



FACULTY GUIDE: SUPPORTING STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

Created by the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, University Health and Counseling Services, and the Office of Prevention and Education at Northeastern in collaboration with Northeastern Active Minds

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Dear Faculty,

During faculty town halls, meetings with department chairs, and faculty development workshops, you shared that students often approach you and disclose difficulties that go beyond the academic. Students may share concerns about stressors such as anxiety, depression, and trauma with trusted faculty. We know that mental health issues can interfere with the quality of life for college students and certainly with academic performance.

In the Spring of 2021, the Boston University School of Public Health, sponsored by the Healthy Minds Network and the Mary Christie Foundation, surveyed faculty members across the United States. Results from the 1,685 faculty members indicated that nearly eight of ten professors had spoken one-on-one with a student about mental health during the 2020-21 academic year. However, fewer than 30 percent said they had received training to have such conversations. Almost 70 percent said they would like more training on student mental health concerns, and the majority felt that such training should be required for faculty members.

These data are in line with what we've heard from you. You've shared that students frequently reached out to you and disclosed challenges they were facing outside of the classroom, including concerns related to depression, anxiety, and mental health. You have also asked for resources for supporting students.

We heard you and want you to know that resources are available. This guide was developed in collaboration with University Health and Counseling Services (UHCS), The Office of Prevention and Education (OPEN), and a student group, Active Minds, as a resource for you if and when you notice mental health concerns coming up with our students. We've included information about warning signs to look for and information on connecting students with appropriate campus partners when they need extra support. Please know that you are not alone in this.

Sincerely,



Debra L. Franko, PhD
Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Professor, Department of Applied Psychology

MENTAL HEALTH + COLLEGE STUDENTS

On the National College Health Assessment Survey in 2020, Northeastern students were asked about issues that might have negatively impacted their academic performance (either impacting their performance in a class or delaying progress towards their degree) within the last 12 months. The following are a few of the top factors students indicated.

FACTORS NEGATIVELY IMPACTING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE:

