



50 Targeted Success Strategies to
Create a Campus Culture of
Well-Being

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Red Folder at Penn State Helps Those Assisting Distressed Students

Penn State faculty, staff and student leaders looking for assistance helping distressed students can automatically turn to The Red Folder, a resource managed and distributed by Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). It comes in both website and printed form, serving as a quick reference guide for those interacting with students in their campus roles.

Students' well-being is first and foremost when it comes to this approach, whether it's determining ways to boost their overall well-being, address others' worries about their well-being or intervene with concern right away.

Users on all Penn State campuses are shown how to **recognize** indicators of distress, practice strategies to meaningfully **respond** and identify various resources to **refer** students effectively. Colors are used to show the level of distress:

Green (Low Distress)

- **Recognize.** Indicators of low distress include things like exhibiting stressors that typically go away, adaptive and satisfactory daily functioning and little to no impairment overall. Examples are given within the realms of academic, physical and psychological well-being.
- **Respond.** Users are given tips on how to listen and validate, gather information, provide a menu of options and follow up.
- **Refer.** Localized resources are provided for each Penn State campus.

Yellow (Moderate Distress)

- **Recognize.** Behaviors may occur in clusters or be acute changes worth noting, be ongoing and consistent, or result in some impairment while maintaining adequate daily functioning. Examples are given within the realms of academic, physical and psychological well-being.
- **Respond.** Users are given tips on how to be steady, pause, listen and validate, consult, gather information, provide a menu of options and follow up.
- **Refer.** Users are asked: "Is the student a danger to themselves/others OR does the student need some other assistance?" They're then given Yes, No and Maybe points to help determine effective next steps.

Red Folder at Penn State Helps Those Assisting Distressed Students *(continued)*

Red (High Distress)

- **Recognize.** Be on the lookout for behaviors that indicate concerns about someone's safety, may occur in clusters or be acute changes worth noting, are ongoing and consistent, or result in significant impairment. Examples are given within the realms of safety risk, academic, physical and psychological well-being.
- **Respond.** Users are given tips on how to put safety first, be steady, pause, consult, listen and validate, ask direct questions, give concrete help and follow up, being forewarned that each situation is unique.
- **Refer.** Users are asked: "Is the student a danger to themselves/others OR does the student need some other assistance?" They're then given Yes, No and Maybe points to help determine effective next steps.

At all Moderate and Low points, users are given the advice: "If the student's conduct is clearly dangerous or threatening, including self-harm or harm to others, call 911 or your local Penn State Police line. If a student does not meet these criteria and you have greater concerns than outlined here please refer to High Distress for guidance on recognizing, responding to, and referring students experiencing extreme distress."

You can find more about the Red Folder at Penn State at: <https://redfolder.psu.edu>.

Sources: Penn State Student Affairs News, 10/4/22; Red Folder at Penn State, <https://redfolder.psu.edu>

Previously, "People were very effectively using the Red Folder to help students in high distress, which is primarily defined by safety concerns. By further educating the campus community about how to recognize, respond, and refer students experiencing moderate and low levels of distress, individuals can preventatively help students by addressing concerns about their mental health and wellbeing before reaching a point of high distress. We encourage the campus community to play an active role in mental health prevention as the trusted, compassionate people students interact with in their daily lives. The goal is to 'reduce the Red.' As a community, we can prevent students from getting to the point of high distress by intervening earlier."

- Stephanie Stama, Assistant Director, Community Education and Outreach for CAPS

The Life Design Program at Bowling Green State University

The search for purpose and meaning is most certainly tied into students' well-being. At Bowling Green State University (OH), they've undertaken a campus-wide Life Design initiative to offer all undergraduate students a sense of "purpose and forward momentum."

BGSU's Life Design program was created to help students "learn to maximize their academic experience, prioritize their well-being, make connections that build an invaluable network while in college and jump-start their careers before graduation," according to their website.

"Grounded in design thinking principles, students explore big questions - what they want to do and who they want to become - while shaping their college and career journey."

Life Design Coaches

Undergraduate BGSU students can enter the Life Design program at any point during their college journey with most starting off at the Geoffrey H. Radbill Center for College and Life Design. The center offers inclusive, collaborative spaces where students can work with Life Design coaches to design their college experience, all while gaining tools and skills to design their lives.

Life coaches help guide students through experiences such as...

- "Exploring majors or interests"
- Unlocking new opportunities or ways of seeing paths forward
- Empowering you to get unstuck or seeing problems from a new angle
- Encouraging you to understand more about yourself and take action to achieve your goals
- Managing your time and energy
- Helping you build your 'team' at BGSU by connecting you to campus resources and departments
- Setting goals"

Encouraging Words

"Every student has their own unique path," reads BGSU's site. "Life Design empowers you to create the college experience and career that is just right for you."

The encouragement continues: "You will work with the Life Design team to develop a personalized experience that helps you graduate, launch a successful career and connect with a network of 200,000+ Falcon alumni, professionals and organizations around the world. And, if your plan changes, you'll have the toolkit to pivot and design your way forward."

Throughout their progression, students are then introduced to services at the Michael and Sara Kuhlin Hub for Career Design and Connections where they can connect with professionals about mentorship opportunities, plus co-ops, internships and career opportunities. Workshops, professional development and more are also provided.

Learn more about BGSU's Life Design program at: www.bgsu.edu/life-design/.

Virginia Tech's Residential Well-Being Program Surrounds Students with Resources and Care

A Residential Well-being initiative at Virginia Tech works to incorporate a full spectrum of student-facing departments into the residential experience, from Hokie Wellness to Living-Learning Programs, Inclusion and Belonging, the Counseling Center, Housing Services, the Dean of Students, Learning Partnerships and others. The program design is “creative and responsive, meeting the needs of a student’s mental, emotional, and social well-being,” their site explains.

Residential Well-being offers a proactive approach to bring holistic well-being and student success right to students’ doors, according to Rebecca Caldwell, the director of Residential Well-being. Trained student leaders – 251 of them – focus on inclusion, belonging, well-being and student engagement, working within a large residential campus to create smaller, more connected campus communities. Each of these are supported by professional case managers, well-being coordinators, ExperienceVT coordinators, embedded counselors and the student Residential Well-being leaders, reported Virginia Tech News.

“Rather than expecting the students to find Virginia Tech’s world-class campus experiences on their own, we are surrounding the student with the key elements of first-year success inside of their living environment,” said Caldwell. “The focus is care and relationships, while connecting students early to our campus wide web of resources and experiences.”

“We can’t just assume that because a student shows up to Virginia Tech that they will immediately feel a sense of place,” said Chris Wise, assistant vice president for Student Affairs’ health and wellness areas. “We must reach out to students and develop relationships with them, have them develop relationships with each other, so they can feel welcome, included, and a part of their new community.”

Learn more about Residential Well-Being at: RWB.vt.edu.

Sources: Virginia Tech News, 8/29/22; Residential Well-being, Virginia Tech Student Affairs, RWB.vt.edu

“It would have been so easy to continue doing things the way we always had, but it was brave and bold to realize that what we were doing was no longer working for today’s students. The model was broken, and we needed to try something different, something brand new.”

– Amy Epperley, Senior Director for Hokie Wellness at Virginia Tech

Why Residential Well-being?

“Students spend more time in a residence hall than anywhere else on campus and we understand that the campus residential environment has an enormous impact on students. The habits, patterns, and relationships formed during the first year can significantly influence the trajectory of a student’s success.”

Source: RWB.vt.edu