

plies to religiously affiliated or controlled schools, which may be exempt from coverage depending on the specific circumstances.

ADA extends the right to public and private education for all individuals with disabilities in previous areas not covered by federal law, such as activities open to parents or other individuals with disabilities, graduation ceremonies, parent-teacher organization meetings, plays, and adult education classes regardless of the source of funding.

*See also:* COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES; FEDERAL EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES; SPECIAL EDUCATION.

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## PERSONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING AT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

College and university students must adapt to environments plagued by rapid change, ambiguity, uncertainty, and depleted support systems. Students must also cope with a myriad of personal and psychological problems that range from basic adjustment and developmental, academic and learning, and career concerns to clinical-level mental illness. Within higher education, there exists general consensus that the ubiquitous role of personal and psychological counseling is to contribute to student development, adjustment, and learning while preventing dangerous and self-defeating behavior, thus enabling the individual to thrive in the college community. The mechanisms that colleges and universities utilize to achieve this goal vary dramatically from one institution to another, depending heavily on the institution's philosophy or mission, available resources, and campus need.

American colleges and universities confront the daunting task of serving the needs of a highly diverse campus. Within this environment, personal and psychological counseling incorporates an expanded interpretation of its role and responsibility. A comprehensive view of counseling within higher education reveals a set of role domains that include psychotherapy, career, academic and learning, and educational and psychological outreach. Not all institutions of higher education share this systemic perspective. Some schools define counseling within the strict confines of academics, devoid of a mental health dimension, offering only educational, career, and developmental services. Others adopt a more inclusive perspective of counseling in higher education—one that incorporates all domains. This holistic view of counseling enables services to reach and assist a vast majority of the campus community while contributing to an environment of support and encouragement.

#### Psychotherapy

Students arrive on campus with personal and psychological problems centered on dysfunctional family situations; anxiety around social, academic, and career concerns; and mental health issues. For many students, transition and adjustment to college is

marked by debilitating stress and anxiety. Deleterious effects result from personal and psychological problems stemming from these experiences and often manifest during the college experience, requiring psychotherapeutic attention. At an alarming rate, students are also experiencing serious mental disorders diagnosed prior to or following their admittance to college. Mood, anxiety, eating, substance, or other disorders complicate adjustment and the ability to meet personal, familial, and collegiate expectations.

The traditional-aged student typically presents developmental, career, and adjustment issues and crises. Identity development, sexuality, intimacy, relationships, substance use, grief and loss, family dysfunction, and values clarification denote challenges this group encounters. Generally, the adult returning student tackles different dilemmas, which focus on stress and time management, career and life transition and changes, family and relationship issues, and financial stress. Minority and other groups on campus require continual attention and support pertaining to such issues as racism, discrimination, marginalization, and academic and social integration.

Personal and psychological problems interfere with innumerable aspects of a student's life, causing significant impairment and distress. Attending to these mental health concerns, psychotherapy represents a viable mechanism in providing support and guidance across cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions within a confidential and safe environment. Utilizing individual, group, couples, and children and family counseling opportunities, therapists attend to the whole individual. Assessment, referral, and treatment extend the mental health counselor's ability to meet students' disparate needs. Collaborations with community mental health providers, support groups, and Twelve Step programs allow students to access services the college or university does not furnish.

### **Academics and Learning**

The general role of counseling, within the realm of academic and learning, is to improve academic proficiency. Programming and support services place considerable attention on strengthening basic reading and writing skills, while addressing issues of time management, test taking, comprehension and retention, and study strategies. With the advent of novel research aimed at enhancing campus programming

and student services, diagnostic criterion and tools, supportive programs, and medication, students diagnosed with varying degrees of learning disabilities and attention-deficit disorders are better equipped to successfully matriculate and prosper in higher education. Encouraging student interactions with academic advisers, faculty, and campus learning centers significantly strengthens a student's chances of being successful and contributes to a student sense of academic and social connection.

### **Career Counseling**

Counseling on a college and university campus inevitably involves issues encompassing career and vocational exploration. Within this domain, counseling assists individuals in selecting an area of study, choosing a career, or clarifying attributes that facilitate or detract from their present work. Exploration of personal values, goals, and characteristics, combined with assessments of career interests, enhance the student's successful transition through higher education. Facilitating student-faculty interactions represents another essential facet of career counseling. Such significant relationships are positively associated with changes in students' occupational values.

### **Educational and Psychological Outreach**

Educational and psychological outreach is critical if college counselors desire to serve as initiators and catalysts for change on the campus and in surrounding communities. Education and prevention comprise the foundation of outreach initiatives. Via thematic presentations, decimation of educational materials, special events, and educational programs counselors effectively address topics such as stress and time management, eating disorders, substance abuse, depression, study skills, career issues, and cross-cultural adjustment.

College counseling services typically acknowledge the scope of problems for which students seek assistance, yet disagree as to the resource feasibility and the level of responsibility schools have in meeting all these counseling provisions. Balancing the needs of traditional-aged students, returning adult students, minority students, and other groups represents a challenging and resource-exhaustive process.

The prevalence of developmental and adjustment problems as well as various forms and degrees of mental illness on college and university campuses cannot be ignored. Within the context of higher ed-

ucation, the role counseling assumes depends largely on the specific needs of the individual and the broad requirements of the campus community. Abetting student adjustment, development, and learning, counseling provides the means for clients to explore problems related to normal developmental issues such as careers, academics and learning, relationships, and identity. For a large number of students, problems of mental illness require more intensive therapy in order to maneuver life's daily tasks and successfully meet personal, parental, and school expectations. In recognizing the comprehensive role of personal and psychological counseling in higher education, colleges and universities substantially counteract student's perception of academic, social, and personal isolation by addressing all facets of the human being.

*See also:* ACADEMIC ADVISING IN HIGHER EDUCATION; ADJUSTMENT TO COLLEGE; CAREER COUNSELING IN HIGHER EDUCATION; COLLEGE STUDENT RETENTION; DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE, *subentry on* COLLEGE; PERSONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS; STUDENT SERVICES.

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## PERSONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

An increasing amount of attention is being directed to the transition to higher education as experienced by traditional-age and adult students. It is a movement that incorporates a great deal of stress and challenge. Although some students are able to experience this transition as a challenge to personal growth, other students are overwhelmed by the changes and experience emotional maladjustment and depression.

Issues of adjustment and general development require persistent attention by campus professionals due to the immediate relevance to college success. Complex psychological histories often underpin these problems, further complicating treatment. These difficulties are often present as inefficiencies in coping with familial separation, time and stress management, basic study techniques, goal setting, relationship formation, handling emotions, and self-esteem crystallization. Personal, academic, social, and professional success depend on the student's ability to manage these aspects of their lives.

### Family Dynamics

Families in the United States are experiencing significant stress and functional discourse marked by unparalleled changes in family structures. The home environment for many young people represents a place of instability and emotional upheaval where security, caring, and nurturing are depleted or nonexistent. Separation, divorce, death, or abandonment removes one or both parents from the family. The lack of attention and affection that may accompany such change adversely impacts children. Subsequent emotional and financial difficulties of a single parent household further strain the family dynamic.

Substance abuse; domestic violence; emotional, physical, and sexual abuse; and mental illness plague some families. At an alarming rate, young people enter higher education with dysfunctional family backgrounds that evoke stress and trepidation in students. For children of alcoholics, for example, the college social climate that is impressed by alcohol use produces significant anxiety as the student grapples with the personal and familial implications of watching and participating in drinking practices. It is imperative that schools recognize the existence