34.8% STRESS

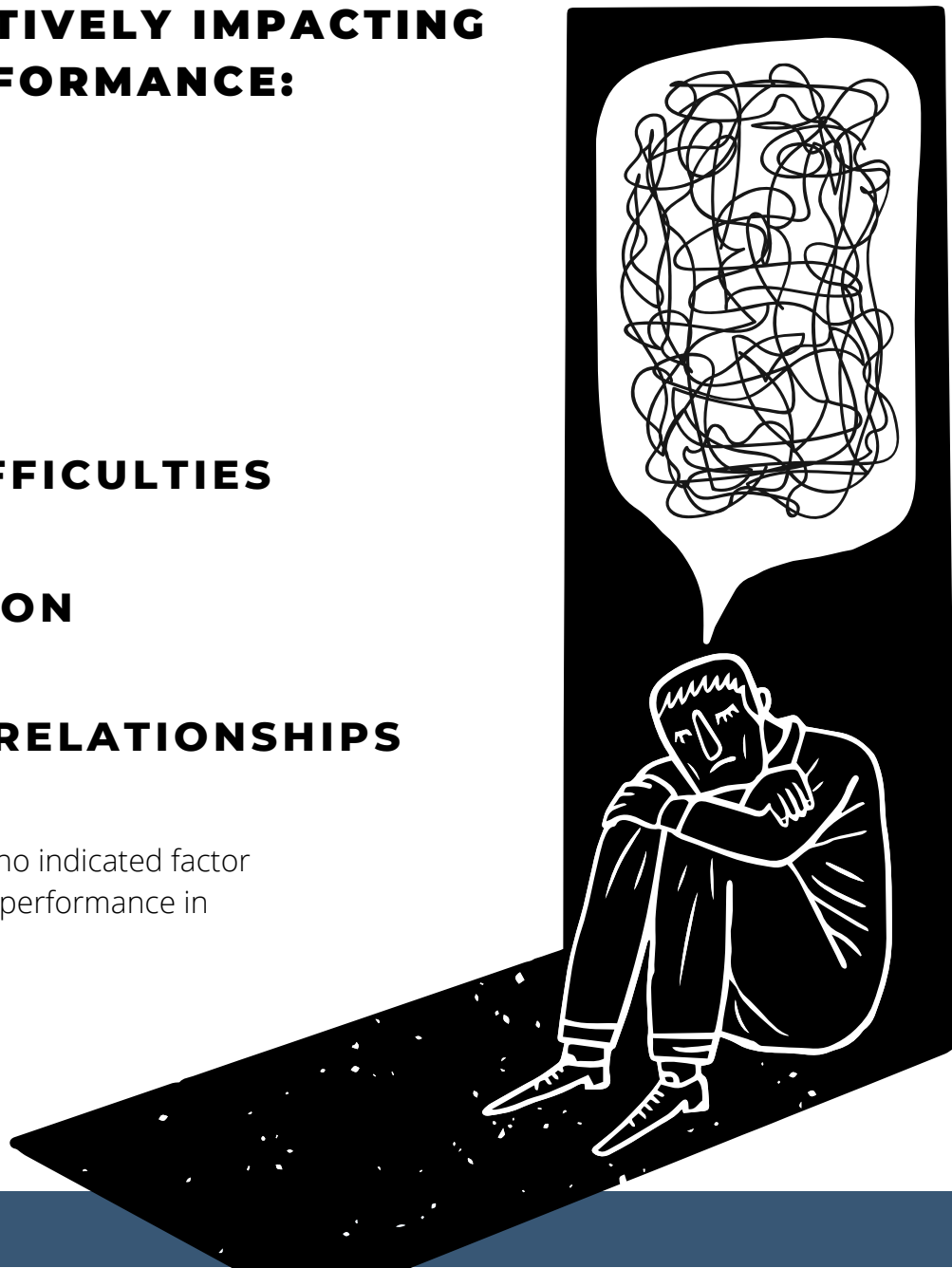
24.2% ANXIETY

19.3% SLEEP DIFFICULTIES

17.6% DEPRESSION

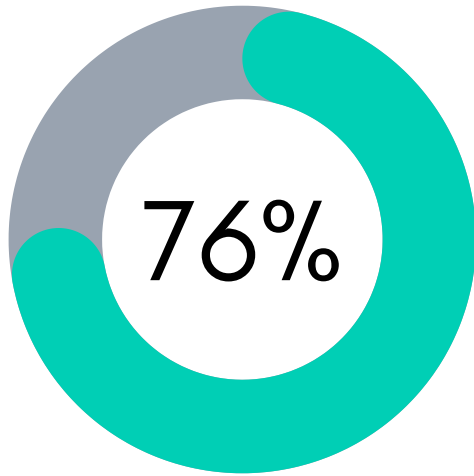
9.2% INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

% all students in the sample who indicated factor negatively impacted academic performance in last 12 months

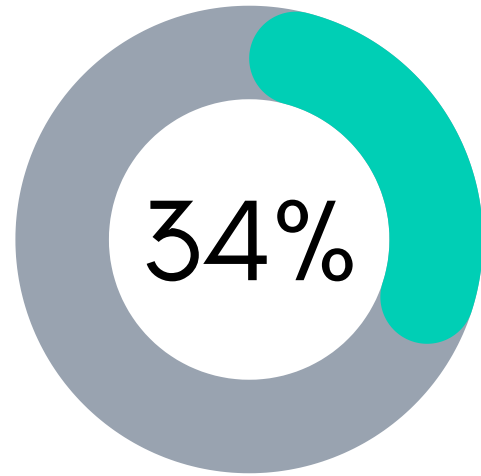


COLLEGE STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC

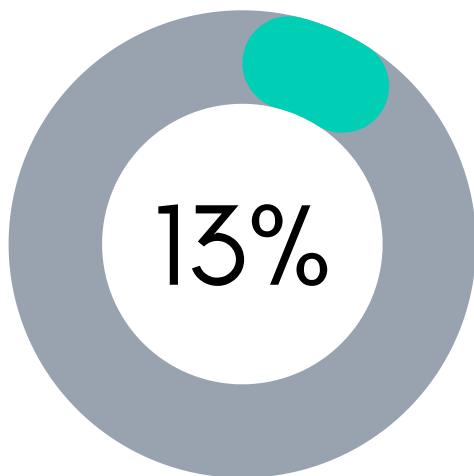
National data collected during the pandemic demonstrates exacerbated mental health symptoms and challenges for college students.



