COUNSELING AND STUDENT DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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For information and appointment scheduling, call 402-559-7276

The UNMC Counseling and Student Development Center offers a wide range of professional counseling and psychological services, including general problem-solving, individual psychotherapy, stress management training, couples/marital counseling, communication consultations, psychological testing, substance dependency screening and academic skills enhancement. These services are provided free-of-charge to all UNMC students and medical residents. Counseling Center staff members are licensed and have advanced degrees in mental health counseling, clinical social work or psychology. Medical referrals are available if needed.

The Counseling Center staff makes confidentiality the highest priority. With the exception of life-threatening situations (clear danger to self or others), no private information is released without the written consent of the student. Counseling files cannot be accessed through UNMC or hospital electronic medical records systems. Since there is no charge to students, there is no need to file insurance claims for services provided in our office.

In addition to personal counseling and consultation services, the Counseling Center houses a wide variety of academic support and student development programs that enhance the overall quality of campus life. Programs include: the Academic Success Program (learning styles assessment, study skills improvement, test-taking strategies); Student Senate advising and administrative support; Services for Students with Disabilities; Student Health Major Medical Insurance (policy interpretation, claims filing); Substance Abuse Education; and the Ombudsperson Referral Service (call 402-559-2491).

The Counseling Center also provides information and confidential services for students and residents with concerns regarding substance abuse or dependency. The initial counseling interview may lead to a referral for a comprehensive chemical dependency evaluation. The office has information on: 1) volunteer UNMC faculty and staff with specialized training in substance abuse issues who are willing to meet with students on an informal, confidential basis; 2) local meetings of support groups such as alcoholics anonymous (AA), Al-Anon (for family and friends of the alcoholic), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), and Gamblers Anonymous (GA).

These programs use similar 12-step recovery programs as a foundation, 3) inpatient and outpatient chemical dependency treatment programs in Nebraska, and 4) UNMC student health insurance coverage for chemical dependency treatment.

The goal of the Counseling & Student Development Center is to help students have the most productive, enjoyable learning experience while enrolled at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. We invite students from every UNMC academic program to stop by our office or call if you have any questions. If we don’t know the answer, we can probably help you find the right person. Information is also available on our website at: http://www.unmc.edu/stucouns/.

Academic Success Programs
Academic support services are provided free-of-charge for students by the Counseling and Student Development Center and the Recruitment and Student Engagement Office. These services are focused on enhancing the academic performance of UNMC students. Although students admitted to UNMC programs are among the most academically accomplished, the demands of health science education sometimes outstrip a student’s ability to maintain an adequate learning pace using their customary study habits. Student-to-student academic tutoring services are coordinated by the Office of Recruitment and Student Engagement. Academic counseling for improved study skills, test taking, concentration, time management, and stress management services are offered through the Counseling & Student Development Center. For further information go to: http://www.unmc.edu/stucouns/services/academic-success.html.

Services for Students with Disabilities

Kelly Swoboda, MHR, LMHP, Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities
Counseling & Student Development Center
Bennett Hall, 6001
402-559-7276
FAX: 402-559-9671

Student Documentation of Disability Policy Statement
To be eligible for disability-related services, students must have a documented or visible impairment as defined by the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 1990 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. The ADA regulations broadly define impairments to include a wide variety of disorders or conditions affecting any number of body systems, including the neurological or musculoskeletal systems, special sense organs, respiratory, cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitor-urinary, hemic, lymphatic, or endocrine systems, or the skin. Impairments also include mental or psychological disorders, including mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and certain learning disorders.

The University of Nebraska’s Student Individual Accommodation Procedure relies on documentation from appropriate, licensed professionals including educational information such as Individual Education Plan (IEP), 504 plan, Summary of Progress (SOP) or other information about a student’s education and accommodation history and interview information from the student. The cost of obtaining documentation will be borne by the student. If the initial documentation is incomplete or inadequate and the student interview does not provide the relevant information, the services for students with disabilities office will have the discretion to request additional information focused on
providing the clarification needed to provide the student reasonable accommodation.

Determination and Provision of Reasonable Accommodations
Accommodations, modifications, or adjustments to a course, academic program, service, or activity may enable a qualified student with a disability to have an equal opportunity to attain the same level of performance or to enjoy equal benefits and privileges as are available to similarly-situated individuals without a disability.

