Campus Engagement-Oriented Supported Education

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Temple University
Collaborative
On Community Inclusion of Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities

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The Intervention

What is Campus Engagement-Oriented Supported Education?

Individuals with serious mental illnesses are much more likely to withdraw from college before completing their degree compared to the general population[1]. While mental health-specific factors likely play a role, so do factors that affect all college students, such as problems paying tuition, poor academic preparation (e.g., study skills), and lack of confidence. Another normative factor is that academic success and retention have been associated with greater campus engagement, such as joining clubs, attending events, and being connected to others in the classroom and outside. Research conducted by the Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion suggests that college students with mental illnesses are significantly less engaged on campus compared to the general student population, and that this was associated with lower graduation rates[2]. Feeling that others treat them differently because of mental health issues is one factor associated with less campus engagement.

Supported education has emerged as a promising evidence-based practice for assisting students with serious mental illnesses to achieve their personal educational goals. Supported education programs differ greatly, but primarily focus on academic preparation issues, illness management and crisis planning, and coping with the impacts of mental health issues during one's academic career. Campus engagement is typically not a central focus of such interventions.

This manual describes a supported education intervention that has two unique features. First, a central focus of the intervention is on enhancing campus engagement, including supporting students with mental illnesses in identifying their engagement interests, helping them search for opportunities on campus, and developing and utilizing natural support systems. Second, the intervention is designed to reach students at university and college campuses across the country by using several distance communication technologies to reach students where in-person supported education programs may not exist. This groundbreaking approach is also done in response to anecdotal findings that

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[1] Kessler R, Foster C, Saunders W, et al: Social consequences of psychiatric disorders. I: educational attainment. American Journal of Psychiatry 152:1026–1032, 1995

[2] Salzer, M.S. (2012). A Comparative Study of Campus Experiences of College Students with Mental Illnesses Versus a General College Sample. The Journal of American College Health, 60, 1-7.

attendance and connections with face-to-face supported education programs can be problematic.

This supported education intervention also incorporates several fundamental principles of community inclusion as described in Temple University's Collaborative on Community Inclusion document, *Well Together-- A blueprint for community inclusion: fundamental concepts, theoretical frameworks and evidence*.[i] The intervention focused on seeing "the person," not "the patient," by working to address issues that all college students face and encouraging participation in campus life. It maximized the use of mainstream community resources by referring students to resources and introducing them to supports they could use themselves. The intervention emphasized the value of self-determination and dignity of risk by supporting their decision-making. The intervention made engagement in campus life the primary objective of the intervention (fundamental #6, "community inclusion focuses on participation that occurs more like everyone else" p. 51) and helped build natural and peer supports. Finally, it addressed environmental barriers to inclusion by teaching students about the services available to them and encouraging and supporting self-advocacy.

The Five Core Areas

The goal of the Supported Educational Specialist (SES) is to address needs that the student might have in any of the following five *core areas*:

1. Campus engagement: The SES helps the student identify and access campus services and resources such as campus recreation, student life, and student organizations, which can increase student satisfaction with their college experience.

2. Academic achievement: This area includes needs related to study skills, accommodations, homework completion, organization and time management, attendance, and working with other students.

3. Natural support systems: This refers to the development of a social network of supportive people who do not have a formal (paid) relationship with the student. These are social contacts which are "naturally occurring," (e.g., friends, family, coworkers, faculty, classmates, etc.) rather than those whose role is to provide services to the student (e.g., caseworkers, coaches, therapists, advisors, etc.).

4. Interpersonal relationships: This area focuses on confident and effective interactions with administrators, faculty, staff, fellow students, friends, family, coworkers, and any other people whom the student interacts with in relation to their academic pursuits; needs in this area may be related to self-advocacy and natural support systems.

5. Self-advocacy: The SES focuses on the student's ability to speak confidently and effectively on their own behalf to administrators, faculty and staff, and other key people within the university and broader community to gain access to needed resources and services, along with developing skills around organization and follow-through.

Phases of the Intervention

A student may have needs in multiple core areas, and some needs may span more than one of the areas listed above. The SES helps the student to identify these needs and develop realistic goals and a plan to address them, while also providing encouragement and revising goals as needed. These activities generally fall into three phases:

1. Intake and assessment
2. Goal planning
3. Ongoing contact, goal revision, and addressing emerging issues

These phases are described in more detail below, followed by descriptions of the activities and strategies which can be used by the SES in the third phase to address the needs and goals identified with the student in the first two phases.

Phase 1: Engagement, Intake and Assessment of Needs

The first contact with a new student involves a two-step intake process, during which the SES first reviews the student's pre-intake form, and then arranges the first meeting with the student. The SES should have a copy of the new student's completed pre-intake form on hand during the initial meeting. This allows them to ensure that all of the needs identified by the student are discussed and to confirm relevant details (for example, to clarify the student's living situation and how that might impact their needs). The

overarching goal of the first meeting is engagement—it is crucial that the SES engage the student and develop a foundational relationship with them before a successful assessment can take place.

If possible, the first meeting with the student should be done using spoken communication, preferably including video, e.g. webcam. When arranging the first meeting, the SES should determine whether the student requires any accommodations to use distance communication technologies. For example, if a student is hearing-impaired, the SES may arrange to use a chat service in addition to a webcam so that the student and SES can communicate clearly in real-time while establishing rapport. It is not appropriate to use only nonverbal methods of communication for the first contact with a new student except in unusual circumstances. If nonverbal communication must be used, it should be in real time (i.e., using online chat services), but email and text messaging should never be used for the first meeting.

The purpose of the intake meeting is not only to assess the student's needs, but to engage with and develop a rapport with the student. For this reason, it is important that the conversation during the intake meeting is casual and open-ended in nature, with a semi-structured interview format. Depending on the communicative style, personality, and the number and breadth of needs of the individual student, the amount of time required for the intake meeting will vary; however, it should not take longer than 90 minutes.

