Introduction

Many colleges and universities are experiencing an increase in the number of distressed or disruptive students on their campuses. You, the faculty and staff of the UMKC community, regularly interact with our students both in and out of the classroom. You are often the first to notice when a student is distressed or begins to act in a disruptive or threatening manner. This may leave you in the sometimes difficult position of trying to find an appropriate and helpful action plan.

The purpose of this document is to provide a reference guide for you for dealing with these situations when they arise. These students are best served by the early interventions of concerned people within the UMKC community and by the collaborative use of our resources for prevention, informed personal support, specialized services and preparedness.

This guide is divided into two sections. Section I deals with sources of student distress, identifying the student in distress, tips for interacting with the distressed student and the process involved in making a referral to the Counseling Center or other appropriate student services. Section II deals with handling a situation in which a student is behaving in a threatening or disruptive manner.

Section I: The Distressed Student

Your Role

College students encounter many stressors and often may seek help from trusted faculty and staff members. Faculty and staff who are seen as caring and trustworthy have the potential to offer support to students and to point them in the direction of the assistance they need. Other times, you may be the first to notice that a student is having difficulty. Your recognition of the possible signs of a student’s distress and your willingness to discuss them with the student can be helpful as a show of your support and as an opening for them to consider other possibilities for assistance. Sometimes your first step may be to consult with others about a student to consider a plan of action.

Sources of Student Distress

Students may arrive at college with emotional concerns or experience distress as a result of the various concerns they face in their academic or personal life. While most students successfully cope with the pressures of college life, others need assistance. Some common sources of student distress include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family problems</th>
<th>Financial concerns</th>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship problems</td>
<td>Balancing school and work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic difficulties</td>
<td>Physical problems and concerns</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alcohol or drug problems</td>
<td>Grief, loss or traumatic events (war, rape, domestic violence, accidents, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Harassment or discrimination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
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Signs of Student Distress

Because students often seek the support or advice of faculty or staff when they are feeling overwhelmed, it is helpful for you to be aware of the signs that a student is in distress. At times, a student may not openly disclose their concern or ask for help, but their behavior or attitude may be noticeably changed. Being cognizant of these distress signals can help you to be more proactive in situations that may present themselves and to facilitate a helping process for the student. Some common signs of psychological distress include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor academic performance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Excessive absences or tardiness</td>
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<td>Disruptive behavior</td>
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<td>Changed pattern of interacting with others/ isolation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depressed or lethargic mood</td>
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<td>Weight loss or gain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expressions of hopelessness or helplessness</td>
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<tr>
<td>References to suicide, homicide, or death in writings or comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decreased attention span</td>
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<td>Fatigue and sleeping in class</td>
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What To Do When A Student Expresses Suicidal Ideation?
The student who is contemplating suicide may send messages indicating their pain or loss of hope. These “invitations” for help can range from “I wish I wasn't here”, to a very direct “I'm going to kill myself.” Non-verbal messages can include giving away valued possessions, putting financial and university affairs in order or saying good-bye to people. Each possible message about suicide should be explored. If you believe a student is in imminent danger of harming themselves, the UMKC Police Department (235-1515 Volker Campus or 235-1818 Hospital Hill Campus) should be contacted immediately. If you are uncertain about whether a student’s behavior or threats constitute “imminent danger”, do not hesitate to contact the Counseling Center at 235-1635 and ask to speak with a staff member to consult about your concerns. Alternatively, you may also discuss any concerns you may have with the Assistant Dean of Students and Judicial Officer, Dr. Jeff Traiger (235-5660).

If a student expresses thoughts of suicide, keep in mind that not all suicidal thoughts are indicative of actual intent to harm oneself. In order to better assess the risk of suicide, find answers to the questions below. Do not be afraid to ask.

