the support needed for their personal and academic growth. Sometimes just having someone listen without judgment or advice will be what the student needs most. At other times, you may find yourself feeling uncertain about your ability to help a student or feeling that a student's problem is more than you can handle. In this case, trust your intuition. A referral to CAPS may be needed.

Here are some possible signs that you are taking on too much, and that a referral may be indicated.

If you feel:

- · responsible for the student
- · pressure to fix the student's problems
- · that you are over-extending yourself in helping the student
- · stressed by the student's issue(s) or behavior
- · that the problems a student brings to you are more than you can handle
- · anxious when the student approaches you
- · resentful if the student does not improve

How Do I Make a Referral or Schedule a Consultation with CAPS?



"My advisor recommended I schedule an appointment with CAPS during a pretty tough time in my life. I probably would not have gone without him. Because he told me to go face-to-face and I had a strong relationship and lots of respect for him, I took his advice." - Science Major

"When I was in a bad place mentally, my professor set up a system where I had to go say hi to her before class every day. Our class met daily, so this helped me stay accountable to my own health until I could get professional help. It made me feel like someone cared about me and would notice if I didn't show up."

-Student

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, CAPS 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 925-631-4364 and ask to speak to the Clinician of the Day.

Warning signs for when to refer a student for further assistance:

- Manifests a change in personality (goes from being actively involved to quiet and withdrawn, or goes from being quiet to more agitated or demanding).
- Begins to display aggressive or abusive behavior to self or others; exhibits excessive risk-taking.
- Shows signs of memory loss.
- Shows loose or incoherent thought patterns, has difficulty focusing thoughts, or displays nonsensical conversation patterns.
- Exhibits behaviors or emotions that are inappropriate to the situation. · Displays extreme suspiciousness or irrational fears of persecution; withdraws, does not allow others to be close; believes she/he is being watched, followed, etc.
- Exhibits signs of hyperactivity (unable to sit still, difficulty maintaining focus, gives the impression of going "too fast," appears agitated).
- Shows signs of depression (no visible emotions or feelings, appears lethargic, weight loss, looks exhausted and complains of sleeping poorly, displays feelings of worthlessness or self-hatred, or is apathetic about previous interests).
- Talks about unusual patterns of eating, not eating, or excessively eating.
- Shows signs of injury to self, cuts, bruises, or sprains.
- Experiences deteriorating academic performance (extended absences from class, incapacitating test anxiety, sporadic class attendance).
- Begins or increases alcohol or other drug use.
- Makes statements regarding suicide, homicide, feelings of hopelessness, or helplessness.

How Do You Refer a Student to CAPS?

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 CAPS or other resources using the following tips:

- When you have decided that professional counseling is indicated, inform the student privately in a concerned, straightforward manner.
- Actively listen and validate your student's experiences.
- In addition to CAPS, know about other campus resources and encourage your student to seek them out (e.g., Dean of Students Office, Intercultural Center, Mission and Ministry Center, Student Disabilities Services).
- Encourage a recommendation to CAPS if they are experiencing mental health distress, and reassure them that it is an act of strength to seek help.
- 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 CAPS website together can be helpful, especially the "Staff" page. Or you might say, *"Many students have found the help they need at CAPS. Between 12 and 14 percent of the student body visits CAPS every year."* or *"Talking to a counselor does not mean that you are 'crazy' or 'weak.' Actually the opposite is true—seeking counseling is a reflection of your courage and resilience."*
- Sometimes students need extra support in making the next step. Ask your student if it would be helpful to walk with them to CAPS to make an appointment.
- Because many students initially resist the idea of counseling/therapy, it is useful to be caring, but firm in your judgment that counseling will be useful, and to be clear and concrete regarding the reason you are concerned. Describe the specific behaviors that have concerned you. Incorporate the student's own worries or needs as part of your concern and your endorsement that they receive help from an appropriate source.
  "I'm concerned about you because I've noticed you have been very withdrawn and uncommunicative in class for the past three weeks." or *"I understand that you are worried about how down you have been lately. You are right to be concerned. You really need to talk about this."*

· Inform the student why you are making a referral and how you think they may benefit from talking with a counselor/therapist.
"You and I have talked several times over the past three weeks and it seems that things aren't getting better for you. I think it would be helpful for you to talk with a professional counselor."
· Let the student know what they can expect from talking with a counselor.
"I want you to know that I am concerned and care about you and want to remain in contact with you, but I feel it would be to your benefit to explore your concern with professional counseling."
· Sometimes it is useful and necessary to assist the student more directly. In these instances, you can call CAPS yourself while the student is in your office and let them know you will be walking the student over. This can be especially helpful to students who are unsure about the location and/or are intimidated about meeting with a therapist for the first time.
· Assure the student that you are not rejecting or abandoning them by making the referral. Make plans to follow up with the student.