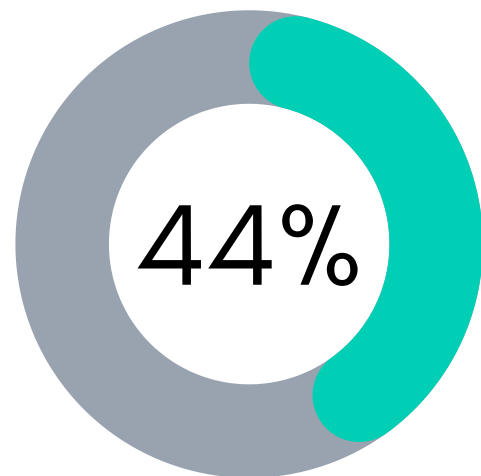
% respondents who reported that their mental health had worsened to some degree since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (National Active Minds Student Mental Health Survey, Fall 2020).



% respondents who reported experiencing clinically significant anxiety in the last 12 months (National Healthy Minds Study, Winter 2021).

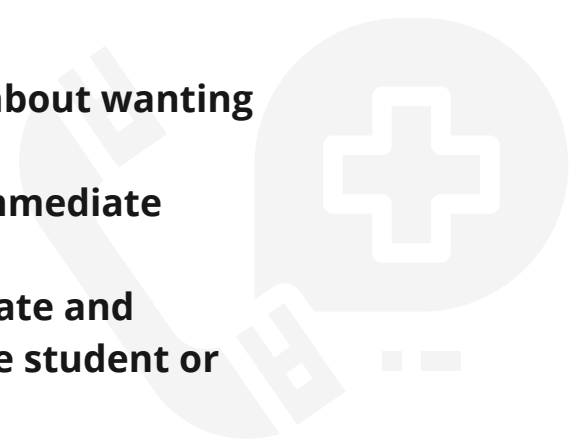


% respondents who reported experiencing suicidal ideation in the last 12 months (National Healthy Minds Study, Winter 2021).



% respondents reporting they felt so sad (all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, or a little of the time) that nothing could cheer them up in the past 30 days (National College Health Assessment, Spring 2021).

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS REQUIRING IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION

- **Explicit and immediate comments about wanting to die by suicide**
 - **The student indicates they are in immediate danger**
 - **There is an indication of an immediate and imminent threat to the safety of the student or others**
- 

ACTION STEPS

If you have an immediate concern for someone's health and well-being, contact NUPD at 617-373-3333. Remain with the student unless doing so would put your safety at risk.

EXAMPLE

"I appreciate you sharing this with me. I'm concerned about you and want to make sure I can support you in getting help right away. I need to reach out to Northeastern Police so they can help ensure that you're safe. I'll share with them what you shared with me (mirror whatever language student has used)."

SIGNS THAT INDICATE NEED FOR URGENT INTERVENTION

- **Non-immediate references to suicide or thoughts of death (without reference of an immediate plan or intent to die)**
- **Severe hopelessness, despair or isolation**
- **References to self-harm (e.g., cutting, burning)**

ACTION STEPS

If you believe the student needs urgent assistance but is not in immediate danger, the following resources are available to help assess the situation and determine the necessary next steps:

Option 1: Walk a student over to speak with a clinician right away. View UHCS' hours at <https://www.northeastern.edu/uhcs/about-uhcs/contact-us/>.

Option 2: Call UHCS at 617-373-2772 to request a call back from a mental health clinician with whom you can consult.

Option 3*: Call Find@Northeastern (1.877.233.9477 U.S., +1.781.457.7777 Intl.)

Option 4*: Call Northeastern University Police Department (617.373.2121 non-emergency line) for guidance.

*If it is after-hours, options 3 and 4 are most appropriate.

If a student tells you that they have a therapist who is not affiliated with Northeastern, you can suggest that they reach out to that person for support. However, it is still recommended that you notify UHCS or Find@Northeastern so that additional check-in and support can be offered.

EXAMPLE 1 (CONTINUED)

If you are with the student at the time of the interaction:

Faculty: "Thank you for sharing this with me. I'm concerned about you and want to make sure I can support you in getting help right away. Let's walk over to UHCS together now. If you aren't feeling up for that, we can call Find@Northeastern together to talk with a clinician right away."

Student: That's okay. I already have a therapist.