- Are you planning to hurt yourself?
- What is your plan for suicide and exactly how (when will it happen)?
- Do you have the means to carry out that plan? (For example, if a student says they will take pills, ask them if they have pills to take, where they are and if they have immediate access to them).
- Have you ever attempted suicide before?
- How unbearable is your pain?
- Who/What are your resources for life?

The more specific and lethal the plan, the more recent a previous attempt, and the greater the ability to carry out the plan, the higher is the risk for a completed suicide. For people who are considering suicide, these questions will not furnish them with new ideas. Most people who are actively suicidal are more than willing to discuss their plan. Conversely, many people consider suicide from time to time in passing. The less specific and lethal the plan (e.g. “I guess I'd take a couple sleeping pills sometime.”), the less likely a suicide attempt.

If the student does not appear to be in immediate danger, it would be helpful to facilitate the student’s connection with the Counseling Center and to work a safety plan with them. For example, you may offer to have the student call the Counseling Center from your office to schedule an appointment or you may bring the student in to the Center yourself. You might help them call one of their support persons. See section on Making a Referral for more information on how to make a successful referral.

Tips for Interacting with and Assisting the Distressed Student
There are no absolutely correct procedures for dealing with a distressed student. Each person has their own style of approaching and responding to others. Listed below are some suggestions for interacting with the distressed student.

- Talk with the student in private if possible to minimize the student’s embarrassment and to protect their privacy
- Express your sincere concern about the student’s welfare
- Listen carefully without providing advice or rushing in to help fix the problem
- Reinforce the person for confiding in you
- Empathize and acknowledge their distress
- If possible, normalize students’ feelings and assure them that it is okay to talk about those feelings
- Be accepting and non-judgmental
- Provide support to the student and consider referring the student to the Counseling Center where their distress can be addressed in a confidential setting
- Link to other people and resources that would help

Making a Referral to the Counseling Center
When you have determined that a student may benefit from professional counseling, it is typically helpful to talk with the student in a direct manner that demonstrates your concern for the student. Again, reinforce the person for confiding in you, acknowledge their concern, and suggest that they may benefit from talking to someone who is trained to help students who are having difficulties.

- Suggest to the student that he or she may benefit from talking with someone trained to help
- Tell the student about the services available to them at the Counseling Center
- Offer to call the Center for the student while they are in your office
- If a student is skeptical about seeking help, express your acceptance of those feelings
- Encourage the student to be open to reconsidering counseling at a later time
An Example of a Referral
A student comes into your office and begins to describe problems that are interfering with his or her academic work. At a break in the discussion, you might say:

“It sounds as though you have been under stress and having a hard time right now. It may be helpful to talk with someone about this and get some support. I would suggest you see someone at the Counseling Center. Other students have gone there and found it helpful. If you would like, you could call now from my office to find out more about their services and perhaps schedule an appointment.”

Let the student know that help is available on campus, and seeking assistance is a sign of strength and courage rather than weakness. Tell the student as much as possible about services they can receive which are detailed below. Faculty and staff members are in a unique position to facilitate a student’s use of counseling services or to provide some options.

Consultation is Available
If you are concerned about a student at risk, please be aware that staff members at the Counseling Center are available for consultation. Center staff members can help with the following:

- Assessing the situation and its seriousness
- Identifying the best way to facilitate the student’s use of counseling services
- Clarifying your own concerns and feelings about the student
- Answering questions about how to effectively interact with the student
- Exploring a variety of possible approaches to your concerns

Student Health and Wellness Service--Another Referral Option
Sometimes physical problems may present with symptoms or complaints that sound psychological in nature. Likewise, sometimes a student might describe psychological symptoms that actually point to a physical ailment. If an underlying physical ailment seems likely, consider a referral to Student Health and Wellness (SHW) at 235-6133.

Some students are unwilling to accept a referral to the Counseling Center but will consider being seen in Student Health and Wellness for a physical evaluation. While a direct referral to the Counseling Center may be more desirable, a physical evaluation in SHW is an alternative that may be more acceptable to the student. The professionals at SHW will evaluate the student and may more easily be able to refer them to counseling if necessary.

