

Student Care and Support

College students encounter a great deal of stress during the course of their academic experience. While most students successfully cope with challenges that may arise, an increasing number of students find academic and social transitions difficult. In addition, COVID-19 has impacted the mental health of many students across the country. The following is a guide developed to aid faculty and staff in assisting students that are experiencing difficulties. It is important to note that the information in the guide may not address every situation one may encounter with a student.

REFERRAL OPTIONS FOR DISTRESSED OR DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS		
Emergency or When Immediate Attention is Required		
Concern	Who to Contact	Phone
Medical Emergency	911	911
Suicidal or homicidal threats	911 (24/7) or Campus Safety (between the hours of 7p & 4a)	911/ (229)-319-1522
Other violence or stalking	911 (24/7) or Campus Safety (between the hours of 7p & 4a)	911/ (229)-319-1522
Sexual assault	Title IX Coordinator	229-221-9145
	911 (24/7) or Campus Safety (between the hours of 7p & 4a)	911/ (229)-319-1522
For Non-Emergency Situations		
Concern	Who to Contact	Phone
Disability	Disability Services	229-226-1621 X1164
Depression/anxiety, signs alcohol or drug use, relationship problems, suspected eating disorders, adjustment issues, stress management, transition issues	Counseling Center	229-226-1621 X1139
Death of student	Counseling Center	229-226-1621 X1139
General student concerns	Dean of Students	229-226-1621 X1028
Academic issues (warnings, probation, Honor Code violations)	Academic Dean	229-226-1621 X1128
Advising	Student Success	229-226-1621 X1054
Sexual assault, harrasment, and misconduct	Title IX Coordinator	229-221-9145
Housing and roommate issues	Dean of Students	229-226-1621 X1028
Student conduct issues	Dean of Students	229-226-1621 X1028
Veteran support	Veterans Career and Transition Center	229-227-6908

The above notwithstanding, if you believe that a student may be in danger, contact the Thomasville Police Department at 911 or Campus Safety between the hours of 7pm – 4am M-F at 229-473-0318.

Distressed Students

A student in **distress** may exhibit a variety of behaviors which suggest that something is wrong, but **do not** indicate or present as an immediate threat to themselves or others. Use this guide and information below to help you help students gain the assistance they need. If you see something, whether in person or virtually, say something.

What are some signs a student may be in distress?

A student may not be disruptive to others, but may exhibit behaviors which suggest that something is wrong and indicate that assistance is needed. They may also be reluctant or unable to acknowledge a need for personal help.

Behaviors may include:

- Change in academic performance
- Excessive absences, especially if the student has previously demonstrated consistent attendance.
- Unusual or markedly changed patterns of interaction (e.g. avoidance of participation, excessive anxiety, domination of discussion).
- Trouble managing stress successfully.
- Marked decrease in energy/ lethargic mood
- Attention issues or rapid speech.
- Marked change in personal dress or hygiene.
- Expressed uncertainty about emotional stability, family issues or relationship problems.
- Appearing uncomfortable, highly emotional, exaggerated emotional responses.
- Repeated requests for special considerations.
- New or repeated behavior which pushes the limits of decorum or which interferes with effective management of the immediate environment (e.g. aggressive or abrasive behavior).

How should I respond to a distressed student?

- Deal directly with the behavior/problem.
- Address the situation on a personal level.
- If the student does not pose a threat, discuss the situation with the student to address the inappropriate behavior.
- If the behavior escalates, ask the student to leave the room and report the situation to the Dean of Students, or between the hours of 7pm – 4am M-F call Campus Safety at (229)-473-0318.

For students who are mildly or moderately distressed (not an immediate threat to self or others), you can submit your concern to the Dean of Students at 229-226-1621 X1028. You can submit a concern for any student, whether they are face to face or fully virtual.

Disruptive Students

Disruptive students exhibit behaviors that signify a crisis and that necessitate emergency care.

Behaviors may include:

- Highly disruptive behaviors (e.g. hostility, aggression, violence, etc.).
- Inability to communicate clearly (garbled, slurred speech, unconnected, disjointed thoughts).
- Stalking or obsessive behaviors.
- Threats to harm self or others.
- Loss of contact with reality (seeing or hearing things which others cannot see or hear, beliefs or actions that are greatly at odds with reality or probability).
- Inappropriate communication (including threatening letters, email messages, social media, harassment).
- Taking pleasure in making others feel uncomfortable through their language or actions.
- Suicidal thoughts (including referring to suicide as a current option in a written assignment).
- Note: Negative behaviors are typically and likely not isolated to just one class. It is quite probable that a student is also acting out in other classes, on campus, in their residential hall, or missing practices or meetings.

How should I respond to a disruptive student?

Remain calm and call for help if necessary.

- Remain with the student or find someone else to do so while calls to appropriate resources are made (see referral section).
- Remember that it is NOT your responsibility to provide the professional help needed for a severely troubled/disruptive student. Responding to a disruptive student does not rest on your shoulders. You only need to make the necessary call and request assistance.
- When a student expresses a direct threat to themselves or others, acts in bizarre, highly irrational or disruptive way, call the Counseling Center at 229-226-1621 X1139, Campus Safety at (229)-473-0318 (between the hours of 7pm – 4am M-F) or 911.

How should I respond when a student is disrupting my class?