Faculty: I'm glad to hear that you are connected to a clinician already. Do you feel comfortable letting them know that you have been having a difficult time lately?

Student: Yes, I will call them later today.

Faculty: Great. I just want to make sure that you are supported. To that end, I'm also going to notify UHCS so they can reach out and provide additional resources and support if needed.

EXAMPLE 2

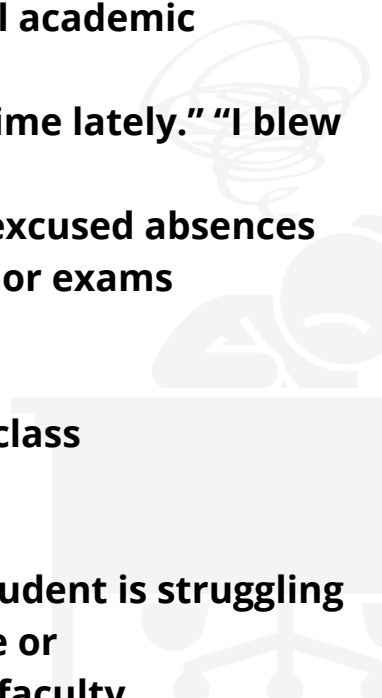
If you are not with the student at the time of the interaction:

Faculty: "Thank you for sharing this with me. I'm concerned about you and want to make sure I can support you in getting help right away. I need to call University Health and Counseling Services to let them know what you're experiencing to make sure you get help. I plan to tell them what you've shared with me. I'll tell them that you've been feeling really down lately and feel like giving up/(mirror language student used). I will request that a clinician reach out to you to check-in. How does that feel for you?"

Student: "That's okay but I'm busy today so I might not be available."

Faculty: "I understand, but it is important that you answer that call or follow up as soon as possible. We need to make sure that you are OK and get connected with support right away. If UHCS isn't able to reach you they may need to initiate a well-being check and have NUPD come check in on you."

SIGNS SOMEONE MAY BE STRUGGLING

- Change in academic performance, personality or behavior
 - Uncharacteristically missing class or assignments*
 - Noticeable change in student's typical academic engagement
 - Direct comments "I'm having a hard time lately." "I blew this semester." "I'm struggling."
 - Repeated requests for extensions or excused absences
 - Distressing content written in papers or exams
 - Deterioration in personal hygiene
 - Noticeable cuts or bruises
 - Under the influence of substances in class
 - Anger/agitation/ irritability
 - Withdrawal or isolation from others
 - Reports from other students that a student is struggling
 - Significant change in class attendance or responsiveness/communication with faculty
- 

ACTION STEPS

If you notice one or more of these warning signs, we recommend you check in with the student and/or consult with the appropriate campus resource for guidance on next steps.

*If a student has missed multiple classes and is falling behind, please submit a Faculty Advisor Communication Tool (FACT) immediately. This will alert the academic advisor to the issue and that person can assist in next steps (which may involve We Care).

SCENARIO 1: CONCERNING BEHAVIORS

You notice concerning behaviors from a student in your class or a student directly tells you they are struggling.

1 EXPRESS CARE AND CONCERN.

Talk with the student about your concerns discreetly and non-judgmentally.

Strategies:

- Thank the student for coming to you (if they have) and acknowledge the situation.
- Reference the specific behavior you have noticed and that it is out of the ordinary.
- Ask an open-ended question (cannot be answered with yes or no).

EXAMPLE

Faculty: I noticed recently that you haven't been turning assignments in on time. I know that's not like you so I wanted to check in. How are you doing?

Student: Thanks- I'm so sorry about that. I've had some mental health stuff going on and it's been hard to get it all done.

Faculty: I'm sorry that's been happening.

2 REFER TO RESOURCES.

Offer to assist with connecting the student to available resources.

Strategies:

- Be clear what the resources are.
- Give the student choice about if/how they'd like you to refer them when possible.
- Bring the conversation back to the initial academic-related request and discuss options for support and assistance.
- Summarize/reflect back what they're saying to show you're listening.
- Avoid judgement if the student doesn't want to use the resource or isn't ready.

EXAMPLE

Faculty: I can help get you connected to some mental health resources if that would be helpful.

Student: That actually might be helpful.

Faculty: 24/7 mental health support is available through Find@Northeastern. They can connect you to ongoing, free therapy. I can give you that number or I could have a therapist from UHCS reach out if that would be easier.

