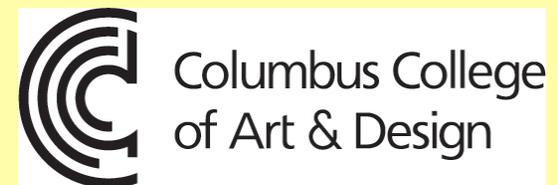


Beyond the Syllabus: Strategies for Enhancing Communication Between Faculty and At-Risk Students

Amy Shevrin, LISW
Director of Counseling & Wellness
Columbus College of Art & Design

Chris Mundell, MS
Assistant Dean of Students
Columbus College of Art & Design



A new paradigm?

- Is the dynamic between faculty and students fundamentally changing in today's classroom?
- Is perception (and reality) about increased mental health concerns impacting the way students and faculty interact?
- Are there new challenges – If so, what do they mean for student learning and faculty job satisfaction?
- What role do student affairs professionals have in addressing these issues?

Our Agenda

- Faculty-Student Expectations
- Theoretical lens
- Current context
- Classroom impact
- Role of student affairs
- Strategies, interventions, and responses
- Discussion- what works on your campus?

Our Learning Goals

To give you the tools to:

- Apply theoretical frameworks to your role as a facilitator of positive faculty/student communication
- Attain a deeper awareness of how mental health issues impact classroom dynamics
- Develop strategies that promote proactive communication and healthy boundaries
- Engage faculty regarding their changing role

Faculty and Students: An Evolving Relationship

1700- 1960

Clearly defined roles– based in structure and authority. Moral, intellectual, & personal development, “in-loco parentis”

1960’s

Civil rights movement, authority challenges, student learning focus

1970- 90’s

Reciprocal relationships, students as consumers/customers, increased diversity

2000’s

????

What are today's expectations?

Match the institution to its mission statement...

| Institution |
|----------------------|
| University of Miami |
| Marquette University |
| Denison University |
| Hobart College |
| University of Texas |

| | Mission Statement |
|---|--|
| 1 | to inspire and educate our students to become autonomous thinkers, discerning moral agents and active citizens of a democratic society. |
| 2 | to transform lives for the benefit of society through the core values of learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity and responsibility. |
| 3 | to educate and nurture students, to create knowledge, and to provide service to our community and beyond. |
| 4 | the search for truth, the discovery and sharing of knowledge, the fostering of personal and professional excellence, the promotion of a life of faith, and the development of leadership expressed in service to others. |
| 5 | student-centered learning environment, globally focused, grounded in the values of equity and service, developing citizens who will lead in the 21st century. |

Mission vs Reality?

*Inspirational... Transformative... Nurturing...
Personal Attention... Active Citizen...
Student-Centered... Develop Character...
Responsibility... Community of Learners*

Key Questions:

Are faculty encouraged to learn how to meet these expectations and to maintain boundaries?

How do students learn to relate appropriately and respectfully with faculty?

Theory & Terms

Learning Partnerships Model (LPM)
Baxter-Magolda, 2004

- Expectations for college graduates are increasingly complex:
 - Ability to cope with conflict
 - Gather and judge evidence
 - Engage multiple perspectives
 - Manage complexity and change

- LPM promotes “self-authorship”– maturation across interpersonal, intrapersonal, and epistemological dimensions

- A framework for faculty to deepen and re-define their relationship to students and enhance student learning

Teaching Approaches

| Framework | Relational Approach |
|-----------|---|
| Teaching | Telling students what they need to know; One-way street from authority to learner |
| Learning | Engaging students in learning how to learn; emphasis on learning what they "need to know" |
| Discovery | Empowering students to develop professional and life skills and to engage in knowledge discovery & construction |

Boundaries

Family Systems Theory

Dr. Murray Bowen

- Core aspect of family systems perspective
- Barrier, something that separates two things
- Boundaries between people have no physical reality
 - Implicit in how people relate to one another

"Boundaries function to regulate communications between people"

-Mark Dombeck, Ph.D.