At the beginning of the meeting, the SES should introduce him or herself, let the student know that they will be taking notes during their discussion, and then use directed, open-ended questions to learn more about the student and their individual situation. The SES should focus on identifying the student's strengths and any issues for which they need to apply coping or problem-solving strategies. For example, many college students—not just students with serious mental illnesses—struggle to get enough sleep, exercise, eat well and effectively cope with stress. These are issues that the SES can support the student with during coaching sessions. They can also discuss what services or people have been supporting them in the core areas addressed. The SES should find out what the student would like to work on and what they hope to get out of their time with the SES before discussing the student's specific needs in detail. At this time, the SES should make clear to the student what services they can or cannot provide, e.g. they cannot take the role of a therapist, but can assist and support the student in finding and engaging in counseling services. The SES should have a conversation detailing each of the core areas of the intervention and then explore with the student the needs that they might have in these areas.

All questions should be open-ended, but specific enough to allow the student to provide a directed response; for example, "What helps you study?" may be more difficult to answer than "Tell me more about the strategies you use to study for exams." The SES can also refer to information in the student's pre-intake form, for example, "I see that you wrote that you're having some difficulty talking with your professors. Could you tell me more about that?" Examples of questions which the SES can use to get to know the student and learn more about his or her situation, strengths, and needs include:

1. Tell me more about yourself
2. What classes do you feel are going well for you right now? What do you like about them?
3. Tell me about an academic success you have had in college, such as positive feedback on an exam or paper, or a favorable grade in a particular course.
4. Are you currently using any campus services to help you succeed?
5. Describe your process when approaching a setback related to school. What works for you to help you get through it? What have you done in the past? What was helpful and what wasn't?
6. Who do you turn to for support when you are having a problem at school?
7. What would you like me to help you with? What are you hoping to get out of our time together?

By the end of the intake session, the SES and student should have discussed all five of the core areas, and the SES will have identified the specific areas where the student has unmet needs (e.g., taking exams, talking with professors, connecting with campus services). Some students may be ready to start planning goals right away, but others may need more time to think before they move on to this step.

Determining Priority Needs

In addition to the main goal of defining the student's unique strengths and needs, the intake is also an opportunity for the SES to learn what the student hopes to gain from the relationship, which can help the SES to lead a more effective and satisfying goal planning session. Many students may enter their relationship with the SES feeling overwhelmed by a variety of challenges, including financial difficulties, poor academic performance, and precarious relationships with the people who usually provide them with social support. When a student perceives their life to be unraveling in multiple areas, it can be difficult for them to identify the best area to address first. The SES should work with the student to ascertain the most urgent goals before proceeding to the goal planning phase. For example, if a student is especially concerned about losing their merit scholarship due to poor grades during the previous academic year, the SES will

want to prioritize planning goals to improve the student's academic performance before discussing goals for improving the student's engagement with campus services.

Phase 2: Goal Planning

After the student's needs have been identified, the SES will work with the student to create a detailed, targeted plan for addressing those needs. This involves defining *specific and realistic goals*, the *timelines* for achieving those goals, and anticipating any *barriers or challenges* the student may have to overcome to do so successfully. The role of the SES in this process is one of facilitator; that is, they should make sure that the student is engaged in and directing the goal planning process, rather than constructing the goals on the student's behalf.

As with the intake meeting, the SES should make every effort to have the goal-planning session with the student using a verbal mode of communication, preferably including video. The SES should indicate to the student that they will be making notes and creating a goal sheet together. After the session, the SES should send a copy of the completed goal sheet to the student (in a secure format) so that the student can reference it. The SES will also keep a copy of this sheet on file to reference and update as necessary. Goal planning involves the following steps:

1. *Identifying goals.* Goals are derived from the needs which were named by the student in the intake and assessment meeting. Many needs can be easily reframed as goals – for example, "I need more time to finish my homework" can become, "My goal is to ask for accommodations that will help me to finish my homework on time."

2. *Identifying strengths and resources.* Talk with the student to determine if there are any resources, strengths, or existing strategies they are already using which can help to achieve their goal. Resources might be people whom the student knows who have knowledge in a particular area; strengths might include good organizational skills or confidence with public speaking; strategies could be something that has helped the student to achieve similar goals in the past, such as setting aside time to spend in meditation for five minutes before an exam.

3. *Anticipating barriers.* By figuring out ahead of time what challenges or problems might get in the way of achieving a goal, the student can be more prepared to overcome them. Barriers might be internal (e.g., low self-esteem) or external (e.g., lack of financial resources).

4. *Making a plan.* Finally, the SES should work with the student to identify concrete steps that they will take to meet their goals, and develop a timeframe for each step. It is important that the steps be specific and manageable so that the student does not feel overwhelmed. For example, a student whose goal is to pass the final exam in a difficult course might make a plan that includes steps like using their excellent organizational skills to create a study plan in the first week, organizing a study group after two weeks to help increase their confidence in their study skills, and making sure that they eat a healthy meal the day of their exam.

Some students may feel intimidated by the use of the terms "goals" and "goal planning". The SES should be aware of this and be able to adapt their language in order to put the student at ease. Words such as "aim", "intention", "desire", "purpose", or "objective" can be used during this process.

Phase 3: Ongoing Contacts with Students

After helping the student to identify their specific goals, the SES provides ongoing support as the student attempts to achieve their goals. Just as the needs and goals of students are unique to the individual, the type of support which a student will need to reach their goals will differ on an individual basis. Students may encounter unanticipated challenges, including loss of motivation, and simple actions like checking in with someone to whom they can be accountable may help them reach their goals. As students begin to work on their goals, they will continually revise them with the SES as necessary and as goals are reached. For example, the student and SES may find that timelines need to be extended or that goals should be broken down into smaller and more manageable steps. They may also identify new goals. It is crucial that the SES ensure that each contact ends with the student having a clear concept of the action or next step they are to take. The SES should be aware that it can take a few sessions for the student and SES to develop rapport and gain clarity in order to move forward with goal planning.

The amount of contact the SES has with students is likely to fluctuate over time, with some students needing more contacts and supports at times of higher stress (e.g., midterms, finals, unexpected challenges) and some needing less (perhaps because a previous challenge has been overcome). Although students may drop out of contact when they feel that they do not need as much support, it is important that the SES continue to regularly contact all students they are working with, as students may enter a

crisis and be afraid or unwilling to ask for help, especially after a period where they were less responsive to contact. An email sent once per month to inactive students should be sufficient to let students know the SES is available to meet with them if they would like to do so.