What to Expect After Your Student Arrives at CAPS?

Our office manager will greet them. Students will be asked to fill out brief paperwork and will be scheduled for the first available Initial Consultation. If the student is in crisis and needs to see someone on the same day, encourage them to ask to speak with the Clinician of the Day.

What Happens at an Initial Consultation?

The CAPS therapist will learn more about what is troubling the student and will work together to determine best next steps (e.g., brief individual or group therapy at CAPS or a referral to a resource on campus or in the community).

It is important for members of the campus community to understand that the meetings conducted with students at CAPS are confidential. Information or content of those sessions cannot be released or discussed without the student's written permission. CAPS 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 CAPS.

· 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 decides 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?



"One of my professors checked in with me repeatedly while I was in the process of getting help, listened, and asked how she could support me."

- Student

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 CAPS. However, as mental health care providers, CAPS is legally and ethically required to uphold standards of confidentiality and the laws regarding privileged communications, and students expect us to uphold these standards and laws.

Treating information confidentially means that CAPS cannot release any protected and privileged information to professors, advisers, parents, or concerned friends without the student's consent. Confidentiality also prohibits CAPS staff from confirming that a student has made an appointment or attended sessions at CAPS 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 CAPS must maintain confidentiality consistent with our professional guidelines and mental health laws. The practices and operations regarding confidentiality utilized by the CAPS staff are informed and guided by law (the California Mental Health Code), by our ethical standards within psychology and social work, and our professional standards (via our accrediting bodies).

Without confidentiality the therapeutic process has little chance of being effective. There are narrow exceptions to when confidentiality must be "broken" including when we consider the student-client to be a threat to self or others; in order to protect children or minors from current 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 CAPS?*") can be very supportive.

· **Be aware of other campus resources,** such as connecting with the Dean of Students 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.

What Else Should I Consider?



"One of my professors understands that people might have unseen disabilities, cancels class during difficult weather conditions (wet sidewalks), still teaches a challenging course, but maintains mindfulness of student issues, and displays knowledge that students have individual problems."

- Science Major

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 level in terms of disclosing may vary, which may impact their access to resources. As some students may be more or less comfortable sharing, let them know that you are supportive of them getting the help they need. 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/Professional 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 SMC community.
- **Transfer Student:** Adjusting to rigor of SMC, 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 inability to return home for the 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. See Appendix for a good resource on how to be antiracist in the classroom:
- **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 with Diverse Sexual Orientations:** Development of identity while navigating academic and life demands, self-expression, establishing community and support, micro-aggressions and macro aggressions.
- **Undocumented Students:** 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 or 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.

Additionally, your **professional role** impacts your interactions with students and your ability to address their concerns, whether you are a faculty member or lecturer. Reflecting on your own experiences and how your background and multiple social identities affect interactions with students can be 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 SMC Resources

If you have questions or are unsure about a student, please call one of the resources listed below and **file a Retention Alert in your Gael Express Account**. Each of these departments serves as consultants and resources to faculty and staff:

In case of emergency or if you feel unsafe, please call 911.

Counseling and Psychological Services
925-631-4364
https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/student-life/health-wellness-safety/counseling-psychological-services

Finding Your Community Provider Tutorial:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKw-SzR2WZA

Dean of Students Office
925-631-4238
https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/student-life/dean-of-students

Campus Assault, Response and Education Line (24-hour anonymous line) 925-878-9207
https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/sexual-assault-and-violence-prevention

Campus Safety
925-631-4282
https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/public-safety

Student Engagement and Academic Success (SEAS)
925-631-4349
https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/student-engagement-and-academic-success

Student Disability Services (SDS)
925-631-4358
https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/student-disability-services

Intercultural Center
925-631-8545
https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/intercultural-center

Student Health Center
925-631-4254
https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/health-wellness-center
High Potential Program
925-631-4835
https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/high-potential-program

Mission and Ministry Center
925-631-4366
https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/mission-and-ministry-center

Food Insecurity Resources
Gael Pantry/Mission and Ministry Center:
https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/offices-services/mission-ministry center/gaelpantry

Faculty Mental Health
As faculty and instructors, 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.stmarys-ca.edu/offices-services/humanresources/benefits/employee-assistance-program for more information on what mental health services are available for you.