Boundaries and Relationships

- Open and closed boundaries, permeable
- Maintaining the same pattern of behaviors within a system may lead to balance in the system, but also to dysfunction
- If too rigid or crossed, not good

National Context

- Highly publicized college “mental health” crisis
 - Media as “educator”
- High profile violent incidents on campuses
 - Increased concern about violent behavior
- Increased access to higher education and larger numbers of students in college
- Greater diversity of learners

Context of the Classroom

Student Stress is Up

Mental Health

- Emotional health of college freshmen lowest in 25 years
- Percent of students said their emotional health was above average fell to 52% down from 64% in 1985

Academic Pressure

- Film "[Race to Nowhere](#)" explores effect of academic pressures on high school students
- College admissions "hysteria"
- Need for remedial classes once arrive on campus
- More students working while in school

Student Stress, continued

Financial Reality

- Number of student loans up from 48 million to 70 million since 2007
- Student loan debt will hit \$1 trillion by 2012
- 66% said current economic situation significantly affected choice of college

Job Prospects

- 85% said they attend college so they can get a better job, up from 64% in 2006
- Student loan problems spiking as many with college degrees can't find jobs
- Unemployment rate for those with bachelor degree or higher is highest in record keeping history

Context of the Classroom

Faculty Stress is up

Professional Stressors

- 25% of new Ph.D.s find full-time, permanent jobs
- 50% of faculty have part-time appointments, non-tenure-track positions account for 68% of all faculty appointments
- Average salary for full-time faculty in 2009 was 1.2 percent higher than in 2008– the lowest year-to-year change in 50+ years
- Intense scrutiny of “productivity”- especially at research institutions

Anxiety and Expectations

- Impact of violent incidents on campuses– Feel more vulnerable/less sure on the “front lines”
- Safety concerns
- Concern about potential consequences (e.g., violence, litigation, etc.) arising from issues in the classroom
- Expanded and new roles (outside their expertise)

Dilemma

Scenario #1

You are the Assistant Dean for Academic Support Services at a mid-size, public university. You get a call late in the day from a faculty member concerning a student in his Intro to Psychology class. According to the professor, the student has some “personality issues” and he is troubled by his lack of progress in the class. The student sits in the far corner of classroom and displays a “distant” and “flat” demeanor. He rarely speaks, but when he does, it often doesn’t make sense and lacks connection to the class subject matter. After failing his first exam, the professor tried to have a private conversation to share his concerns. The student was rude, confrontational, and left the meeting abruptly mumbling something under his breath. The student said that the academic problems he was having were “his teachers fault”. You are aware that the student has been on the radar of the campus Behavior Intervention Team and that he is already on academic probation due to poor grades. However, aside from being a lackluster student, he hasn’t done anything to violate your campus conduct policies. The professor knows he should submit a midterm deficiency (failing) grade for the student, but he’s hesitant to do so fearing retaliation or a worsening of his behavior.

What do you do?

Dilemma

Scenario #2:

You are the Counseling Director at a small, private college. One of the students you have been counseling experiences a series of panic attacks and is away from school for a week in order to stabilize herself and gain family and professional support. When she returns, she asks you to write a letter for her professors to ask for leniency regarding her recent absences which were a result of a "confidential personal issue". You provide the student with a letter and she delivers it to her professors.

The next day, you receive a phone call from the student who is upset and shares that when she gave the letter to one professor, he read it and then immediately questioned her about what happened. He said he wanted to know so that he could help her through this difficult time.

What do you do?

Role of Student Affairs

- Uniquely positioned to view institutions as interactive systems
- Act as advocates for students— but have an increasingly important role as consultants to faculty (and the campus)
- Whistle-blowers who call attention to problematic relationships or boundary violations

Student Affairs' Dilemmas

- If create culture of caring, identifying, and reporting leads to an expanded role of serving needs of students AND rest of the campus
- Responding more to needs of faculty and staff in addition to students
- Present their concerns with urgency, have expectations
- How do we prioritize? Intervene ethically? Document sufficiently? Are we prepared and trained to do this well?

Our New Role?

- Raise awareness of changing paradigm
- Teach boundary management
- Promote development of life skills as part of educational experience
- Specific communication tools

Specific Tools

- Slides to incorporate into existing faculty trainings or student programs
- Suggested clauses on syllabus (proactive):
 - How to address issues of a personal nature
 - Safety awareness and expectations
 - Communication expectations i.e., email, cell phone, time frame for response, etc.

SAMPLE SLIDE #1

Boundary Awareness

Maintaining appropriate student/faculty boundaries becomes challenging when...

