

Develop professional development training for faculty that focuses on identifying signs that a student could use support for personal issues and how to respond to these signs.

CURRENT CHALLENGE:

Faculty and staff need professional development in supporting students when they are struggling with personal challenges. Many of our students experience frequent and intense psychosocial stressors. Faculty and staff need to understand these students' resilience in the face of such stressors so that they can call on these strengths to motivate students' campus engagement. However, they also need to understand the ways in which these stressors interfere with students' academic performance, signs that students' are becoming overwhelmed by these stressors, and techniques for responding to these signs

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

Faculty professional development incentives have traditionally been allocated for the development of cutting edge teaching methodologies. It seems reasonable that some of these incentives could be used to teach faculty members advising approaches that enable them to identify signs that a student could use support for personal issues and enable them to respond to these signs. For example, faculty members are probably not aware of how counseling services can support students in distress and do not have skills for encouraging students to utilize these services.

I am not as familiar with staff needs for training in understanding and responding to students' personal challenges. I have had the opportunity to talk with many staff members. They have told me about how they have been concerned about students and their personal challenges. But, they feel they need more training to understand the early warning signs, the best way to respond, and when and how to encourage students to seek counseling services.

BENEFITS TO FRESNO STATE:

This initiative is likely to have significant short and long term impacts on students' academic success. An early and compassionate response to signs of personal distress can make the difference between academic success and failure. In addition, we know that students from some ethnic/racial groups have a disproportionate number of personal challenges. Enhancing faculty and staff understanding of how to work with students from all backgrounds who are experiencing personal distress will address the "achievement gap."

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: