

Supporting Student Mental Health at GVSU

Students experiencing mental health challenges are a growing concern at GVSU. Responses to the 2018 National College Health Assessment indicated the following about our students:

- 32% reported that stress seriously impacted their academic performance
- 27% were diagnosed or treated for anxiety within the last year
- 50% reported that academics were traumatic or very difficult to handle in the last year
- 64% reported that they had sought/ received information on depression/ anxiety
- 61% indicated they were interested in receiving information
- 23% reported having a personal health issue that was traumatic or very difficult to handle in the last 12 months

Students navigating mental-health issues are more likely to have lower GPA's and less likely to persist in school. They are often hesitant to approach faculty for help for a range of reasons, namely fear of disappointing their instructor and being viewed as lazy or making excuses to get out of doing the work.

What can I do in my Classroom?

First, be sure to model inclusive behavior at all times. Students will follow your lead! There are many ways faculty can support student mental health, below are a few proactive strategies to get started.

- Create a safe and encouraging classroom environment by normalizing the presence of mental health issues the first day of class. Clearly state that you understand stress, anxiety and depression are no different than a physical illness and you want to be as supportive as possible. Include this in a statement in the syllabus and verbalize it in class. Here is a sample statement:

"As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, including stress, anxiety and depression. While I am not an expert, I acknowledge that mental health challenges can be a deterrent to academic success and overall quality of life. If you are in need of support, please come see me or contact the [University Counseling Center](#). I want you to get the help you need!"

- Announce mental health related events when offered on campus and if possible, incorporate them into your course work. Attend them yourself when you can and invite students to join you.
- Incorporate Inclusive Grading Policies:
 - ❖ Consider alternatives to class attendance/participation points such as online activities that students can complete on their own if they cannot attend class
 - ❖ Provide flexible dates for students to complete work such as a 2-week window to

submit larger assignments

- ❖ Drop the lowest quiz or test grade
- ❖ Allow students to revise and resubmit one assignment in the last week of class

Want to learn more?

University Counseling Center, 204 STU, 616-331-3266 or gvcounsel@gvsu.edu

[Collette, Armstrong & Bean \(2018\). Supporting Students Facing Mental Health Challenges. University of](#)

[Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching Occasional Paper, 38](#)

[Lipka, S. \(Feb 2018\). I Didn't Know How to Ask. Chronicle of Higher Education](#)

[National College Health Assessment](#)

[University of Texas at Austin, Promoting Well-Being in Learning Environments Guidebook](#)