The University of Nebraska is obligated to provide reasonable accommodations, adjustments, and/or auxiliary services only to the known limitations of an otherwise qualified student with a disability. The student with a disability is responsible for informing the Services for Students with Disabilities Office that an accommodation or change in accommodation is needed and to participate in the interactive process to formulate a reasonable accommodation plan. When a qualified student with a disability requests accommodation, reasonable efforts to provide the accommodation, adjustment and/or auxiliary service that is deemed effective will be made.

Evaluation of performance, including admissions decisions, course examinations and other measures of achievement, will be provided with appropriate reasonable accommodations or modifications to ensure that the evaluation represents achievement rather than reflecting the impact of disability.

Process for Application
To be eligible for accommodations, students are responsible for completing a Request for Services form and providing documentation of disability. Please go to the Counseling and Student Development web site at www.unmc.edu/stucouns/ to complete the form and find additional information, or contact the Disabilities Coordinator (see above).

This must be done well in advance of the semester for which the accommodation is needed (6 weeks is suggested). Instructors are not required to provide classroom accommodations without prior approval.

Once the request has been approved, an individualized accommodation plan will be formulated and an official “Letter of Disability Accommodation” will be issued to the student. With this letter, it is then the student’s duty to discuss with each course instructor how to best implement the plan.

Ombudsperson for Students
David S. Carver, Ph.D.
Bennett Hall, Room 6001, 402-559-2491
(Call for a confidential appointment)

Purpose of the Ombudsperson
The word “ombudsmen” originated in Sweden and means “representative of the people.” UNMC has established a team of ombudspersons to help students, residents, faculty and staff resolve problems and to promote fair and equitable treatment for all members of the UNMC community. Dr. David Carver is the student/employee ombudsperson and Dr. Susan Swindells is the faculty/employee ombudsperson. Although Dr. Carver is the designated student ombudsperson, Dr. Swindells is also available for consultation with students. More specifically, the Ombudsperson services are:

1. Confidential—no written records are kept, and any information shared by a student remains private except in cases of direct threats of physical harm to self or others
2. Informal – the ombudsperson is a “behind the scenes” sounding board or consultant; but is not an UNMC “officer of notice” for filing formal complaints, grievances, or appeals and does not participate in formal hearings or disciplinary processes
3. Independent – the ombudsperson program is not part of the formal UNMC administrative chain of command and reports only general problem trends and other summary data (without identifying individuals) to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and the Chancellor
4. Neutral – the ombudsperson advocates for fair processes but does not take sides or serve as an advocate for a student in formal complaints, appeals, or grievances

Functions of the Ombudsperson
Information and Referral Source — The ombudsperson is an information source on policies, procedures and regulations that apply to students, staff or faculty. In a complex organization like UNMC, it is often difficult to figure out where to go with an issue or concern. The ombudsperson can answer the question “Where do I start?” by referring the student to the appropriate person or office. The ombudsperson can also help students to locate and interpret relevant policies.

Identification of Options – the ombudsperson listens carefully and non-judgmentally to a student’s concern and then assists the student in identifying various options for solving a particular problem. This confidential conversation may help the student to decide on a specific course of action after weighing the potential rewards and risks of various options.

Facilitating Conversations —With the permission of the student, the ombudsperson may act as an informal, neutral facilitator between parties in a dispute. This can be done by bringing the parties together for a face-to-face conversation with the ombudsperson present, or it can be accomplished through “shuttle diplomacy” where the ombudsperson talks with each party separately. The dispute may be between a student and a faculty member, two or more students, or a student and an employee. The ombudsperson may also provide information about formal “due process” grievance procedures, but the ombudsperson will not participate directly in any formal grievance or appeal hearings.

Policy Recommendations — Ombudspersons gather facts and data on recurring problems experienced by students, faculty or staff. Ombudsperson team members may recommend changes in policies, procedures and organizational structures to promote greater fairness and equity.

Consult an Ombudsperson . . .

• If you are unsure about which UNMC policies, procedures or regulations apply in your situation.
• If you have a specific problem or complaint that you have not been able to resolve through regular UNMC channels (or if you are unclear about where to start or what to do next).
• If you need help in deciding whether to appeal an evaluation, a grade, or an administrative decision.
• If you feel that you have been treated improperly or unfairly and would like to identify your options.
• If you have a problem that requires assistance in facilitating communication and understanding between you and another party.
• If you need help in deciding whether to file a formal complaint or grievance.
Students and residents can get more information about the Ombudsman service by calling the Ombuds Team Hotline at 402-559-2491.