Students:

- Over-share about their personal life or concerns
- Look to faculty as a parental substitute
- Overly dramatize a life issue or an emotional concern as an excuse or a distraction to classroom performance/learning

Faculty:

- Ask for details about a student's personal life (e.g., disability/medical diagnosis, mental health status, family/home life, relationships)
- Offer extraordinary amounts of leniency or favoritism, enabling the student to avoid their underlying problem
- Become the primary support person of a student whose problems go beyond their training and experience
- Establish close, personal relationships with students which extend far beyond their role as teacher or mentor

SAMPLE SLIDE #2

Potential Consequences

To Students and Faculty:

- Student might feel coerced
- Harm an emotionally fragile student
- Intentions could be misinterpreted
- Faculty becomes thrust into a parental role

To Faculty:

- Incur legal liability if a student acts on their disclosure to you
- You feel like you have to solve their problem
- You feel overwhelmed (wondering what to do)
- You think their problem touches you personally
(I experienced this, so I should be able to help them)

"You're the only one who understands."

"You know about this stuff, right?"

"Will you promise not to tell anyone?"

"If I tell you I'm fine, isn't that good enough?"

SAMPLE SLIDE #3

What are appropriate Boundaries?

Instructor is responsible for:

- Presenting course content and providing high-quality instruction
- Establishing a environment that facilitates student learning
- Demonstrating genuine concern for students
- You can maintain boundaries and still be an effective teacher and demonstrate genuine concern for students

Student is responsible for:

- Learning to take care of their personal and emotional well-being
- Communicating with faculty appropriately about personal concerns or circumstances that impact learning
- Engaging their support network when needed to help them through challenges (family, friends, professional counselor)

SAMPLE SLIDE #4

Proactive Communication- For Faculty

- Communicate behavior expectations early and directly
- Consider outlining your conduct expectations
 - You have a right to assert what is acceptable or unacceptable behavior in your classroom.
- Be engaged with your students as individuals; learn names and refer directly to comments they have made (As Ashley pointed out earlier...")
- Include a statements in syllabus about: accessibility to students, civility, safety, conversations of a personal nature

Template Statements

Personal Conversation Statement

- All conversations of a personal nature will be held in private in my office during office hours or at a prearranged time. The focus of the conversation will be directed on how to help you succeed in the class and/or your career.

Classroom Safety Statement

- Weapons of any kind are prohibited in the classroom. Any verbal threats to safety or violent and/or disruptive behavior will result in immediate referral to appropriate campus authorities. This could result in disciplinary sanctions including failure in the class or suspension from the college.

Template Statements

Respectful Discourse Statement

- Your ability to learn is built upon a fundamental respect for me as the instructor/facilitator and for your classmates. Our shared goal should be to maintain an atmosphere that allows learning to occur. Therefore, the following behavior is expected of you:

Communication Expectations Statement

- I am available to answer questions related to the course before/after class, during office hours and via email. Please note, that I most likely will not respond to e-mails received after ____pm, until ____ the following school day.
 - Office hours (my hours are as follows)
 - E-mail
 - Remote office hours via Skype (you must e-mail me to request a Skype meeting)

Proposed Delivery Methods

- Opportunities for student affairs professionals to facilitate healthy, productive relationships between students and faculty
 - Formal
 - Informal

Students: Formal

- Seminars - communication expectations with faculty, life skills, coping skills
- Orientation
- RA Training
- Student Handbook
- Introduce and teach classroom civility and comportment expectations
- Mentoring Programs

Students: Informal/Passive

- Conversations and meetings
- Advising/Disabilities/Counseling/Res Life/Student Activities/Careers/Judicial Affairs/Deans
- Role model in our behavior and how we communicate to students and each other
- Marketing Campaign i.e. Do's and Don'ts in the Classroom

Faculty: Formal

- New faculty orientation and other training
- Offer series i.e. Student Development, Generational Trends, Mental Health 101, Referring Distressed students, etc
- Be a resource to Academic Affairs regarding Faculty Handbook
- Safety Awareness Training (Partner with campus security)
- Kognito Gatekeeper Training
- QPR Suicide Prevention Training (Question, Persuade, Refer)
- Presentations at departmental meetings
- BIT – (Does creation of BIT comfort or increase anxiety?)

Faculty: Informal

- Consultation
- Staff/faculty roundtable
- Marketing efforts

Faculty and Student Relationship Today

1700- 1900

Clearly defined roles– based in structure and authority. Moral, intellectual, & personal development, “in-loco parentis”

1960’s

Civil rights movement, authority challenges, student learning focus

1970-90’s

Reciprocal relationships, students as consumers/customers, increased diversity

2000’s

Negotiated Learning?, A new era of “in-loco parentis”?

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