Availability and Time-Management

Ongoing contacts may be initiated by either the SES or the student. The SES should make her or his best effort to be flexible in their availability, as many students may have irregular schedules due to class or work. Offering weekend and evening availability is likely to significantly increase the success of the intervention. It is at the discretion of the SES when to engage in communication with the student, but they should define their availability in one of their first sessions (e.g., I am available by text message any time between 7am and 10pm Eastern time, and available on video chat from 9-5pm Eastern time or at any time with 48 hours' notice). The SES should also make every effort to use the method of communication preferred by the student whenever possible.

Some contacts will be brief, lasting only a few minutes, while others may take closer to an hour. The SES should aim to have at least 30 minutes of contact with a participant every two weeks. This can encompass several smaller meetings (e.g., three 10-minute sessions of text messaging or emailing) or a single, longer meeting (e.g., a Skype session). A SES working with multiple students may be in contact with several students at any given moment, so scheduling meetings in advance is preferable. However, the SES should be aware that students may request meetings on short notice and be as flexible as possible. Additionally, the SES should aim to spend no more than 90 minutes meeting with an individual in a single day, except in unusual circumstances. Meetings of 30-45 minutes are considered ideal, although keeping meetings shorter and on-topic is a skill that requires practice.

Record Keeping

It is imperative that the SES keep a detailed record of all contacts with an individual student. This should include notes on the duration and mode of contact, who initiated contact, and the outcome. If the student's goals have changed, the SES should take time to update the student's goal sheet. Tracking the student's progress can help to identify successful (or unhelpful) strategies and activities, as well as providing a record of accomplishments which the SES can refer to if a student begins to feel discouraged. For example, if a student reports feeling that they have not made any progress on improving

their grades, the SES could refer to a paper that the student had previously revised after initial submission and received improved marks on, noting that the student's use of their school's writing center had been useful in that situation and might prove to be a helpful resource again.

Revising the goal sheet and identifying new goals

As students work to achieve their goals, they may encounter unanticipated challenges. During ongoing contacts with students, the SES should actively help the student to evaluate progress towards goals and help the student to adjust their goals as needed. In keeping with a strengths-based perspective, a student who does not meet their goals should not be considered a failure. Rather, the goals should be re-evaluated to determine whether they are serving the needs of the student appropriately. The process of revising, re-evaluating, and creating new goals should be done in partnership with the student, rather than on behalf of the student. In addition to helping with revising existing goals, the SES should be attentive to the emergence of new goals, which may take the form of new challenges, needs, or student interests.

The Role of the Supported Education Specialist

There are many resources which can support a student's academic achievement, and one which is often overlooked is encouragement. The SES's role is not only to coach the student in navigating the logistical challenges of secondary education, but also to reassure, engage, and inspire the student to achieve his or her educational goals. The SES's relationship with the student is formal, and the SES should at all times maintain a friendly, non-judgmental attitude toward the student. The student can expect to receive the acceptance and support of the SES regardless of his or her progress toward their goals. However, this does not preclude the SES from expecting that the student engages with the intervention and pursue related goals to the best of his or her ability.

While ideally the SES should not be the first person the student contacts if they experience a mental health crisis, there may be times when this does happen. Rather than directly providing services, such as mental health care, the SES should facilitate the development of the student's relationships within their college communities. Initially this should be done in the context of the assessment and goal planning. For example, the SES could help students to join student organizations for the chance to develop new friendships, role-play with a student who is nervous about contacting their University Counseling Service, direct students to their campus Writing Center for help reviewing a

paper, and refer students to their campus Career Center for help with resume building. Where resources are unavailable, the SES assists the student in problem-solving to identify alternative supports. Instead of working *for* the student to build these relationships, the SES works *with* the student to empower them to self-advocate for and create such relationships within their college community. The SES should be aware that students may occasionally talk about symptoms, specifically as they relate impact their academic success and interpersonal relationships. The SES should be able to respond in a supportive way, helping the student to problem solve and choose the best strategies to support the existing challenge.

Distance Communication Tools and Strategies

Access to computers, cell phones, the internet, and other forms of distance communication technology is rapidly increasing, providing a variety of tools which the SES can use to communicate with and support students from any distance. Additionally, the wide range of modalities available for the SES to interact with students provides increased flexibility in addressing communication challenges. Choosing the right mode for communicating most effectively with students will depend on many factors, such as time constraints, individual student preferences, and the tone and content of the conversation.

Video Communication

Programs such as Skype or FaceTime utilize a camera to stream live video and sound from one user to another. An advantage of using video communication is the ability to use body language, particularly facial expressions, to enhance interactions. This can help the student to feel supported and encouraged by providing a visual confirmation that the SES is listening to their concerns and fully engaging with them. Video communication is an essential tool for the SES because it introduces a human element which can be lost when using other forms of distance communication: it can help to establish the relationship between the SES and student as a relationship between two people, as opposed to a series of detached electronic interactions. This mode of communication is best for building rapport, longer communication sessions, more complex conversations, and for activity sessions. There are also Live Video Conferencing programs like zoom where users are able to share their screen and work collaboratively, which are useful tools when working with students. SES's can use this feature to show

students websites for resources in their communities, demonstrate how services work and provide visual cues to information.

Verbal Communication

Verbal modes of communication such as telephone and voice chat have many of the same advantages of video communication. They allow a more personable interaction and allow the SES to address complex issues more quickly than text-only communication. Verbal communication is good for building rapport, longer communication sessions, more complex conversations, some activities, and checking in with students. In addition, many students prefer communication via phone because of the convenience.

Text-Only Communication

Text messaging, instant messaging or chat, and email help to supplement video or verbal communication. Many students may prefer these modes of communication due to their ease of use, and they can sometimes provide more privacy than other modes. However, these communication methods should not be the primary mode of communication used by the SES. Text-only communication is best for brief check-ins, answering minor questions or concerns, or for passing on information that does not require a full conversation. Remember to ensure that any documents sent by email are password-protected to safeguard confidentiality, and never include the password in the same email as the document you are sending!

Methods for Meeting Goals

There are a variety of methods the SES can use to help the student to develop skills and access resources. A few general methods which can be helpful to students in addressing challenges of any kind are discussed below. Specific strategies are then presented for addressing needs in each of the five core areas of the intervention.

General Methods

Referrals

One of the main functions of the SES is to educate and refer students to appropriate mainstream and disability-focused campus resources. The SES can use their general knowledge of typical campus resources to brainstorm appropriate campus resources with the student, and the SES and student can use video communication technologies to search for campus resources on the internet together. Referrals can serve to address any of the 5 core areas as well as other goals/issues the student may have and are applicable beyond campus engagement activities. For example, a student who needs a new mental health care provider may benefit from being referred to campus health services.

Role-Playing

This activity can be especially helpful to students who are feeling nervous or disempowered in social situations. In many cases, practicing a dreaded conversation or knowing what to expect when entering a new social environment can help the student to feel capable and communicate more effectively to achieve their goals. Role-playing can also assist students in anticipating challenges and self-identifying maladaptive behaviors—it can be as casual or as scripted as the student needs and can be used successfully via multiple modes of communication.

Problem-solving

Whatever challenge or goal a student faces, the SES should always be mindful of helping students to develop or improve their problem-solving skills. One approach to problem-solving is to take a *systems perspective*, which aims to identify the real causes of problems before implementing solutions. It is important not to make assumptions about the underlying issues when trying to solve problems. A strengths-based assessment for tackling problems follows these steps:

1. Identify and define the issue.
2. Break down the issue into its components and identify specific challenges.
3. Prioritize the component problems or issues.
4. Identify strengths or resources which could be used to address the issues.
5. Create a strategy for tackling the problem, including specific steps and timelines.
6. Re-assess the strategy after implementation, and revise if necessary.

Phone and tablet applications can be useful aids when developing new skills and habits. The SES should recommend apps to students to address specific needs when the student expresses interest in this tool. It is recommended that the SES read reviews and test the apps themselves prior to recommending them to students because there are many apps available and not all of them are updated regularly. Temple University's Collaborative on Community Inclusion has prepared a document called 20 Apps for Student Success that provides an overview of some of these apps.

Core Area #1: Campus Life Engagement

Colleges are more than just classrooms—they are communities of people working together to try to create a positive environment for learning. Just like any other community, the more engaged the student becomes—in both the functional and social aspects of the community—the more benefits they will receive.

Methods for Increasing Campus Life Engagement

Getting students more involved generally includes the following steps:

1. Identifying the student's interests or desires.
2. Asking about the student's past experiences with the activity or interest.
3. Finding campus resources that fit that interest or goal.
4. Accessing the student's network—do they know anyone else who is interested in the same activity, or already involved, or willing to try it out with the student? Is there someone who can go along with them?
5. Making a plan, including anticipating and problem-solving any barriers, for accessing campus resources.

A great resource for helping students to get engaged on campus is the Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion's guidebook, *Your College Community: How People with Psychiatric Disabilities Can Make the Most of Their College Experience.*[ii] This guidebook describes a variety of facilities, services, and other resources which are typically available on college campuses, and addresses some of the concerns of students with psychiatric disabilities who seek to engage with their campus community. The steps suggested above can be tailored by the SES to assist a student in any campus activity and are explored in more depth below:

1. _Identifying interests._ It is important for the SES allow the student to lead the conversation about what they might be interested in being involved with on campus. This can be difficult—for example, the SES might approach the topic of campus engagement with a student and receive the response, "I don't have time to do anything," or "I'm not interested in doing anything." Sometimes, it can help to give the student space to start thinking about campus engagement before diving straight in. For instance, the SES might say, "why don't you think about the kinds of things you might like to do on campus, and come up with one thing that you might enjoy doing that we could talk about at our next meeting?"

   If, at the next meeting, the student is unable to come up with one activity they might enjoy, the SES might suggest that the student visit the school's website and choose 3 activities that interest them. The SES can then assist the student in finding a list of the school's clubs or the homepage of the school's student activity board. Again, it is important the student take the lead in determining their interests. For example, a seemingly quiet, introverted student may come back to the SES and say, "I really thought about what you said; I'm feeling isolated and I don't have a lot of friends. I'm not confident with public speaking, but I've always wanted to be in a play."

2. _Asking about past experiences._ The SES should ask if the student has any previous experiences with an identified interest in order to help determine how best to pursue that interest on campus. For example, the student may say, "My roommate asked me to go to this play with her, and I thought it was neat; I would be interested in getting involved with theater." This is also a good way to identify any social connections the student has that could help them to access their interest—in this example, the student's roommate may be a social support who could go with them to plays in the future if they were nervous about going by themselves. A student who has no experience with something may benefit from being encouraged to try out a smaller, related activity before making any larger commitments, such as going to a local play and seeing if they enjoy it before committing to join the drama club.

3. _Identifying campus resources:_ Now that the SES and student have identified an interest (in this case, drama or theater), the SES should assist the student in finding out what options are available for pursuing that interest at their school. This also involves collecting information about how to get involved. The SES can support the student by encouraging them to decide when they will take next steps and by providing encouragement and reminders via text.

4. *Accessing the student's network*. Having another person who can assist the student in getting involved in their area of interest on campus can help students overcome barriers, feel more confident, and persist in engaging activities while strengthening their social support network. This could be someone the student knows who is already engaged and whom the student can ask to join the next time they participate in the activity, a group leader whom the student can reach out to before approaching the larger group (for instance, a student could make an appointment with their school's religious leader to get to know them before attending services), or it could be a friend or family member who is willing to support the student's interest, perhaps by attending their first meeting with them. If students are feeling tentative about trying out a new activity, they might try emailing the group's primary contact and requesting that an established member be available to "buddy-up" with them prior to the meeting and provide them with extra assistance and support.

5. *Making a plan*. This involves outlining specific next steps that the student will take to get engaged, as well as anticipating any potential barriers. Actions should be specific, such as finding out when an organization's meetings take place and how to get to the meetings. For example, the student who wishes to join the drama club might attend their first meeting, and then report to the SES that they feel hesitant about being on-stage right away. This hesitation could then be addressed by making a plan to request to be involved with props for the performance rather than being on-stage right away.