Student Health and Wellness, located at 4825 Troost, Room 115, provides health care to UMKC students at no fee for office visits. Appointments can be made by calling 235-6133 and walk-ins are welcome on a space available basis.

Counseling Center Services
The mission of the Counseling Center is to facilitate UMKC students’ academic objectives by providing them with a variety of services related to their emotional and mental well-being and to provide assistance to University staff and faculty who serve these students. Individual counseling is the primary service offered by the Center with services provided by a staff of licensed psychologists and supervised graduate interns.

- Individual Counseling
- Couple’s Counseling
- Group Therapy and Support Groups
- Outreach and educational programs
- Psychiatric Services
- Assess for Success to understand learning concerns
- SCOPE (Students Considering Other Potentials in Education) for substance use
- Consultation to students or their concerned friends, faculty, staff and parents

Location: 4825 Troost, Suite 206
Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday
Phone: 816-235-1635

Making an Appt: When a student calls, the receptionist will arrange for the student to meet with an individual counselor for the intake appointment as soon as possible. If the student appears to be in need of immediate help, the student may be seen the same day on an emergency basis.
What to Expect: During this first intake session, the student will complete some information forms before meeting individually with a counselor. Then, the student and the counselor will discuss the student's concerns and determine together how the student can best be served.

Confidentiality: All services at the Counseling Center are confidential by law.

Fees: The initial intake session is free for all students. Both full and part-time students are eligible to receive eight sessions free of charge during an academic year and students who wish to be seen longer can often do so for $15 a session.

What if the question is academic progress? The Assess for Success service helps students with academic performance by providing a cost-effective assessment service targeted to individual needs. It is designed for individuals who may be experiencing difficulty due to study skills, unique learning styles, test anxiety, learning disabilities, or attention and focus issues. For consultation or services available through this program, please ask for Assess for Success.

What if the concern is substance use? The SCOPE (Students Considering Other Potentials in Education) program is designed to assist students who are seeking to better understand and cope with the consequences associated with their own alcohol and drug use. Students may enter the SCOPE program by self referral or in response to a referral from faculty or staff. For consultation or services available through this program, please ask for the SCOPE program.

The Distressed Student who is Disruptive

Sometimes a consultation with a therapist at the Counseling Center can help the faculty or staff member to better understand the disruptive student. Through consultation between therapist, staff member and possibly the student, problems can sometimes be satisfactorily addressed without the need for formal action. When faculty or staff recommend that a student be seen for counseling or assessment due to behavioral disruptions, our services are typically to be entered voluntarily. The students' behaviors and consequences remain in the discipline purview, while counseling is a process that the student may find helpful to figure out how to address their particular issues. Once a student seeks counseling, a professional and legally confidential relationship is established between the counselor and the student. Sometimes the student will give a release for information to be shared with others or you can ask them if they came. There are exceptions to confidentiality.

Section II: The Disruptive Student

Faculty and staff members may also be faced with students who are behaving in a disruptive or threatening manner. It is recommended that faculty and staff members follow the guidelines delineated below when confronted with such a situation.

Responding to Disruptive/Threatening Behavior

When improper student conduct obstructs or disrupts classes or other University functions, or when the safety of members of the UMKC campus community is endangered by threats of violence or violent acts, the campus has identified the following courses of action:

- If a student appears to threaten harm to others, immediately contact the UMKC Police Department (235-1515 Volker or 235-1818 Health Sciences Complex). The police will handle all aspects of the investigation.

- If a student appears to threaten harm to him or her self, immediately contact the UMKC Police Department (235-1515 Volker or 235-1818 Health Sciences Complex) who will assess the need to involve the Counseling Center. Once the Counseling Center is involved they will work with the UMKC Police Department to arrange for appropriate intervention and treatment.

