

Lead Students Past Anxiety Using Learner Centered Strategies

Dwain Turner, PhD

Professor

University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

1200 N University Mail Slot # 4789

Pine Bluff, AR 71601

turnerd@uapb.edu

Orlentea McGowan, Ed.D.

Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs

Oklahoma City Community College

7777 South May Avenue

Oklahoma City, OK 73159

orlentea.s.mcgowan@occc.edu

Amy L. Brooks Young, M.Ed

Culture and Leadership Development Officer

Oklahoma City Community College

7777 South May Avenue

Oklahoma City, OK 73159

amy.l.brooksyoun@occc.edu

Introduction

College students experience anxiety symptoms daily. Effective prevention and intervention strategies for mental disorders should be developed among college students (Li & Zhao & Chen & Peng, 2022). According to the American College Health Association, 63% of college students in the US experienced overwhelming anxiety in the past year, and 23% were diagnosed or treated for anxiety by a mental health professional. Factors contributing to this include sleep disruption from caffeine and all-nighters, loneliness, academic stress, and disengagement from studies. Interestingly, college students today appear more stressed and anxious than ever before. Entering college is one of the most important milestones in a student's life. This phase of student life is often characterized by prevalent mental health-related problems such as anxiety. (Cuttilan et al., 2016; Gaultney, 2010; Tavolacci et al., 2015; Wang and Liu, 2022) It's essential to recognize these challenges at our institutions of higher learning and provide support to our students. Furthermore, faculty and staff need to understand EQ (Emotional Intelligence) vs IQ- (Intelligence Quotients). Students must have skills, not only intelligence, but also emotional intelligence, to be successful in school, college, and the workplace. The Objectives of this abstract presentation from the perspective of two institutions is to: 1. Provide institutions with quick Learner Centered strategies of how to support students with anxiety and develop their emotional intelligence, 2. Provide insight as to why more than the majority of college students struggle with anxiety and strategies to support student emotional intelligence, and 3. Dispense Professional development ideas for faculty and staff to best meet the needs of students.

Implementation

This abstract and presentation will depict two institutions: Institution #1- a regional community college in southwest Oklahoma City and Institution #2- a regional HBCU in Central Arkansas. Both institutions serve diverse populations from unique settings and geographical locations.

Institution #1 is a regional community college in southwest Oklahoma City that has created an Office of Culture and Leadership Development to provide leadership coaching and professional development for staff and faculty utilizing Learner-Centered Strategies. With the new Office of Culture and Leadership Development, faculty and staff will be provided professional development, one-on-one coaching, and collaboration on best ways to meet students' social and emotional needs through Learner Centered strategies and techniques. Currently, the Office of Student Life provides ongoing activities and sessions to support learning-centered teaching and student support services by serving as a hub for student engagement, service learning, student clubs, organizations, student government association, student activities and events, career services, and careers. Additionally, Student Life offers co-curricular activities that foster student leadership and development. Faculty and staff at the college level must be ready to meet the Emotional Intelligence needs of our students. Furthermore, quality professional development for faculty and staff is the key to best support students, have empathy, and the capacity to advise a student that is struggling.

Institution #2 an HBCU in Central Arkansas currently has a unique method of addressing students who are coping with stress and anxiety utilizing LCT strategies which includes: (1) techniques of intervention including self-care, student led sessions, (2) breaks between lessons

and assignment which reduce stress and positive strategies to compartmentalize life through LCT and (3) self-care strategies.

Results

Current results from Institution #1 through the Office of Student Life displays that over the past academic year, through a variety of activities, events, and services, Student Life has achieved over 11,000 interactions with students and community members. These engagement points highlight the remarkable presence and commitment to ensuring that students receive a comprehensive and holistic college Learner-Centered Teaching experience.

Institution #2 continues to see more mature students and student involvement in terms of addressing issues or barriers of populations in the service area. As a result, faculty has been more intune with challenges and students counseling competency for the service population. Untimately, the work is designed to create an environment conducive to learning and allows students to be authentic and true to themselves.

Implications and Impact

Future implications at both institutions display understanding the importance of learner-centered teaching and student interactions, stress/anxiety and coping skills and how vitally important these factors are to student retention. Furthermore, this leads to exploring specific points in the academic semester that are crucial to student success. Overall, both institutions, the goal is to help students create a “Road Map to Courage and Confidence”- Education, Awareness, Skills, Goals and Plan to help develop students’ emotional intelligence and self awareness skills. Students need Tier I guided instruction on: 1- how to shift focus from threat to opportunity; 2- Reframe the Situation-view events as opportunities for growth; 3- Visualize positive outcomes.

Future Plans and Advice to Others

In response, the institutions are working to create benchmarks for student success based on co-curricular engagement. Identifying students who have not engaged in co-curricular activities by certain points can help identify those who may be at risk of not persisting at the institution. Better education and better prepared for the career pathways that promote learner-centered teaching. Each institution plans to continue to adapt policy and procedures that support students in learner-centered environments and that support emotional health and well being. Furthermore, each institution recommends that leadership and faculty play a key role in identifying students who are experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety.

This session will be interactive for participants and they will be provided ready-to-use materials at their institutions. With the use of multimedia components, the participants will be engaged and energized to return to their institution of higher learning to share the concepts and information.

References

Cregg, D. R., & Cheavens, J. S. (2021). Gratitude interventions: Effective self-help? A meta-analysis of the impact on symptoms of depression and anxiety. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 22, 413-445.

Davydov, D. M., Stewart, R., Ritchie, K., & Chaudieu, I. (2010). Resilience and mental health. *Clinical psychology review*, 30(5), 479-495.

Hartanto, A., Kaur, M., Kasturiratna, K. S., Quek, F. Y., & Majeed, N. M. (2023). A critical examination of the effectiveness of gratitude intervention on well-Being Outcomes: A within-person experimental daily diary approach. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 18(6), 942-957.

Li, W., Zhao, Z., Chen, D., Peng, Y., & Lu, Z. (2022). Prevalence and associated factors of depression and anxiety symptoms among college students: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of child psychology and psychiatry*, 63(11), 1222-1230.

Nesayan, A., Hosseini, B., & Asadi Gandomani, R. (2017). The effectiveness of emotion regulation skills training on anxiety and emotional regulation strategies in adolescent students. *Practice in Clinical Psychology*, 5(4), 263-270.