Keep in mind that not all students will be prepared to address campus engagement right away; before suggestions are made, it is best that the SES have developed a strong relationship with the student. The SES should also make sure that students are moderating their engagement level and don't become over-involved to the point where they feel overwhelmed by their commitments on-campus. For many students, this can all be very difficult so it is important that the SES give lots of encouragement and acknowledge when they have accomplished something.

Ways to Get Involved on Campus

There are many ways to get involved on campus, and many facilities, services, clubs and organizations available on most campuses. A list of some of the typical facilities, services, clubs and organizations is provided below.

There are a wide range of facilities and services that may be available at a school, depending on the size and resources of the particular institution. Typically, access to facilities and services is included in tuition for students who are enrolled in classes full-time. Facilities and services may include:

- A theater or a drama program
- Art galleries or museums
- Music programs
- A cultural center, women's center, and/or LGBTQ center
- A place of worship or spiritual center
- A library
- A counseling center
- An Office of Disability Support Services
- Gyms or fitness centers
- Sports fields
- A wellness center
- A clinic or health center
- Campus safety or security
- Student legal services
- Career advising
- Financial aid and advising
- An Office for Study Abroad
- An Office for Community Service
- A student center
- Computer or tech centers
- A Dean of Students Office
- An Office of Sustainability

Campus facilities also host events throughout the school year which are free and geared toward students. These could be events as diverse as a candlelit meditation service in the campus chapel, an outdoor recreation fair with games and student sports clubs, or pizza dance parties. Events on campus are an opportunity to find out about or to receive additional services, identify new interests, and to meet new people and make new friends and connections on campus. However, finding out about these events and making time to attend can be difficult for some students. Some of the ways students can find out about things going on at their campus include:

- Looking for fliers or posters for fairs and events when walking around campus
- Checking bulletin boards located in classroom buildings, student centers, and outside of offices.
- Attending an activity fair, often held at the start of the semester
- Signing up for email listservs for student organizations or clubs.
- Looking for tables set up in student centers and other high-traffic areas by specific offices or organizations.
- Visiting the Office of Student Life or Student Affairs, or contacting the Student Activity Board.
- Following school organizations, such as clubs, Greek life, and recreational programs, on social media.
- Talking to their Resident Advisor (RA) if they live on-campus.
- Joining a student club or organization and attending meetings.

Clubs and Organizations

Student organizations and clubs are a fantastic way for students to make new friends and to increase their social support networks, while also pursuing their personal interests. Schools usually provide financial support to these organizations through a student activity fee included in tuition. Many groups are free to join, and the level of time commitment required of members varies by group; the focus of student groups may include:

- Academic and professional
- Arts and entertainment
- Cultural or international
- Governance
- Honorary
- Club and intramural
- Media and publication
- Political or advocacy
- Recreation and leisure
- Religious
- Community service

Other opportunities include intramural and club sports, Army ROTC programs, student activity board/student government, student-created media (e.g., student newspaper or radio station), and Greek organizations.

Student-Led Organizations on Mental Health Issues

In addition to the kinds of student organizations listed above, many schools also have student-led associations which focus on addressing mental health issues both on campus and in the local community. These organizations, which are often peer-driven, can be a wonderful way to connect students with local resources and an excellent source of social support. One such student organization is Active Minds (*www.activeminds.org*), a nonprofit organization with chapters at schools across the nation. Active Minds is a student-run mental health awareness, education, and advocacy group which uses campus-wide events and national programs to try to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues. Students who are interested in finding an Active Minds chapter (or starting one at their school) can be directed to the Active Minds website.

Core Area #2: Attaining Academic Goals

Connecting Students to the Office of Disability Support Services[3]

Disability accommodations can provide many tools to assist students with meeting academic goals. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), colleges and universities are required to provide accommodations aimed at providing students with disabilities, including psychiatric disabilities, the most "normal" college experience possible. These "Standard Accommodations" must be made available by every college or university to all students with disabilities. Standard accommodations do not lower class expectations for the student; they are still accountable for the same work as every other student. Work may be in a different format than a student's classmates but it will still be the same level of work as their peers. Not all accommodations apply to all students, and it is up to the student to decide what accommodations, if any, they wish to utilize. Students may also request specific accommodations. The staff of the Disability Support Services Office should be able to help students determine which accommodations they are eligible to receive. Some of the available accommodations include:

- Extra time for tests.

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[3] Adapted from *Community integration tools: Natural supports.* The Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://tucollaborative.org/pdfs/Toolkits_Monographs_Guidebooks/relationships_family_friends_intimacy/Natural_Supports.pdf

- A note taker (someone who takes notes for the student in their classes if they have difficulty writing quickly enough to keep up).
- Alternative formats for class texts (audiobooks, adaptive/auditory software, such as text-to-speech, etc.).
- Taking exams orally instead of writing them.
- Taking exams in a distraction-free environment away from other people.

Accommodations can be an invaluable academic support for students. Because it is important for students to connect with the Office of Disability Support Services immediately if they think they might need accommodations at any time in the future, the SES should make it a priority to connect students with the Office as soon as possible. Many students are unfamiliar with these services and may benefit from a session to go over the resources Disability Support Services provides. Students may not know that accommodations can be made for students with mental illnesses. In addition, many students do not want to disclose they have a disability, in this case, the SES should make sure they explain the anonymity of this service. Helping a student to register with the Office of Disability Support Services involves the following steps:

1. _Information_. The SES should talk with the student and provide them with information about the Office of Disability Support Services, including what kinds of accommodations might be available to them. The discussion should also include why it might be important or helpful to register with the Office as soon as possible. Even if a student never decides to take advantage of accommodations, it is preferable to register with the Office of Disability Support Services "just in case." The Office can also provide support to students beyond accommodations, for example, helping them to navigate a medical withdrawal, or possibly communicating with professors on their behalf in an emergency.

2. _Disclosure_. In order to receive accommodations, students must be willing to disclose their disability to the Office of Disability Support Services. The SES should make sure that the student understands that registering with the Office does not mean that they have to disclose to their professors and classmates. If they request accommodations, professors will know that they have a disability, but not what the nature of their disability is.

3. _Contact._ Help the student to contact their Office of Disability Support Services and ask about their registration procedures. Usually, this involves helping the student to find the Office website to get the phone number or location on campus.