Student: Actually, yeah. Can you have someone reach out?

Faculty: Sure- I'll reach out to them, and someone should reach out to you soon. How can I support you in this class? What flexibility would be helpful?

Student: I'm not sure. I just got behind in a lot of classes because I've been feeling kind of depressed, and I'm trying to catch up but I feel like I've been late on everything.

Faculty: It sounds like things have been really hard lately.

Student: I know, it feels kind of overwhelming.

Faculty: There's another office I want to suggest- they are called We Care. Their role is to support and guide students going through challenging times.

3 FOLLOW-UP

Check back in with the student at a later time to see how they are doing and if they need any other support getting connected to the referral.

Strategies:

- Be non-judgmental. The student may not have followed up with referrals you provided.
- Bring it up discreetly or over email (not in front of others).
- For example, you could say something like, "I just wanted to check in to see how you're doing since we last talked. Is there anything else I can do to help connect you with resources or to help support you?"

If consultation is needed at any point, call UHCS at 617-373-2772 to consult with a mental health clinician. Clinicians from UHCS can reach out to the student, if appropriate, to check on their well-being.

SCENARIO 2: REQUEST FOR ACADEMIC HELP

A student emails you. They reference a mental health concern and ask for an academic accommodation (e.g., extension, grade change, excused absence).

1 ASSESS THE SITUATION.

In emergency situations call NUPD right away. If needed, call UHCS at 617-373-2772 to consult with a mental health clinician. Staff from either office can help determine appropriate next steps.

2 RESPOND AND EXPRESS CARE.

Respond in a timely manner. Express appreciation for the student trusting you with this information and/or acknowledge what they have shared. See email example for some sample language you could incorporate.

3 REFER TO RESOURCES.

Share appropriate campus resources with the student. If you are unsure of resource options, consult with appropriate campus partners.

4 ADDRESS THE REQUEST FOR AN ACCOMMODATION

We understand there are boundaries/limits to what may be possible, but there may be times when flexibility is appropriate. It can be helpful to consult with a colleague, your department chair, or We Care to explore possibilities. Where can you be flexible? If accommodations are not possible, what other supports are available?

5 FOLLOW-UP

Check back with the student at a later time to see how they are doing and if they need any other support getting connected to the referral.

EMAIL EXAMPLE

From: Student
To: Professor
Subject: extension?

Hi Professor,
I'm sorry I missed class today. I've been having a really hard time lately and haven't been able to get out of bed because I've been so down. Is it possible for me to get an extension on the paper that is due tomorrow? I don't think I'll be able to get it to you before the deadline.
Thanks,
Student

From: Professor
To: Student
Subject: Re: extension?

Dear (Student),
Thank you for reaching out. I'm so sorry to hear that you've been feeling so down. I'm concerned about you and want to make sure you have the support you need.
I'm aware of some campus resources that might be helpful.

Find@Northeastern (<https://www.northeastern.edu/uhrs/find-at-northeastern/>) offers 24/7 mental health support. They can be reached by calling 877-233-9477. You'll be immediately connected with a licensed mental health clinician who can provide in-the-moment support and recommendations. They can also help get you connected to free, ongoing therapy.

University Health and Counseling Services (<https://www.northeastern.edu/uhrs/>) is also available to help. They have therapists available to talk with students and also offer support groups.

We Care (<https://studentlife.northeastern.edu/we-care/>) is a support system for students in times of difficulty or challenge. They provide connections to resources to address many different concerns including academic support and exploration of options.

I can offer you a 3-day extension on the paper you referenced and I'm happy to meet with you to talk about ways to get back on track.

Sincerely,
Professor

RESOURCES

You are not alone. Reach out to campus partners for support.

