



## WHEN A STUDENT IS UNDERPERFORMING OR NEEDS HELP

*Despite intelligence and past academic success, students may underperform or struggle to reach their full potential. Faculty members can be key to overcoming roadblocks to success.*

### WARNING SIGNS

- Receives lower test grades, misses classes or labs, or submits tardy assignments
- Exhibits change in interpersonal behavior, appearance, hygiene, and/or functioning
- Demonstrates lack of concentration and/or engagement in class
- Avoids assuming personal responsibility

### POSSIBLE CAUSES

- Ineffective study/test-taking skills
- Difficulty adjusting to a new program, location, job, or culture
- Conflict with a faculty member
- Unrealistic expectations
- Problems with a significant relationship
- Depression and/or anxiety
- Low self-esteem
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- The death/loss of a loved one

### EFFECTS OF STRESS

- Everyone experiences stress, but feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope may lower one's performance
- Empirical evidence suggests that memory, critical thinking, and performance are adversely impacted by stress
- Given that stress and burnout are rarely revealed at school or work, poor academic performance may indicate a more serious problem



### OPENING A DIALOGUE

- Attempt to talk to the student with concern and care
- Encourage the student to seek support through a mentor or other academic support service
- Consult a Learning Specialist or Psychologist at Counseling and Educational Support Services (CESS)
- Emphasize that psychological counseling services at CESS are confidential

### PROVIDING DIRECT ASSISTANCE

- Express concern and a desire to help
- Invite the student to share their thoughts and feelings regarding their difficulties
- Cite specific behaviors that concern you
- Paraphrase their words to demonstrate that you understood them
- Convey that you are listening
- Encourage the student and instill hope
- Help the student create an action plan
- When possible, maintain confidentiality, and clarify what information you can and cannot keep private
- Follow-up with the student concerning your recommendation (i.e., Did they follow through?)

### KNOWING YOUR LIMITS

Despite your best efforts, you may find it challenging to intervene. Some of these difficulties may include the following:

- The student may not be willing to discuss or address certain issues
- You do not have the time or resources to intervene
- The student may become overly reliant on you and would benefit from a different perspective
- The problem presented is outside your scope of competency and counseling may be a more appropriate avenue of help

It is reasonable to state your limitations and offer other options for support.

## REFERRING TO CESS

- Be direct and convey that the best way to address the student's concern is through consultation with a CESS counselor
- Normalize the use of counseling and provide information:
  - Services are confidential
  - 1,000+ students and residents attend counseling yearly
  - During the initial appointment, staff will help the student identify their problem(s), establish goals, and develop strategies to succeed
- If the student agrees, provide CESS contact information or assist them in making an appointment
- If the student denies your recommendation, request they give counseling further consideration and explore alternatives

## ASSESSING PROGRESS

- A decrease in the signs you observed initially may indicate improvement
- Greater academic performance
- Increased motivation
- Better hygiene/appearance
- The student relays directly that he/she is feeling better

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Due to HIPAA/FERPA, CESS staff may not be able to disclose information about a specific student without written consent. Please follow up with the student directly.



## OTHER HELPFUL CONTACTS/RESOURCES

### Student of Concern Form

[www.kumc.edu/soc](http://www.kumc.edu/soc)

### Marcia Jones

Graduate Studies • 5004 Wescoe  
[mjones@kumc.edu](mailto:mjones@kumc.edu) • (913) 588-1238

### Dr. Pamela Barnes

School of Nursing • G020 SON  
[pbarnes2@kumc.edu](mailto:pbarnes2@kumc.edu) • (913) 588-1238

### Dr. Jeff Radel

Health Professions • G04 SON  
[ljunge@kumc.edu](mailto:ljunge@kumc.edu) • (913) 945-7333

### Dr. Mark Meyer

School of Medicine • 3040 Murphy  
[mmeyer@kumc.edu](mailto:mmeyer@kumc.edu) • (913) 588-1483

### KU Police Department

115 Support Services Facility  
(913) 588-5030

### Student Health Services

1012 Student Center  
(913) 588-1941

### Academic Accommodations

Cyn Ukoko • G020 Dykes  
[cukoko@kumc.edu](mailto:cukoko@kumc.edu) • (913) 588-7035

### Equal Opportunities Office

Discrimination/Harassment Concerns  
1018 Delp • (913) 588-8011



## COUNSELING AND EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Appointments: (913) 588-6580

Online Scheduling: <https://medconsult.kumc.edu>

Educational Support Services: G012 Dykes

Counseling/Psychiatric Services: G116 Student Center