4. *Forms.* Assist the student in procuring any and all forms that the Office requires be filled out. Typically, there is a form that their doctor must fill out which describes their disability and what kind of accommodations would be helpful for them. The student can visit the Office in person to get these forms, or they may be able to print them from the Office's website.

5. *Identify needs.* Have a discussion with the student about how they think that their disability might affect their academia and what kinds of accommodations they think that they might need. It can help to make a list with the student of any symptoms that they believe might affect their schoolwork—for instance, medication that makes concentration difficult, or having trouble getting out of bed in the morning to get to class on time—as well as accommodations that might help with these symptoms, such as a distraction-free exam room or permission to arrive late to class without penalty. The student can then bring this list with them when they go to their doctor and ask them to fill out the form from the Office of Disability Support Services.

6. *Meet with the doctor.* Next, the student should arrange to meet with their doctor to have the necessary form filled out. As in the previous step, the SES can help the student to prepare to discuss their disability with their doctor so that they can describe what kinds of accommodations they think that they might need. Typically, students can only request the types of accommodations that their doctor agrees that they might need.

7. *Submit forms.* The student returns with the completed doctor's form, as well as any other required paperwork, to the Office of Disability Support Services. At this point the student can also find out what additional steps are required in order to arrange for accommodations. Often, the Office will provide the student with a letter that they can give to their professors outlining the kinds of accommodations that will be helpful to them.

8. *Develop a relationship with the Office.* Once the student is registered, the SES can have a conversation with them about developing an ongoing relationship with the Office of Disability Support Services, including becoming familiar with their processes and regulations, finding out if they have any special workshops or events, and perhaps having at least one contact person at the Office with whom they feel comfortable.

Some students have reported difficulties with having their accommodations honored by professors. Should this occur, the SES should direct the student to contact the Office of Disability Support Services immediately. Professors are required by law to honor accommodations requests, and the Office can take care of any problems a student may have without the student needing to get involved.

Methods for Supporting Academic Goals

Supporting a student's academic goals often involves identifying and building skills in more than one area. Certain skills in other core areas may need to be addressed to help support academics, including mental health (e.g., managing academic stress) and interpersonal relationships (e.g., communicating with professors and administration). Some of these academic-specific needs that students may need help with include:

- Organization and time management
- Study skills
- Writing skills
- Obtaining accommodations
- Completing homework
- Procrastination
- Attendance and classroom engagement
- Motivation
- Collaboration with other students
- Addressing feedback or criticism
- Career planning and choosing a major
- Financial Aid
- Course selection and balancing course load

Many of these needs can be addressed by campus resources and the SES's role is to refer students to the appropriate resources, like writing centers in campus libraries, student support services, and career or academic advising offices. Sometimes students may struggle to find resources that they can access easily, such as those with drop-in times or that are easy to get to. In these cases, the SES can work with the student to locate additional resources. In some circumstances where access is still a problem, the SES may be able to help with some basic tasks, such as referring the student to online resources, which may include apps to help with procrastination, online writing guides, and the basic principles behind tasks like career planning.

Organization and Time Management Skills

Helping students to develop good organization and time management skills can benefit them in many areas of their life in addition supporting academic success. From increasing the usability of class notes and planning/prioritizing assignments to ensuring that financial assistance forms are in order, effective organization and time management is crucial to academic success for students. Providing assistance to students in this area is particularly appropriate for students who struggle with organization or feel anxious about seemingly overwhelming tasks.

As with other skill development areas, the SES should work with the student to determine their unique needs and preferences. One of the key skills many students need help building is how to manage large assignments. Learning how to approach projects with a plan can help to reduce anxiety and procrastinating. The SES can assist the student in identifying the steps necessary for completing projects and for creating a timeline for completion of individual steps.

Students also often need help planning out classes and tasks on a daily, weekly or semester basis to ensure that everything is done on time. The SES can assist students with creating calendars, making to-do lists, and scheduling time for studying. In the same vein, students may need help with other big picture items, like keeping track of all of their coursework over a given time period and prioritizing which assignments to complete first. Part of developing this skill is figuring out when and where a student is best able to handle a specific task. For example, the student may find writing assignments easier to complete in the library, which may in turn be easier to go to at a certain time of day. Other assignments can then be built into the day to fit around scheduled library time. Students may also need to schedule assignments for completion before the due date if they anticipate needing help from the Writing Center or feedback from professors. This level of organization and time management can make a difference for achieving academic goals.

Core Area #3: Natural Supports

Natural supports are the relationships that occur in everyday life. They differ from formal supports, which usually involve some form of payment for services and include relationships with service providers such as administrators, professors, therapists, and case managers. Natural supports, on the other hand, usually involve relationships with family members, friends, co-workers, roommates and acquaintances, and are of a

reciprocal nature. Such supports help students to develop a sense of social belonging, dignity and self-esteem.[iii]

Helping students to identify and utilize natural supports is an important goal, in part because natural supports can complement and supplement the support, encouragement, goal-setting, and problem-solving resources which the SES provides. While other core areas addressed by the intervention may assist students in developing natural supports—for example, engaging in campus life by joining a club to make new friends— *the value of natural supports is such that the SES should prioritize their development and engage strategies aimed specifically at enhancing this crucial area.*

Methods for Creating/Strengthening Natural Supports

Approaches to strengthening a student's natural supports include:

- Helping students to discover and express their interests, suggesting possible choices, and making a list of options. The SES can then discuss with the student how these interests might be utilized to connect with their natural support persons. For example, if a student expresses an interest in reading fantasy novels, the SES may suggest that they could join a book club, lend their favorite novel to a roommate with whom they wish to have a better connection, or role-play how to discuss common interests with a friend to develop social skills.
- Assist the student in identifying resources both within and outside of their campus community which fit their interests. For example, a student who is interested in animals might be encouraged to volunteer at their community animal shelter.
- Encourage students to participate in social or community activities, when consistent with their interests and cultural background, in addition to mental health programs and groups they may already be attending.
- Addressing social adversity and recognizing potential discrimination. Helping students to develop strong self-advocacy skills can be beneficial in coping with the effects of prejudice and discrimination.
- Problem-solving with students to repair relationships. When a close relationship grows apart, for whatever reason, the student may not know how to reconnect. The SES can help the student to reflect on what caused the relationship to become problematic, how circumstances may have since changed, and role-play with the student how to reach out to a support person who may have been estranged.