Resource	Why refer?	Information
<p><u>University Health and Counseling Services</u> * 617.373.2772 Forsyth Building, 1st Floor</p>	<p>A student is looking for medical care or mental health services or you are concerned about their mental health and well-being.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dedicated daily walk-in hours are available for mental health support. See website for hours.• Staff can call UHCS and request to consult with a clinician.• If appropriate, a clinician can reach out to students of concern.• Please be aware UHCS does not provide sick notes for missed classes or assignments.
<p><u>Northeastern University Police Department</u> Emergency: 617.373.3333 Non-emergency: 617.373.2121 716 Columbus Ave.</p>	<p>A student shares information that indicates a need for urgent intervention including immediate concerns for health or well-being.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NUPD officers can respond urgently to emergency situations and conduct well-being checks.• NUPD can provide after-hours guidance.
<p><u>Find@Northeastern</u> * 877.233.9477 (U.S.) +1.781.457.7777 (Int'l).</p>	<p>A student is looking for immediate or 24/7 mental health services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students can access an immediate connection to a licensed mental health clinician, available at any time from any location.• Find also offers referrals to free therapy in the local community.

**Indicates a confidential resource. Confidential staff do not have an obligation to report disclosures of sexual violence to the Office for University Equity and Compliance/Title IX.*

Resource	Why refer?	Information
<p><u>We Care</u> 617.373.7591 wecare@northeastern.edu 354 Richards</p>	<p>A student is looking for support or assistance with a difficult circumstance (e.g., interpersonal problems, academic concerns, medical or mental health issues, a personal tragedy).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We Care is a network of administrative offices, university faculty, and staff that serve as a support system for students during times of difficulty or challenge. • We Care staff may be able to assist with student outreach when a student appears to be unresponsive to faculty/staff.
<p><u>Office for University Equity and Compliance</u> ouec@northeastern.edu 125 Richards Hall</p>	<p>A student is looking to make a report or considering making a report related to sexual violence or any other form of harassment or discrimination.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The OUEC investigates all allegations of discrimination. • If a student shares information about sexual violence, faculty and staff must <u>make a report</u>. This does not commit students to future action. OUEC staff will explain rights and reporting options.
<p><u>Office of Prevention and Education at Northeastern*</u> 617.373.4459 open@northeastern.edu 307 Ell Hall</p>	<p>A student is struggling with substance use.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff can consult with OPEN regarding a student's substance use. • Students can self-refer to OPEN to talk about their substance use. • OPEN can make referrals for more high level care.

Resource	Why refer?	Information
<p><u>OPEN's Sexual Violence Resource Center *</u> open@northeastern.edu 407 Ell Hall</p>	<p>A student who has experienced sexual violence is looking for resources, referrals, or to discuss reporting options.</p> <p>A student is looking to support a friend who has experienced sexual violence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SVRC can be a place for students to start if they don't know what to do. • Staff can explain options and connect students to resources. • The SVRC is not an ongoing counseling service. • The SVRC offers resources for faculty including the Faculty Guide on Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence and the <u>"RESPOND: Trauma Informed Response to Disclosures of Sexual Violence" Canvas course, available at northeastern.edu/open.</u>
<p><u>Confidential Resource Advisor *</u> cra@northeastern.edu</p>	<p>A student who is a respondent in a Title IX case or who has been accused of sexual violence is looking for resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CRA can accompany students throughout the Title IX process. • The CRA can explain options and connect students to resources. • The CRA is not an ongoing counseling service.
<p><u>Disability Resource Center</u> 617.373.2675 TTY: Contact DRC via Relay 711 20 Dodge Hall</p>	<p>A student is seeking accommodations for a disability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DRC staff can guide a student through the process of applying for accommodations and navigating university systems. • The DRC has resources for staff on their website at <u>northeastern.edu/drc</u>.

**Indicates a confidential resource. Confidential staff do not have an obligation to report disclosures of sexual violence to the Office for University Equity and Compliance/Title IX.*

Resource

Why refer?

Information

Office of the Graduate Ombudsperson

617.373.6904 (office)
617.545.7989 (cell)
graduateombuds
@northeastern.edu

A graduate student wants to discuss concerns related to university experience, speak off the record about concerns, and identify options for resolving conflicts informally.

- The Ombudsperson for Graduate Students serves as a confidential, neutral, and informal resource for graduate students seeking to address concerns that may be impacting their studies.

PROACTIVE STEPS

Here are ways you can proactively support students.