- If a student is disruptive, they should be immediately asked to stop and warned that disruption can result in student disciplinary action as outlined in the UM System Student Conduct Code. (Copies of the Student Conduct Code can be found on-line at http://www.umsystem.edu/ums/rules/collected_rules/programs/ch200/200.010_standard_of_conduct, in the student handbook, course catalog or at the Student Life Office.) Students in Dental, Law, Medicine or Pharmacy may also be held accountable under their respective Honor Code.
• If the student continues the disruption despite the warning, faculty/staff are authorized to ask the student to leave the area and may inform the student that the case will be referred to the Assistant Dean of Students in Student Affairs (x5660) for disciplinary action.

• If the student refuses to leave after being instructed to do so, they should be informed that this refusal is a separate violation of the Student Conduct Code (failure to comply with directions of a University official) and may be subject to additional student conduct sanctions.

• If, in the faculty/staff member’s best judgment, a disruptive student’s threats or refusal to leave creates a safety risk or makes it impossible to continue class or other University functions, they should contact the UMKC Police Department immediately.

• If the Police Department files criminal charges, they will also make a referral to the Assistant Dean of Students in Student Affairs Assistant for disciplinary action. However, regardless of the actions taken by the Police Department, the faculty/staff member may always refer a student to the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs for Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

• Only in an emergency, disciplinary procedures can be used to suspend a student immediately or exclude them from campus if there is strong evidence to believe that the student’s presence on campus may lead to continued threats of violence to another’s health or safety. The UMKC Police Department can implement this action with direct authorization from the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.

• Non-students and students not enrolled in class may be removed permanently without formal review. They have no right to attend the class without the instructor’s permission and should be asked to leave. Contact the UMKC Police Department should a problem arise.

(PLEASE NOTE: A disruptive student cannot be removed permanently from a class in which they are enrolled without formal review and proper due process outlined in the Student Conduct Code or Honor Code. Questions should be directed to the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs for Judicial Affairs at 235-5660.)

The Student Conduct Code and Disruptive Students

Students at all of the University of Missouri campuses are governed by the Student Conduct Code. The University of Missouri Board of Curators adopted our current Student Conduct Code (200.010) in 1994 (an abbreviated version is found below). A disruptive student is normally referred to the Assistant Dean in Student Affairs by faculty, staff or other students for disciplinary action when they (a) disrupt a class while in session, (b) cause physical abuse or other conduct which threatens or endangers the health of others, (c) act in a lewd, indecent or obscene manner or (d) fail to comply with the directions of a university official acting in the performance of his or her duties. The Assistant Dean of Student Affairs conducts an investigation and meets with all parties involved.

Sanctions can range from a simple written warning to University expulsion. Discretionary sanctions such as mandatory counseling, community service and written assignments are administered along with probationary status in many cases involving disruptive students. The disciplinary procedures are designed to ensure due process. Normally, most cases are resolved through a meeting or series of meeting between the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs and the student being charged, called an “informal disposition”. However, the student being charged has the right to request a full University hearing panel at any time.

Privacy rights of the students involved are protected by FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) throughout the entire process. The Assistant Dean of Student Affairs may share the information on a need to know basis only within the University community. Copies of the complete Rules of Procedures in Student Conduct Matters (200.020) can be obtained in the Student Life Office, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and in the University General Catalog as well as on-line at http://www.umkc.edu/umkc/catalog-grad/html/append/policy/0040.html.