Recognize, Respond, Report, refer: 4 R's - Behavioral guide to address disruptive behavior in the classroom:
https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/student-life/health-wellness-safety/counseling psychological-services/info-faculty-staff

Red Folder - Faculty Staff Guide - List of campus resources
https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/smcares/resources/assisting-students-in-distress

Retention Alert - See the module in your GaelXpress 2.0 menu. Faculty and staff can issue an alert for any student here. The interface is fairly straightforward and integrates with our Colleague/GaelXpress system. Advisors and coaches (or program director for grad students) will receive the alerts and can refer cases to other campus departments (Residential Life/Student Life, Financial Aid, Business Office, The Advising Office) for accurate and efficient follow-up, the case tickets will be monitored by the Advising Office to ensure timely resolution.

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Saint Mary's College
Counseling and Psychological Services
1928 Saint Mary's Road
925-631-4364
https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/counseling-and-psychological_services-caps

Appendix:

How to Create an Antiracist Classroom:
Basic Guidelines for Saint Mary's College of California Faculty

As educators, it is our responsibility to create learning environments that feel safe for all of our students. Because we live in a white supremacist society that particularly targets our Black and African American community members, it is especially important that we are mindful of how our classroom environments are experienced by these students. Here are some basic guidelines to help you start to create an antiracist classroom. These guidelines are by no means all inclusive; they are just a beginning.

"Antiracist teachers . . . view the success of [B]lack students as central to the success of their own teaching. . . I knew that it was my responsibility to invite [my Black students] into the classroom and then to see, push, and protect them once they were there." -Pirette Mckamey

DO:

- **Understand your own racial/cultural identity. See and honor the identities of your students.** Communicate your interest in hearing your students' experiences as cultural beings with intersecting identities, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, ability, etc. It is your responsibility to create a safe space for students to share their experiences and get to know each other.
- **Create a curriculum with Black and African American students in mind.** This has often been overlooked. Include works written by Black authors, and works about the real history of our country. For every topic covered in the class, integrate readings about the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.
- **Understand that your Black and African American students are traumatized.** Our Black and African American community members are, to varying degrees and in different ways, traumatized by living in a white supremacist society. Consider having daily check-ins with the class, or check in individually with Black students throughout the semester.
- **Foster respectful dialogues by collectively establishing classroom ground rules.** Create brave spaces. Consider offering participation style points around your ground rules.
- **Be aware of and name aggressions, including how you might**

enact them. Have a conversation about microaggressions, as they are common in the classroom. Talk about the steps that will be taken to address aggressions that occur in the classroom.

- **Pay attention to how your Black students are responding to discussions on race.** Take note if a student appears to be or reports being wounded by a micro- or macro aggression. Check in with them after class and respect their space if they don't want to talk. Ask them for any suggested reparations (e.g., healing circle) or changes to course process.
- **Own your mistakes.** Establish as a class at the beginning of the semester that everyone will make mistakes, you included. Allow yourself to mess up, accept yourself as human, own your error, apologize, and explain what you will do to avoid it happening again.
- **Be mindful of the authority you hold as professor and grader.** It is important to remember that your students experience you as an authority figure with positional power.

DON'T:

- **Say, "I don't see color," sidetrack or end conversations on race, sit silently, or appease.** These actions erase the identities and experiences of your students and re-traumatize them. Your silence conveys the message that you are complicit with white supremacy.
- **Be defensive or say, "I am not *a* racist."** Realize that all humans carry bias, and being racist is not a categorical distinction. Rather, it is a matter of degree. Examine your biases, accept that you have them, and work to dismantle them. Take a Harvard Implicit Bias Test to assess your level of implicit bias.
- **Use the "N" word.** This is an incredibly painful word, and it should not be used in the classroom. If you are reading a historical text written by a Black author in which this word is used, do not repeat it or read it out loud. This is especially true for white students and professors. It is *never* acceptable for a white person to use, repeat, or read this word out loud.
- **Mandate that students use their video during Zoom classes.** Students who are racially traumatized might be more comfortable with video off, particularly if you're discussing sensitive topics such as race. Allow your students the privacy that they need. It's okay to ask students to turn on their cameras for certain activities *if they feel comfortable*, but this should not

be a requirement at all times.

- **Call on your Black students to speak for Black people.** More generally, you really should not ask anyone at any time to speak on behalf of any of their identities.
- **Don't make assumptions about someone's identities based on how you perceive them.**

Additional Resources:

1. UC Berkeley Race Matters Resource List
2. 27 Mistakes White Teachers of Black Students Make and How to Fix Them
3. What Antiracist Teachers Do Differently
4. White Teachers Need to Check Their Racism Before Teaching It
5. Becoming an Antiracist Educator
6. Barriers and Strategies by White Faculty Who Incorporate Anti-Racist Pedagogy
7. Antiracist Resources for Your 2020-2021 Teaching
8. University of Washington Guide on Inclusive Teaching

**This document was created by SMC staff and faculty. Please feel free to share. **