NIU NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Spectrum

Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois 60115

Recognizing and Assisting the Emotionally Troubled Student

Students face a variety of difficulties on a daily basis and faculty, staff, and teaching assistants may often wonder how they can help those students. The emotional and academic pressure of university life, while manageable and even exhilarating for most students, can be simply overwhelming for others. Such students may not yet have attained the level of maturity necessary to develop adequate coping skills, or they may be struggling with relatively long-standing emotional deficits that are exacerbated by the transition to college life.

Consequently, due to your position, status, and visibility on campus, students experiencing emotional distress may turn to you for help. Or, because of your role, you may find yourself confronted by a disturbed or disturbing student who needs assistance. How you respond in these situations could significantly impact the student's ability to deal constructively with their emotional conflicts.

One of the most common concerns college students face is depression. This is an issue that impacts many students. Depression can have negative impacts on one's academics, social life, personal and familial relationships. As with most problems, it is helpful to intervene as soon as possible. By being better able to recognize the symptoms of depression and knowing what course of action to take, you may assist depressed students in pursuing changes that will result in a lessening of their depressive symptomology.

Signs of depression may include:

- Flat affect (inexpressive face)
- Slow speech
- Decrease in interest in course material
- Difficulty concentrating
- Poor class attendance
- Failure to complete assignments
- Expressions of hopelessness or worthlessness
- Agitation or irritability
- Crying
- Low energy/lethargy

If you notice the mentioned signs, consider the following actions:

- Listen
- Take the issue seriously
- Directly express your concern for the student
- Directly ask the student if he or she is feeling depressed
- Try not to threaten, admonish, or reproach a depressed student for falling behind in course work or missing class
- Try to find alternative ways for the student to catch up on missed work
- Make the appropriate referral to Counseling and Student Development Center

Counseling and Student Development Center (CSDC) provides personal counseling for NIU students and CSDC staff is prepared to assist students with overcoming these challenges. To refer a student to CSDC, simply have the student visit the Center located in Campus Life Building Room 200.

You may also call the Center with the student in your office to facilitate the student coming to CSDC. CSDC staff members are also available to consult with you about concerns you have about a student. You may call them to discuss the best way to handle a student issue or concern.

You can learn more information about CSDC at their website at: **www.niu.edu/csdc** or by contacting them at (815) 753-1206.

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Inside this issue:

Are you looking for an effective classroom resource that is relatively inexpensive, up-to-date on current events, available in multiple formats, provides a range of perspectives and attracts diverse learning preferences? If so, consider using newspapers to provide a new dimension to your teaching methods. The significance of newspapers as a teaching and learning resource is great and allows for dozens of strategies to engage students. For instance, news stories can:

- be tied to course content, required reading, and related activities,
- provide content for guided discussions in the classroom and online,
- be used to compare and contrast different perspectives of the same issue covered through multiple sources,
- be linked to journals where students provide responses to a news story related to course topics,
- be used for ice-breakers and "news quizzes" based on the previous day's headlines, and
- be used for interdisciplinary activities using articles that cross over different subject areas.

Newspapers are user friendly! They are relatively easy to access (as a purchased product or online), are portable, take up little storage space and do not require a steep learning curve to use. Conversely, if students are required to read the newspaper, faculty should provide ways for them to understand content instead of just having them read the material. Also, faculty should think about assisting learners with individual needs or require special accommodations.
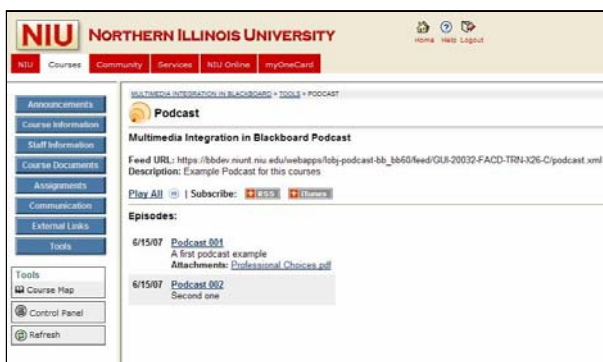
As with any instructional aid, newspapers may have their challenges. Meaningful use of newspapers in the classroom requires careful planning such as preparing guided questions to help students analyze news stories and how much time will be allotted for newspaper-related activities. Newspaper subscription costs, although considerably less than many textbooks, can be a financial burden on students. Also, students may be wary of required class resources that are not adequately used during the semester. Therefore, require newspapers as a class resource only if they are used in a significant way and are related to course goals and objectives.

