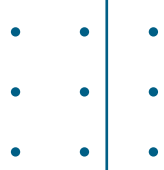




# **COMMUNICATING SUPPORT RESOURCES TO STUDENTS TOOLKIT**



The University of Texas at Austin  
Charles A. Dana Center





# Table of Contents

|                                                                 |   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| Introduction .....                                              | 1 |
| Purpose .....                                                   | 1 |
| Users.....                                                      | 1 |
| Outline of the Process for Communicating Support Resources..... | 2 |
| Prior to the Beginning of the Term .....                        | 2 |
| Suggested supports .....                                        | 3 |
| Familiarizing faculty .....                                     | 5 |
| Support hub for students.....                                   | 5 |
| During the Term.....                                            | 6 |
| First three weeks .....                                         | 6 |
| Remainder of the semester .....                                 | 7 |
| Continuous Improvement .....                                    | 7 |



# Communicating Support Resources to Students Toolkit

## Introduction

Many students who are new to college need support to acclimate to their new learning environment and succeed in their courses. While some of the support needed is academic, it has also been shown that students who have access to and engage with non-academic resources on campus are more likely to be successful. Many students are hesitant to seek help—content-related or otherwise—so it is important to normalize help seeking, especially for students who are less prepared for college.

Connecting students to a variety of services and related community resources will optimize their opportunities for success in their courses and, more broadly, in their early years in college. Faculty can support student development by reinforcing the value of pursuing and obtaining help, regularly reminding students of available resources, and modeling help-seeking opportunities in class or through advising and support centers.

## Purpose

This toolkit describes a three-phase process for communicating support resources to students in gateway mathematics and English courses. The processes described here are not intended to replace the information that students may be learning in a college-101-type course. Rather, they are designed to help instructors reinforce skills that are learned in such courses and to provide additional ways for students to access the available resources on campus.

## Users

Mathematics and English faculty teaching gateway courses



## Outline of the Process for Communicating Support Resources

Below is an outline of the process and a list of key actions before, during, and after an academic term. Key actions are listed in this section, with more details in the following section.

### **I. Prior to the beginning of the term**

- Begin to develop an inventory of student services. You may choose to include additional information, as appropriate, to your local context.
- Familiarize faculty who are teaching the courses with the supports listed in the inventory table.
- Create a standardized, prominent support services hub or module for faculty to insert into their course in the Learning Management System.

### **II. During the term**

- Plan for and implement a variety of ways to familiarize students with available resources.

### **III. Continuous improvement**

- Operationalize the sharing of similar student support resources across campus, beyond gateway mathematics and English courses. Plan for periodic review and updates.

## Prior to the Beginning of the Term

Before the term, begin developing an inventory of student services. A partial list, or several partial lists, of the available supports may already exist, perhaps with the student services center or the instructor of a college-101-type course on campus. The goal is to create a centralized, shared record that can be used by instructors to help their students.

To keep the resources up to date and to give faculty a sense of ownership of the document, the list could be crowdsourced via a wiki, Google Doc, or something similar, which can be revised as faculty learn about new programs, contact information, or other key details. (See Figure 1 for types of information to include in the list.) Faculty can refer to this document when students discuss any challenges that are currently preventing them from fully engaging with and/or succeeding in their courses.

Note that the Student Services Inventory may be a more comprehensive list than is currently available in a single place. This is intentional—the goal is to provide faculty and students with a one-stop location to support a wide variety of student needs.



Figure 1.

| Student Services Inventory |                  |                                   |                                     |                                                                             |
|----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Name of service            | Supports offered | Students eligible for the service | Contact for faculty (to learn more) | Contact for students (location, phone number, email, person, website, etc.) |
|                            |                  |                                   |                                     |                                                                             |
|                            |                  |                                   |                                     |                                                                             |

## Suggested supports

The following list includes student services that could be included in the inventory.

- Ability/disability support services
  - Assistive technologies
  - Community resources
  - Sign language interpreters
  - Testing
- Academic coaching or advising
- Academic supports
  - Assistive technology
  - Free tutoring (in person and online)
  - Learning lab
  - Study aids
  - Technology supports
- Campus police phone number, 911, or other emergency contact options
- Campus response programs, such as programs dedicated to prevention, early intervention, and response to students' disruptive or threatening behaviors
- Childcare on campus or community-based services
- Community services (food bank, clothing closets, childcare resources, etc.)
- Financial aid and support
  - Resources and programming for first-generation students
  - Scholarships
  - Student emergency fund (food and other benefits)
  - Support for money management
- Health services
  - Connections to community health services
  - On-campus clinic
  - Student health insurance for domestic and international students



- Instructional services support center (in person and online)
  - Campus IT support
  - Computer and calculator loans
  - Computer virus issues
  - Email and login support
  - Learning Management System (LMS) assistance
- International student office
  - Advising
  - F-1 international student resources
  - Health insurance
  - Tests/credentials
  - Student activities
- Library services
- Mental health counseling resources on campus
- Rent/utility assistance programs
- Student advocates
- Student life
  - Affinity groups/clubs
  - Cultural, social, and ethical development
  - Events
  - Mentoring and leadership programs
  - Organizations
  - Student lounges (in person and online)
- Testing services
  - Credit by examination
  - GED
  - Makeup tests
  - Placement tests
  - Professional certifications/licensing
- Transfer services
- Transportation (reduced price or free bus passes, etc.)
- Veteran and military-affiliated student services
  - GI Bill benefits and requirements
  - Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program (VRRAP)
- Work study program



## Familiarizing faculty

Faculty can benefit from professional learning opportunities on help seeking and about available campus resources for students. Hold a meeting where faculty can learn about resources they may not be aware of, develop a deeper understanding of why students may not seek help, and build their skills in promoting help seeking.