Faculty members have broad authority to manage their classrooms and establish reasonable guidelines for classroom discussions that ensure everyone has an opportunity to participate in an orderly manner.

- If you believe a student's behavior is inappropriate, consider a general word or caution rather than singling out a student or embarrassing a student. Keep verbal interactions respectful. It is natural for educators to experience feelings of defensiveness, embarrassment, anxiety, or irritation when attempting to talk down a student from an emotional outburst. However, you should strive to appear calm and to treat the student

respectfully at all times. Avoid use of teasing, reprimands, or other negative comments and abstain as well from sarcasm or an angry tone of voice.

- If the behavior is irritating but not disruptive, speak to the student after class. Identify the student's wants and feelings. Use communication tools such as active listening (e.g., "Let me repeat back to you what I thought I heard you say"), open-ended questions (e.g., "What do you need right now to be able to calm yourself?"), and labeling of emotions ("You look angry. Tell me what is bothering you.") to better understand how the student feels and what may be driving the current emotional outburst.
- If a student's behavior reaches the point that it interferes with your ability to teach or other students' ability to benefit from the class, the student should be asked to leave the room for the remainder of the class period. The student should be provided with a reason for this action and an opportunity to discuss the matter with the faculty member as soon as practical. In such situations, the faculty member should contact the Program Director and Academic Dean as soon as practical after the conclusion of the class meeting.

Title IX & Disclosures

Discrimination on the Basis of Sex, Including Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Relationship Abuse, and Stalking

Thomas University is committed to creating and maintaining a safe, healthy, and respectful environment in which our community can work together in an atmosphere free from discrimination. Sexual harassment – which includes sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking – is a form of sex-based discrimination. Any member of the community who is affected by sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship abuse, or stalking is encouraged to seek immediate medical attention and/or to notify law enforcement as appropriate. In addition, all individuals are encouraged to promptly report incidents to the Title IX Coordinator, so we can provide supportive measures, stop unwanted behavior, prevent future incidents, and address the impact of violence on our community.

Required Reporters

All employees (including faculty, staff, resident assistants, coaches, and advisors) are considered “required reporters,” which means that you are required to share information regarding sexual assault, relationship abuse, stalking, sexual harassment, and other forms of sex-based and gender-based discrimination with the Title IX Coordinator. Confidential on-campus resources (Counseling Center and Campus Chaplain) are not required to contact the Title IX Coordinator.

If a student discloses to you, let them know you have to share the information with the Title IX Coordinator. Assure the student that every effort will be made to respect their privacy. Let the student know that the Title IX Coordinator will contact them directly. **Required reporters are required to share the following information with the Title IX Coordinator:**

- Name of student and other involved parties
- Information about the incident (date, nature of the incident, and any other details provided)
- Other helpful information (for example, “the student wanted to speak with a counselor, so we called the Counseling Center”)

Information can be shared with Title IX Coordinator Lyons by emailing cl Lyons@thomasu.edu, or calling 229-221-9145. For more information, please review the policy and processes outlined in the current TU Student Handbook.

How should I respond if a student discloses sexual assault, relationship abuse, stalking, or sexual harassment?

You may be the first or only person with whom the student shares their experience. It is not always easy to know what to say when someone discloses victimization. Use the following ways of showing support:

- **Let Them Know You Are a Required Reporter:** Be honest with the student about sharing information with the Title IX Coordinator. Assure them that their privacy will be respected. Tell them you are not a confidential resource, and let them know that you can connect them to confidential support.
- **Assess Safety:** Determine if the student needs immediate medical attention and has a safe place to go.
- **Listen and Be Present:** Listen patiently and give the student your full attention. Resist the urge to say or do something to fix the situation or ask a lot of questions.
- **Believe Them:** Accept the student's experience without question or doubt. Communicate without judgment. Check your reactions to what they are sharing.
- **Express Empathy and Compassion:** Express your feelings of empathy without contributing to feelings of victimization or blame. Say things like: "I'm sorry this happened to you," "I am here to listen and help in any way I can," and "It's not your fault."
- **Empower Them:** Present the resources available and allow the student to make the right decisions for themselves. Avoid offering advice or making assumptions because each person's story and personal experience are unique.
- **Provide Resources:** Refer the student to professional resources such as a mental health counselor, doctor, hospital, or local victim service center if they are in need of medical treatment or support services.
- **Be Patient:** There is no timetable for recovering from trauma. Avoid putting pressure on the student to engage in activities for which they are not ready.
- **Follow Up:** Show your support by checking in occasionally to remind the student you care and ask if there is anything with which you may be able to help.
- **Self-Care:** Both you and the student will need to practice good physical and emotional self-care.

On-Campus Confidential Resources

Counseling Center: Provides free, private, confidential counseling to all students. The Counseling Center can be reached at (229)-226-1621 X1139. **Remember: In a mental health emergency, call 911.**

Campus Ministry (Goalline): Reverend Cory Wise can be reached at 229-894-3841 or cwise@thomasu.edu.

Off-Campus Confidential Resources

Archbold Student & Employee Assistance Program: (229)-228-2210; Toll-Free 1-(877)-327-2724; or 24 hours Helpline 1-(800)-238-8661.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: A national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. **1-800-273-8255**

There is also a [chat line available](#) (Links to an external site.)