

CampUS

The official newsletter of the Scanlan Center for School Mental Health's Higher Education Program



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Flourish this February

Hello Iowa Higher Education Colleagues! We hope your Spring semester is off to a good start.

Once again, the Scanlan Center for School Mental Health's Higher Education Program has put together information, stories, profiles, and services that we hope can assist you in the work you do caring for our students, staff, and faculty. There are so many rich, innovative, and creative endeavors in which we are all engaged.

The CampUS could be 10 pages long if we covered it all each month. That being said, enjoy this month's snapshot of the incredible work we all do across our state campuses!

In solidarity,

Barry A. Schreier, Monnee' Turner & Kun Wang

Campus Climate for Transgender/Gender Non-Binary Students: Staff & Faculty Strategies for Fostering Inclusivity

Some of the issues

Newer Iowa laws are impacting campus climates concerning the experiences of people who are transgender and gender non-binary (TGNB). Both campus culture and the personal well-being of TGNB individuals have been impacted by these laws. Staff and faculty are critical in creating supportive and inclusive campus environments for students who are TGNB.

Two critical questions arise:

- 1. How do we understand the impact these laws are having on our students?**
- 2. How can staff and faculty best help?**

Impact

Imagine you are Alex's advisor. Alex is a sophomore, is TGNB, and is majoring in physiology. Despite being an outstanding student academically, Alex, who only just turned 18, has encountered challenges related to the new laws. The law banned Alex from being part of the intramural sports team that corresponds with his gender identity, which stressed Alex because he lost access to an athletic scholarship.

Additionally, the gender-affirming hormone therapy in which he was engaged was previously terminated due to his physician's concerns about the impact of the law on their practice. Alex is not readily moving past the stress he feels on campus as he is increasingly wary of potential bias he will encounter and will have to manage.

What Can I Do

Staff and faculty are critical to creating a supportive and inclusive campus environment for TGNB students. Here is a short list of some things staff and faculty can do to support TGNB students:



- #1** Faculty and staff can take the initiative to **self-educate** on transgender issues, terminology, and the challenges TGNB students face. Being comfortable and proficient in using gender-inclusive language can be practiced with anyone, not just TGNB students. This can include sharing one's pronouns, as part of your personal introductions, when meeting others on campus.
- #2** Staff and faculty can **attend training sessions** on TGNB inclusivity, seek resources from campus LGBTQ+ centers, or participate in webinars and workshops.
- #3** Staff and faculty can establish their offices or classrooms as **safe spaces** where TGNB students can feel seen and supported. This can include displaying symbols like the TGNB inclusive rainbow flag or safe space emblems.
- #4** Faculty and staff can use their positions to **advocate for campus policies** that support TGNB students, such as gender inclusive and/or single-user bathrooms, inclusive housing policies, and informed healthcare options. Faculty and staff can work to have forms and documents use gender-inclusive language and gender marker options for students to accurately represent themselves. Faculty and staff can also work to **streamline processes** for students who wish to change their name and/or gender identity in campus records and systems.

By implementing even one of these actions with commitment and care, we can not only counter the negative impacts of restrictive laws that impact our students, but also create campus climates that are safe, supportive, and inclusive for TGNB students.

Skills Video: Cultivating Cultural Humility



Embark on a transformative journey toward cultural humility with this [insightful video](#), offering 3 key phrases that transcend boundaries in conversations. This video unveils powerful yet simple statements that foster genuine connections and understanding across diverse backgrounds. Learn how these phrases embody respect, curiosity, and openness, cultivating an environment of inclusivity and appreciation for varied perspectives.

Innovation Station: Light Therapy Programs

In efforts to support student mental health, Southwestern Community College (SWCC) and the University of Iowa have implemented light therapy programs tailored to assist students in combating seasonal affective disorder (SAD) and enhancing overall well-being.

At SWCC, the journey began during the 2022-2023 academic year when student services, motivated by the benefits of light therapy, procured therapy light boxes. These boxes were made accessible for student check-out via student activities and marketing efforts.

Similarly, the University of Iowa offers light boxes through its Student Wellness program. Here, students engage in light therapy sessions entailing sitting near a light box to help improve mood and sleep, thus easing SAD symptoms.

Benefits & Awareness

SWCC's Therapy light boxes have become a critical resource, offering students a new means to foster their mental health. The initiative has not only provided a practical tool but has heightened awareness about mental health challenges, particularly SAD.

At the University of Iowa, the reported benefits align closely, with students experiencing an uplift in mood and better sleep patterns, contributing significantly to their academic and personal lives.



Collaboration & Support

SWCC's endeavor was championed by a coalition of the dean of students, student activities, student development, marketing departments, and, notably, psychology faculty. This concerted effort underscores the community's commitment to wellness.



Suggestions for Replication

For institutions looking to replicate these successful programs, the key lies in simplicity and promotion. Ensuring easy access to the therapy boxes, clear check-out processes, and widespread awareness campaigns can support similar initiatives. Funding and collaboration across departments and faculty are crucial elements that support the program's success.

The “Higher Edge” Spotlight: Kelly Clougher, University of Iowa

1. Please describe your role on campus.

I am a Licensed Psychologist and serve as the Clinical Services and Outreach Coordinator at the Medical Student Counseling Center (MSCC) in Iowa’s Carver College of Medicine. I work with medical and Physician Assistant students providing psychotherapy, consultation, and outreach programming to support their mental health. I am trained as a generalist but have specialty in treating eating disorders and body dissatisfaction. I have a passion for helping students from marginalized communities.