Circles of Support

The Circles of Support[iv] concept can be used or adapted by the SES to help the student identify and strengthen areas in which they want natural supports. A Circle of Support is a group of people who have agreed to work together on the student's behalf to help them achieve their academic goals. The members of a Circle of Support can consist of family members, friends, roommates, co-workers, classmates, people at a place of worship, or anyone else in the student's community. In the original model of Circles of Support, the Circle meets together with the student on a regular basis. Because this may be impractical for the student and SES, especially in distance-based interventions, regular meetings are not required to employ this concept. Instead, the SES can support the student to identify 3-10 people who fit into different domains of their life (e.g. school, work, extracurricular activities) and to assess whether they believe they have enough support in this area. Students can then be supported to build support in areas where they may be lacking.

Core Area #4: Self-Advocacy

Methods for Developing Self Advocacy Skills

Just like any other skill, being able to self-advocate and obtain resources and services takes time and practice. Effective self-advocacy involves the following components:

1. Educating yourself and getting the facts. Advocates know what's going on. Take time to organize and understand the problem.
2. Identifying strengths and resources.
3. Problem-solving.
4. Learning how to present yourself confidently. Self-advocacy involves:
   a. Going over the information you have and being able to make sense of it.
   b. Presenting your case in a clear and logical manner.
   c. Doing so in a socially competent way.

An important skill to develop in managing one's academic career is knowing when to ask for help, as well as when to follow up. For example, a student might receive a letter from their school stating that their financial aid is being suspended due to their GPA falling too low. In this situation, the student could take the following steps:

1. Before taking any action, the student should make sure to retain the letter they received as a reference. Many students throw away or lose important documents, which later puts them at a disadvantage if they need to refer back to them. Practicing good organizational skills is an important part of successful self-advocacy.

2. They should educate themselves on the issue. First, confirm that the information in the letter is correct--there's always a chance there was an error in calculating the student's GPA, or the letter was sent to the wrong student.

3. The student should think through what this new development will mean for them. Will their housing be affected? Can they regain financial support by repeating a course? Do they need to spend time exploring alternate sources of funding, such as scholarship opportunities?

4. The student should think about what resources they can draw upon to address the problem. Do they know anyone who is knowledgeable about financial aid, such as someone they previously had contact with in the financial aid department?

5. The student should then plan out what actions they should take. In this case, the student might call the Office of Financial Aid to confirm the information in the letter, and then make an appointment if necessary.

6. Finally, the student would make sure that they presented themselves in a confident and clear manner when taking action to resolve their issue. This could involve organizing the information they have and preparing themselves ahead of time, obtaining a copy of their unofficial transcript so that they can go over recent courses and grades with the office of financial aid, or bringing with them a list of questions that they want to have answered at the meeting so that they will not forget anything.

Core Area #5: Interpersonal Relationships

Strong interpersonal relationships, built on good social skills, are essential to college success. There are many situations in which working with the student to improve their interpersonal relationships will have a positive effect on their academics. These situations can include fostering good relationships with instructors and communicating effectively with school administrators, managing relationships with roommates, making

connections with other students, and maintaining or repairing relationships with friends and family. In many cases, basic problem-solving and roleplaying will be sufficient to help a student to improve relationships, but some students may need more targeted help to improve their social skills.

Methods for Developing Social Skills

Good social skills are important not only for succeeding academically but also for developing and maintaining relationships which support the student in all relevant domains, including mental health. Social skills include expressing oneself, recognizing emotions, interpreting the social cues of other people, interacting effectively, and understanding how to modify behavior to fit different social situations.[iii] Not all students need help developing social skills, and some students who want help to improve their relationships may benefit more from learning to apply problem-solving techniques than social skills training in certain situations. It is up to the judgement of the SES whether simply asking the student to engage in a role-playing activity is a sufficient intervention, or if a more formal approach to social skills training should be used. More formal tools include the books, *Social Skills Training for Schizophrenia: A step-by-step guide* by Bellack, Mueser, Gingerich, and Agresta[iii] and *Recovery from Disability: Manual of Psychiatric Rehabilitation* by Robert Paul Liberman.[v]

Conclusion

The intervention described in this manual represents a new direction in supported education interventions. It emphasizes campus life engagement as the most important component of supported education, an emphasis based on the principles of community inclusion. Underlying this focus is the theory that by including students in the campus community, students will have a more rewarding college experience. Delivering the intervention through distance communication technologies allows the intervention to reach more students and increases the convenience to the students.

Examples of some of the aforementioned phases and processes can be found in Appendix A, which includes student stories from our intervention, along with examples of how these processes have led to positive outcomes for the students. A more in-depth evaluation of the intervention is ongoing, and results from this are forthcoming.

Appendix A

Campus Engagement

Carrie

In their first meeting, the Supported Education Specialist (SES) asked Carrie about her hobbies and what she liked to do on campus. Carrie became upset, and said that she didn't feel comfortable joining clubs or going to events because she didn't have any friends and didn't want to go by herself. The SES took the following steps to support Carrie in increasing her campus engagement and developing natural supports.

Objective #1: Support student in identifying interests

After Carrie first brought up her difficulty with campus engagement, the SES presented a hypothetical situation to her, and asked her what kinds of activities and clubs she would be interested in checking out if she did have people to go with. Carrie quickly listed several things—she said that she loved plants and horticulture, fine arts, and theatre. She said she would also go to exercise classes, like Zumba, if she had someone to go with.

The SES and Carrie looked at her school's website to learn more about campus events. The SES was able to do this by using a video conferencing program, like Webex or Zoom, and sharing her computer screen with Carrie. This allowed Carrie and the SES to explore the website together in real time. Carrie said that she'd never looked at her school's event page before, and she saw a lot of campus events that she was interested in.

Objective #2: Identify student's barriers to participation

By actively listening to Carrie, the SES learned that Carrie's main barrier to campus engagement was a lack of natural supports. This helped the SES know how to guide future sessions with the student, and what to focus on together.