1 ENCOURAGE STUDENTS WHO HAVE DRC ACCOMMODATIONS TO SHARE THEM WITH YOU.

At any time during the semester, per a student's request, faculty may receive a Professor Notification Letter (PNL) email which allows the student to access their disability accommodations. This document notifies the faculty of a student's approved classroom accommodations and it will be emailed directly from the Disability Resource Center (DRC). Faculty are responsible for providing approved accommodations upon receipt of the PNL. You may wish to make an announcement about it or put a statement in your syllabus (see syllabus language p. 20)

Faculty Responsibility for Providing Accommodations

- Ensure that students who request accommodations for disability-related reasons are referred to the DRC if they are not already registered. You can do this by including a statement on your syllabus.
- Provide and implement approved accommodations listed on the student's PNL.
- Contact the DRC if you have concerns about an approved accommodation or how to implement it. The staff at the DRC is prepared to assist faculty by answering questions about a specific accommodation and/or providing instructions on how to implement them.
- Maintain privacy by not sharing information about a student's accommodations with anyone.
- Provide handouts, videos, and other course materials in accessible formats.

2 CONSIDER WHERE YOU CAN BE FLEXIBLE AND COMMUNICATE WITH STUDENTS ABOUT IT.

Consider where you may be able to provide students some flexibility.

Some students have shared the following examples of flexibility that they've found helpful:

- Having milestone deadlines for big projects to provide early intervention if students are falling behind
- Flexible deadlines
- Less punitive late policies
- Creating clear pathways for students to request assistance or ask for flexibility (e.g., "life happens" clause)

One professor provides this: "Life Happens Clause: Particularly in this day, this clause could not be more true for all of us. With that in mind, I am awarding you ONE use of this clause throughout the semester. What this means is that should you miss a test, Discussion Board/Assignment, or extra credit assignment, you can invoke this Clause (with no questions asked) subject to the limitations below: You must invoke it the day of whatever material is due/you are asking to apply it to. Doing so will provide you with 24 hours from the date/time of the original assignment to complete the missed assignment."

For further information and guidance regarding student absences, please refer to [attendance requirements in the current student catalogs](#).

3 PROVIDE CONTENT WARNINGS.

If you will be discussing content related to violence (including sexual violence), mental health concerns, suicide, eating disorders, or other sensitive topics, be clear with students in advance what that content will be. For example, if you plan to show a video with more graphic content, you may additionally want to preface that content. Knowing about the content in advance simply allows students to properly prepare themselves for the material and choose their level of participation. If possible, offer an alternate activity of learning opportunity for students who indicate discomfort with the material.

SYLLABUS LANGUAGE

Here is an example of syllabus language you can provide.

Please share any formal DRC-approved accommodations with me early in the semester so I can make sure to put those accommodations in place. You can do so by requesting a "professor notification letter" through your DRC portal and then following up with me via email. See here for more information: <https://drc.sites.northeastern.edu/registered-students/>

If you do not have any formal accommodations through the DRC but would like to request them, you can register here: <https://drc.sites.northeastern.edu/incoming-and-unregistered-students/>.

If at any point of the semester an issue arises that affects your ability to fully participate and learn in this class, I encourage you to talk with me as you feel comfortable. Please note that I am a university-mandated reporter, meaning that if I am made aware of an incident related to sexual assault, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment, dating or domestic violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking, I am required to report it to the Title IX coordinator on campus.

Many campus resources exist to support you, including the following:

- *University Health and Counseling Services: Provides confidential medical and mental health services.
- *Find@Northeastern: Offers 24/7 mental health support to full-time students and connection to unlimited free counseling sessions. Call 877.233.9477 (US) or +1.781.457.7777 (International).
- We Care: Creates a support network for interpersonal problems, academic concerns, or personal tragedies.
- Disability Resource Center: Ensures that students with disabilities have equal access to the academic experience at Northeastern and advocates for students with learning differences.
- *OPEN: Alcohol and other Drug and Sexual Violence Services: Provides confidential, non-judgmental check-ins for students.
- *Center for Spirituality, Dialogue, and Service: Attends to spiritual needs and offers confidential support and guidance.
- Office for University Equity and Compliance: Investigates reports of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation at Northeastern

**indicates confidential resource*

National Hotlines

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Call 800.273.TALK (8255) or chat via website

The Trevor Project: Crisis Support for LGBTQ Youth: Text START to 678-678, Call 866.4887386 or chat via website

Crisis Text Line: 741741

National Sexual Assault Hotline: Call 800.656.HOPE (4673) or chat via website

National Domestic Violence Hotline: Call 800.799.7233, text START to 88788, or chat via website

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