The following videos can help to initiate the conversation. The questions associated with each video can serve as discussion prompts to determine how faculty and/or the institution can assist students.

- Center for Community College Student Engagement Video (3 min): [Asking for Help – Why Hard](#)
  - What strategies have you implemented to help students overcome their resistance to seeking help? Have you had to modify your strategies for different student groups?
- CORA Learning (1 hour): [Serving Students with Basic Needs Insecurities During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
  - What are some of the promising practices? How could they be implemented at your institution?

## Support hub for students

There may already be an LMS module containing information in a student-facing format although it may not include all items on the inventory. A support hub would be helpful and should include key information such as tutoring, advising, financial aid services, counseling resources, and disability support services.

- If such a module exists, update it as necessary and encourage gateway math and English faculty to use the module in their course shells. Provide them with a list of strategies to bring the module to students' attention throughout the semester, such as those described below in the "During the term" section.
- If no such module exists, use the inventory to inform the development of the module. There may already be instructors who have a module with some of the information, so consider asking them to expand it (this may require outreach by the implementation lead to identify the appropriate faculty member). If there is no existing module that can be adapted, perhaps an instructional designer on campus can create one fairly quickly.



## During the Term

The ways in which gateway math and English faculty support students in seeking help may vary, depending on where they are in the semester.

### First three weeks

Incorporate at least one activity to increase awareness of student support services and to promote help seeking. Consider a common activity across course sections, or one that amplifies or builds upon activities in other programs for freshmen such as orientation or first-year experience courses. It may be appropriate to coordinate with college-101-type course instructors.

#### Sample activities

- Invite representatives, such as from the tutoring center, to speak to the class about the services they provide.
- Assign students a discussion board activity as a homework assignment.
  - Students could be given a partially complete table like the one above (omitting the faculty contact information) and be asked to complete one column. Consider using this opportunity to promote group work and collaboration by having students divide the services among group members and then share information.
  - Ask students to develop a class wiki listing campus support options, their locations, and types of help offered, and to include a brief description of what to expect. (For example, does a student need to sign in first when visiting the tutoring center? What happens when a student goes to the campus food bank?)
- Direct students to physically go to one or two services to learn about them. Prioritize services that students are most likely to need.
  - This strategy can be especially effective to introduce students to a tutoring center. The task could be as simple as signing in at the center or meeting a tutor and getting a signature. Prepare tutors to greet students and to talk to them about the tutoring services.
  - Provide a structure for students to share their findings to the class.
- Assign a scavenger hunt for students that incorporates visiting various service locations online or in person to learn more.



## Remainder of the semester

At different points in the semester, incorporate reminders about student services and help seeking.

### Sample activities

- Include a student services question weekly as a brief warmup as students enter class (e.g., “What service on campus helps students with...?”).
  - If you had asked students to develop a class wiki, ask them to continue expanding it, perhaps focusing on what the process is for first-time or returning students using the resource.
- Normalize help seeking by talking about personal experiences in asking for and benefitting from help as a student.
- Continue to invite representatives of services to speak about the student supports they provide.
- Encourage students to share the benefits of help they have received from the services introduced earlier in the term. (Make sure that this sharing does not require students to disclose sensitive information such as food or housing insecurity, LGBTQ+ status, etc.)
- Encourage faculty to regularly revisit the module throughout the term to spotlight specific services.

## Continuous Improvement

Customize the process to align with students’ needs and the specifics of the institution. In order to sustain an environment that promotes help seeking, faculty should continue to implement common tools and activities that are designed to normalize discussions on student supports.

### Strategies to support ongoing work

- Create regular opportunities for faculty and student services staff to learn together and share ideas.
- Conduct student focus groups to identify what encouraged them to seek help from student services. Share the results with faculty, student services staff, and incoming students, as appropriate.
  - [Center for Community College Student Engagement Focus Group Toolkit](#)





The Charles A. Dana Center develops and scales mathematics and science education innovations to support educators, administrators, and policymakers in creating seamless transitions throughout the K–16 system for all students, especially those who have historically been underserved. We focus in particular on strategies for improving student engagement, motivation, persistence, and achievement.

The Center was founded in 1991 at The University of Texas at Austin. Our staff members have expertise in leadership, literacy, research, program evaluation, mathematics and science education, policy and systemic reform, and services to high-need populations.