Newspapers cover a wide range of reading which can accommodate a broad spectrum of student learning preferences. Breaking news stories and influential editorials as well as special sections such as business, science, real estate, sports, life style and books can easily be integrated in a variety of curricular areas, course content and appeal to student interest. In addition to preparing students to be successful in their chosen fields of study, faculty can add value to their education by incorporating a variety of resources which can help them become informed citizens. Newspapers can be that resource and catalyst to help bridge the gap between the classroom and the real world.

To learn more about this topic, register at http://www.niu.edu/facdev/programs/september2007.shtml for the "Integrating News in the Classroom" workshop to be held on Wednesday, September 19, 2007.

Podcasting with Blackboard

Podcasting is a powerful technology involving the selective subscription of audio or video content delivered over the Internet. An RSS feed is at the heart of every podcast, making possible the automatic syndication and aggregation of new media content. Subscribing to a podcast is free (the term "subscription" refers to signing up for new episodes) and no payment is required. An individual subscribes to content that can be viewed on a computer or mobile device. Both 'podcasting' and 'RSS feed' have been featured topics in previous Spectrum issues.

In conjunction with the recent upgrade of Blackboard from version 6.3 to 7.1, NIU has installed a building block to Blackboard that affords the hosting and management of podcasts in Blackboard. As a result, NIU faculty and staff using the Blackboard course management system are now able to take prepared content and create a course Podcast for each of their classes using Blackboard.

Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center offers a Podcasting workshop series, including: *Introduction to Podcasting*, *Audio Podcasting*, *Enhanced Podcasting*, and *Video Podcasting*. A new workshop added to the podcast series, *Podcasting with Blackboard* (slated to debut in September 2007) provides participants with an overview of podcasting technology and step-by-step guidance in creating a course podcast in Blackboard. For more information or to register for workshops, visit **www.niu.edu/facdev/programs/fscurrent.shtml.** To learn more about podcasting with Blackboard, visit **www.niu.edu/blackboard/resources/podcasting.shtml.**

New Features in Blackboard 7.1

Blackboard is the course management system used campus-wide at NIU that allows faculty to post materials, deliver tests and surveys, hold online discussion and perform many other course-related functions. In May 2007 Blackboard was upgraded from version 6.3 to 7.1. This particular upgrade includes some substantial new user features and system capabilities that previously have not existed.

Discussion Board

- **New Appearance:** A robust search engine has been added to the top of the list of discussion forums along with data on the number of total posts, unread posts, and total unique participants in each forum.
- **Forum View:** Discussion threads are now separated rather than each being expandable or collapsible from the forum view.
- **Thread Detail:** The thread detail view of a discussion includes not only a search box at the top, but also a box displaying the structure of the entire thread along with another box below that displays the substance of the individual posting currently selected.
- **Forum and Thread Grading:** Discussion forums can now be graded either by forum or thread, making it possible for faculty to view either selective or comprehensive collections of postings for a student and then to post grades for discussion contributions directly to the Blackboard grade book.
- **Forum Moderation and User Management:** The new forum manager role is assigned by default to the faculty member for the course or leader of the community but can be delegated to another user in the course.
- **Group Discussion Features:** Group members can now create new threads in the group discussion board by default without the faculty member having to first create a forum or thread.
- **Rate Postings:** When this new feature is enabled by the faculty member in forum settings, users can assign a scaled rating to posts, based on a scale of 1-5 stars.
- **Statistics:** Statistics of user forum participation such as total posts, date of last post and average post length are now available in the Performance Dashboard.
- **Thread Subscription:** Faculty members can allow forum users to subscribe to threads. A notification email is sent to the subscriber's official NIU email address when a new post has been added to the thread.

Assessment and Grade book

- **Customized Feedback:** Feedback options are now ungrouped so that any combination of them may be displayed to students upon completion of an assessment.
- **Enhanced Submission Reports:** Assessment submission reports now include first name, last name, course name, username, course ID, name of the assessment and date/time of the submission, serving as verification of assessment completion for the student.
- **Extra Credit:** Faculty members can now mark questions as 'extra credit only' when creating tests.
- **Multiple Attempts:** Assessments can now be configured to allow for an unlimited or specified number of attempts.
- **Self-Assessment Options:** Blackboard assessments can now be used for self-assessment purposes without figuring the results into the grade book final score calculations.
- **Display/Disable Average Score:** The average score for assessments can be disabled, preventing students from viewing the average class grade.
- **Test and Survey Import/Export:** Tests and surveys can now be exported from Blackboard individually as well as imported individually into a specific course section.
- **Visual Text Box Editor Cross-browser Support:** Users can now embed links to a variety of audio/visual materials as well as perform more advanced text editing functions and even spell check using the text box editor without knowing any html.
- **MathML and WebEQ Tools:** Mathematical and scientific equations can now be entered more effectively in Blackboard.

Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center offers a number of programs each month on the principles and practices of teaching with Blackboard. A special program will be held for NIU faculty and staff on Monday, August 20, 2007 to highlight the new and enhanced features of Blackboard. For more details or to register for workshops, visit: **www.facdev.niu.edu/blackboard/workshops.**

To learn more about the new features in Blackboard, visit www.niu.edu/blackboard/resources/version71.shtml

What is CPS?

eInstruction CPS, a classroom performance system, also referred to as student response system or "clickers," has recently been recommended for use at NIU to engage students and enhance their learning experience. CPS allows faculty to receive immediate feedback from students wirelessly with the use of small hand-held devices commonly referred to as "clickers." The system can also be used in conjunction with Blackboard to create a complete interactive learning experience. Faculty can use CPS in the classroom to engage students and provide them with instant feedback and then upload results from class assessments conducted with CPS to Blackboard.

Ordering CPS:

To use CPS in their classes, faculty members need a CPS starter kit which includes a receiver, a response pad (clicker) and CPS software installation CD. NIU faculty should request their CPS starter kits from the eInstruction representative, Susan Junior, Classroom Performance System (CPS) by calling (630) 778-8523, or sending an email to sjunior@einstruction.com, and providing her with the following information:

Information Needed to Request a CPS Kit:
- School Name
- Department
- Course Name
- Number of students
- Number of Sections
- Faculty Name, E-mail, Telephone
- Number of faculty starter kits

Faculty who request a CPS Starter Kit will receive an ISBN number along with the kit. This number can be used to place an order through the NIU bookstore to ensure that ample student response pads are available for student purchase. When placing an order with the NIU bookstore, faculty should provide the *ISBN number* they received with the Starter Kit, *the number of pads* and *the eInstruction fax number (940.565.0959)* for the bookstore to place a purchase order. eInstruction will contact faculty members within ten days by sending them a test kit, set-up instructions, a receiver and the CPS software. The CPS software can also be freely downloaded from CPS' website at http://www.einstruction.com/Downloads/index.cfm.

Integrating CPS with Blackboard:

CPS integrates well with Blackboard and allows seamless transfer of session data into the Blackboard Gradebook. Blackboard course rosters can be imported into CPS, and CPS software can then be set to sync automatically with the Blackboard Gradebook every time a CPS database is updated. The CPS-Blackboard Connection allows faculty to engage their students in the classroom, record student responses to interactive tests and quizzes and then upload the information to Blackboard for review. Faculty can also poll students and take attendance, and the collected data can be uploaded to Blackboard where both students and faculty can view the results.

To use CPS response pads in their classes, faculty will need a computer with CPS software in their classrooms. Smart Classrooms maintained by ITS will have CPS software. Faculty members who plan to use CPS in their labs or Smart Classrooms supported by their departments or college should contact their department or college IT staff to install the software. More information on how to install CPS software, how to import Blackboard courses into CPS and set them to sync can be found at: **www.blackboard.niu.edu/blackboard/resources/cpsconnection.shtml**.

Training:

Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center offers workshops for NIU faculty and staff that cover the use of eInstruction CPS in the classroom and its integration with Blackboard. For more information or to register for upcoming *Clickers in the Classroom* workshops, visit **www.niu.edu/facdev/programs/fscurrent.shtml.**

eInstruction also offers a variety of online training sessions for faculty using CPS. These online training seminars are a great way to learn about the Classroom Performance System. All sessions are free of charge. The schedule of upcoming online sessions is available at: **www.einstruction.com/Training/OnlineTraining**.

Students:

Students can purchase their CPS pads for their courses from the NIU bookstore. To use a pad in a course, students will also have to purchase an enrollment code and then register their CPS pad through Blackboard. More information on CPS support for students can be found: **https://cpsonlinehe.einstruction.com/EnrollingThroughBlackboard.pdf**