

Signs of a Student in Distress

Students will exhibit various signs indicating that they are struggling academically or having difficulties in other domains. Below is a list of symptoms that students might exhibit if they are having difficulties, but are not at an immediate risk to themselves or others. Please note that this is not a comprehensive list and that not all of these symptoms have to be present to indicate a student is in need of help. If you are unsure of whether a student's behavior is something to be concerned about, please contact the Counseling Center at (518) 388-6161 and we can help you in determining what to do.

Academic Behavior

- Significant decline in quality of work.
- Not handing in homework or assignments.
- Coursework that is handed in expresses signs of anger, hopelessness, isolation, depression, or despair.
- Excessive avoidance of their research and of meetings with advisors.
- Dependency (e.g., the student makes an excessive amount of appointments to see you or needs excessive amounts of direction or guidance for simple tasks).
- Repeated absence(s) from class, lab, or recitation.
- Listlessness, lack of energy, or frequently falling asleep in class or lab.
- Inappropriate disruptions or verbalizations in class.

Psychological and Physical Signs

- Exaggerated behaviors or personality traits, such as agitation, withdrawal, or blunted affect.
- Normal emotions displayed at an extreme level or prolonged period of time, such as irritability, anxiety, or tearful behavior.
- Unwarranted anger, hostility, or outbursts.
- Significant changes in concentration or motivation.
- Extreme fatigue or sleepiness in class.
- Deterioration in physical presence or hygiene.
- Visible increases or decreases in weight.
- Evidence of alcohol or other drug dependence or abuse.
- Evidence of "cutting" behavior, such as knife-like cuts on arms.

The following recommendations can be used if a student approaches you with a problem and/or if you decide to approach a student about some of the signs listed above.

- Talk privately to the student about your concerns.
- Listen carefully to what the student has to say.
- Be non-judgmental in expressing your concerns.
- Repeat back what the student has said to you to make sure you understand the essence of what is going on for them.
- Refer them to the Counseling Center and discuss the referral with the student.