Kelly Clougher, Ph.D.

Clinical Services and Outreach
Coordinator, University of Iowa
Carver College of Medicine

2. How do you lead and interface with mental health and well-being across all areas of your campus?

One aspect of working on campus that I love is the variety of ways I use my skills as a psychologist. One hour I provide individual therapy, the next hour I supervise a colleague, and the next hour I engage in strategic thinking in a working group. In these roles and as a leader I use my core values of connection, collaboration, and inclusivity to guide my work. I want the people I work with to know they matter – their voices matter and their experiences matter.

3. Would you share a story where you were concerned about something or someone, and the steps you took that either helped and/or left you perhaps considering how you would do it differently next time?

Over the course of my tenure, I have had the opportunity to be a staff advisor to student organizations. One student leader I was advising suddenly became unresponsive to emails, text messages, and phone calls. I was concerned about her well-being, as this was out of character. I reached out to other leadership within the organization and learned they also were not able to connect with the student and shared concerns about her well-being. After more unanswered emails and phone calls, I contacted the student’s parent. The parent had just talked to the student the previous day, which gave me comfort. The student texted me later that day and confirmed they were okay. I expressed my appreciation that she let me know and welcomed her to reach out if she needed anything. I never received a response and have not seen her since. Although I never learned what led to her departure from the organization, or if my decision to call her parent caused a rupture, I was relieved she was safe. I remain curious about her well-being and grieve the loss of a relationship I cherished. I continue to think highly of her and hope she found ways to share her strengths with others.

The Higher Edge Spotlight: Kelly Clougher Cont.

3 Self-Care Strategies Kelly Swears By

#1 Make time to laugh every day

This may mean sharing a funny story, using humor in relational interactions, or watching/listening to something that elicits laughter. Whenever I need a laugh I go to my family who tell the best stories or watch a YouTube video of Ellen DeGeneres scaring people on her show.

#2 Enjoy the small things

Even on our toughest days there are gifts around us. Practicing gratitude for the small things helps me to notice and appreciate the moments that give me pride, comfort, warmth, or beauty.

#3 Practice self-care intentionally

People can identify their self-care practices, but for true effectiveness one must be able to engage in self-reflection and intentionally use the strategy that will meet the need. For example, when feeling anxious or restless going for a run is likely going to be my best self-care strategy, but if feeling sad or lonely spending quality time with loved ones would be my choice.

4. Could you tell us about one high point and one low point in your work?

High Point: There are many high points in my work because every day I feel honored to offer students a safe place to share their concerns and struggles. I feel grateful I can provide students a place to share their stories, deepen their self-understanding, and find new approaches to managing their mental health. These moments I get to share with students are rewarding.

Low Point: The negative impacts of systemic inequities. For example, a college student who presents with a severe eating disorder and needs a higher level of care but cannot access it due to insufficient insurance coverage. Or, when a mental health provider at a campus counseling center experiences burnout trying to meet unrealistic demands such as high caseloads, walk-in crisis hours and still being available to provide outreach in the evenings or weekends.

5. Is there something which you would like to normalize for others, where they may think they cannot share it or think it is only their struggle?

Struggling with body image is a typical experience. It is easy to compare your body to others, or your previous shape from a younger you. We are also susceptible to sociocultural influences such as media images, fashion trends, and gender-based appearance expectations. Although feeling positive about your body all the time is an unfair expectation, having a negative body image impacts mental health.

I encourage folx to accept you may not feel positive about your body all the time but you can engage in body respect. This includes appreciating what your body does for you (e.g., legs carry you up a flight of stairs, arms allow you to hug a loved one), not using alcohol or drugs, getting a massage, wearing comfortable clothes, fueling your body with your favorite meal, or removing weight-based comments in conversations.



Free Webinar

Findings from the 'State of Iowa Staff & Faculty Mental Health and Well-Being' Study

Join us for an engaging and insightful webinar on **Thursday, February 8 from 10:30 to 11:45 AM**, dedicated to addressing staff and faculty mental health and well-being in Iowa's community colleges and small private institutions. This webinar is for faculty, staff, administrators, and mental health professionals committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive environment in higher education.

Barry A. Schreier, Ph.D., H.S.P., Director of the Higher Education Program at the Scanlan Center for School Mental Health and Professor of Counseling Psychology, **Derek Rodgers, Ph.D.**, Research Methodologist at the Scanlan Center, delve into critical topics that impact our campuses.



This interactive session explores:



Necessity and modalities of mandated training for working with students in distress



Understanding the prevalence of anxiety and depression among staff and faculty



Examining staff and faculty perceptions of existing campus support for mental health



Discussing how perceptions of campus mental health vary based on race, gender identity, and sexual orientation



Practical recommendations for enhancing mental health resources and support systems on Iowa campuses

This webinar is more than a learning opportunity, it is a chance to contribute your voice to a larger conversation about mental health in higher education. We encourage you to participate and help shape strategies that make a difference in our campus communities.

Your participation will also offer an opportunity to learn how your campus can engage with the "Survey" and receive a customized campus data report, further aiding in tailoring mental health initiatives to your specific institutional needs.

[Register now](#)