UMKC Student Conduct Code (200.010)

Conduct for which students are subject to sanctions falls into the following categories:

1. Academic dishonesty, such as cheating, plagiarism, or sabotage. The Board of Curators recognizes that academic honesty is essential for the intellectual life of the University. Faculty members have a special obligation to expect high standards of academic honesty in all student work. Students have a special obligation to adhere to such standards. In
all cases of academic dishonesty, the instructor shall make an academic judgment about the student's grade on that work and in that course. The instructor shall report the alleged academic dishonesty to the Primary Administrative Officer.

a) The term cheating includes but is not limited to: (i) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (ii) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; (iii) acquisition or possession without permission of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the University faculty or staff; or (iv) knowingly providing any unauthorized assistance to another student on quizzes, tests, or examinations.

b) The term plagiarism includes, but is not limited to: (i) use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without fully and properly crediting the author with footnotes, citations or bibliographical reference; (ii) unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials; or (iii) unacknowledged use of original work/material that has been produced through collaboration with others without release in writing from collaborators.

c) The term sabotage includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized interference with, modification of, or destruction of the work or intellectual property of another member of the University community.

2. Forgery, alteration, or misuse of University documents, records or identification, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University.

3. Obstruction or disruption of teaching, research, administration, conduct proceedings, or other University activities, including its public service functions on or off campus.

4. Physical abuse or other conduct which threatens or endangers the health or safety of any person.

5. Nonconsensual sexual behavior including but not limited to rape; sexual assault; nonconsensual sexual touching of the genitals, breast or anus of another person or the touching of another with one’s own genitals whether directly or through the clothing; or exposing one’s genitals to another under circumstances in which he or she should reasonably know that his or her conduct is likely to cause affront or alarm, or sexual harassment.

6. Stalking another by following or engaging in a course of conduct with no legitimate purpose that puts another person reasonably in fear for his or her safety or would cause a reasonable person under the circumstances to be frightened, intimidated or emotionally distressed.

7. Harassment by engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that serves no legitimate purpose that would cause a reasonable person under the circumstances to be frightened, intimidated, or emotionally distressed.

8. Invasion of privacy by photographing or recording (using electronic or other means) another person in a state of full or partial nudity in a place where one would have a reasonable expectation of privacy without that person’s consent, and distributing or transmitting that image without that person’s consent.

9. Participating in attempted or actual theft of, damage to, or possession without permission of property of the University or of a member of the University community or of a campus visitor.

10. Unauthorized possession, duplication or use of keys to any University facilities or unauthorized entry to or use of University facilities.

11. Violation of University policies, rules or regulations or of campus regulations including, but not limited to, those governing residence in University-provided housing, or the use of University facilities, or the time, place and manner of public expression.

12. Manufacture, use, possession, sale or distribution of alcoholic beverages or any controlled substance without proper prescription or required license or as expressly permitted by law or University regulations, including operating a vehicle on University property, or on streets or roadways adjacent to and abutting a campus, under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance as prohibited by law of the state of Missouri.

13. Disruptive or disorderly conduct or lewd, indecent, or obscene conduct or expression.

14. Failure to comply with directions of University officials acting in the performance of their duties.

15. The illegal or unauthorized possession of firearms, explosives, other weapons, or hazardous chemicals.

16. Misuse in accordance with University policy of computing resources, including but not limited to:

   a) Actual or attempted theft or other abuse.

   b) Unauthorized entry into a file to use, read, or change the contents, or for any other purpose.

   c) Unauthorized transfer of a file.

   d) Unauthorized use of another individual's identification and password.

   e) Use of computing facilities to interfere with the work of another student, faculty member, or University official.
f) Use of computing facilities to interfere with normal operation of the University computing system.
g) Knowingly causing a computer virus to become installed in a computer system or file.

Important Telephone Numbers and Addresses

**Campus Police:** Volker Campus 235-1515  Health Sciences Complex 235-1818  4825 Troost, Room 213

**Assistant Dean of Students Jeff Traiger** 235-5660  336 Administrative Center

**Counseling and Testing Center** 235-1635  4825 Troost, Room 206
BASICS (for Alcohol or Drug Use)
Assess for Success (for problems related to learning/ADHD assessment)

**Student Health and Wellness Service** 235-6133  4825 Troost, Room 115

**Sexual Assault Violence Prevention and Response Coordinator** 235-1638  105 Haag Hall Women’s Center