Objective #3: Encourage student to actively engage on campus

The SES encouraged Carrie to independently research and attend one or two campus events within the first two weeks of the semester.

During the first week of the fall semester, Carrie went to two events on her own, and even joined a campus club. Carrie said that she felt nervous about going by herself, so she signed up for events that gave her a job, such as helping first-year students move into their dorms. She said that having a task relieved some of the anxiety she felt about meeting other students for the first time. She also noticed that her school didn't have a horticulture club, and that she was thinking about starting one. The SES encouraged Carrie to learn about steps she would need to take in order to start a campus club.

Objective #4: Develop natural supports

After Carrie became more comfortable going to campus events independently, the SES asked her if she knew anyone that she could invite to join her. Carrie said again that she felt like she didn't have friends at school. The SES engaged Carrie in another hypothetical situation by asking her what kind of people she wanted to be friends with. The SES also encouraged Carrie to think about what qualities she thought would make her a good friend to others. Finally, the SES asked Carrie if she knew any people in her classes that she got along with and would like to be friends with. Carrie then remembered a classmate that she had been talking with every afternoon for the entire semester. The SES asked Carrie if she could come up with a plan to invite her classmate to do something together on campus. Carrie's response was tentative—she said that she would think about it, but didn't feel comfortable. The SES assured Carrie that she didn't have to do anything she wasn't comfortable with, but to start out by just considering what she might invite her classmate to do, and how she might ask her.

During their next meeting a couple of weeks later, Carrie told the SES that she had researched campus events that she thought both she and her classmate would enjoy. She planned ahead to choose a time to invite her classmate to a horticulture event after their class one day. Her classmate was happy to go, and they went to another event after that. Carrie said that while she felt anxious, she thought her classmate had a good time, and she felt proud of herself for taking the steps to plan this.

Objective #5: Process the steps and celebrate success

The SES and Carrie discussed the steps that Carrie took to invite her classmate out to do something fun. The SES encouraged Carrie to recognize the action she took to do something that she was uncomfortable with, and to celebrate this success! Carrie said that she felt proud of herself, and that she was starting to feel more confident about developing friendships and natural supports.

Arianna

Arianna wanted to engage more on campus in order to further develop her academic and professional path, but she wasn't aware of how to seek the resources that would be most beneficial to her. The SES took the following steps to support Arianna.

Objective #1: Support student with academic planning and decision making

Arianna was torn between two college majors, and wanted help deciding which path was best for her. The SES asked Arianna questions that promoted self-reflection: was she taking the right prerequisites for each major? Had she researched each major and profession thoroughly? Had she connected with existing campus resources?

Objective #2: Support student in connecting with campus resources

The SES then asked Arianna what existing campus resources she could connect with that would help her create a more specific academic plan. Together, they looked at the school's website and Arianna was able to find a resume-building workshop to attend. The SES also recommended the Corq app to her, which quickly gives students information on campus events. Through using this app, Arianna connected with faculty and students who were involved in the programs she was interested in. This helped her gain valuable information to make a decision about what to major in.

Objective #3: Process the steps and celebrate success

The SES encouraged Arianna to recognize the steps she took to connect with faculty and students. Arianna said that she felt more confident moving forward with her goals and connecting with available campus resources.

Kayla

Kayla felt like she wasn't connected with her campus. She was about to graduate and didn't feel like she had made friends. The SES took the following steps to support Kayla in increasing her campus engagement.

Objective #1: Support student in identifying interests

The SES asked Kayla to write down a list of things that she enjoyed, and then research available opportunities to engage in those activities on campus. Kayla said that she liked to bike, and she found a bike group on campus.

Objective #2: Support student to prepare to take action to engage on campus

Kayla said that she had a lot of anxiety about meeting with the campus bike group. She was afraid that the people in the group wouldn't be nice to her, or that they would treat her like an outsider. The SES encouraged Kayla to consider benefits of participating with the group, and after a few weeks, she decided she would give it a try, and keep in mind that she didn't have to return if she didn't have a good experience.

Kayla met with the big group and said that she had a great time. She immediately felt like a valued member of the group. She also joined the group's Facebook page and email listserv to become more involved.

Objective #3: Process the steps and celebrate success

The SES and Kayla discussed the action steps and preparation she put into reaching her goal of increasing her campus engagement. Kayla was proud of herself for reaching this goal, and felt more confident about increasing her campus engagement.

Natural Supports

Tonya

Tonya wanted to develop a natural support network and increase her campus engagement. She excelled academically, but tended to isolate. The SES took the following steps to support Tonya in increasing her natural support network.

Objective #1: Support student in identifying barriers to developing friendships

Tonya told the SES that she would like to be more engaged on campus, but she'd gotten into a routine of going to class, then going to work, then going home to her dorm. The SES asked Tonya if she ever went to the library to study or to the campus recreation center. Tonya said that she had tried going to these places, but that she always ended up feeling depressed and lonely when she did, because she would see groups of friends

studying and hanging out together, and it would make her think of how she didn't have a group of friends at college. She had even started actively avoiding places on campus so that she wouldn't experience feeling so lonely. The SES asked her if she would like to take steps to change this and focus on increasing campus engagement and developing a natural support system. Tonya readily agreed, saying that what she wanted most was a support system other than her immediate family and therapist.

Objective #2: Develop a plan to support student

After the SES asked Tonya about researching campus events and activities to attend, it became clear that Tonya wasn't quite ready to go out and make plans with a classmate, or attend a campus event independently. Knowing this helped the SES and Tonya develop a plan that was tailored to her individual needs, goals, and stage of readiness for change.

Objective #3: Offer interventions based on student's stage of readiness

The SES suggested preparation steps that Tonya could take which would facilitate Tonya to take action. Tonya said that she felt overwhelmed when thinking about inviting a classmate to a campus event, or going by herself. The SES suggested that Tonya start by researching what events, groups, and clubs were available on her campus and in community by looking on her school's website and using the Corq app. The SES suggested that Tonya make note of what she might be interested in. The SES made it clear that this was just research, so that Tonya wouldn't feel pressured to do something that she didn't feel ready to do.

Objective #4: Support student to identify participation patterns

The SES guided Tonya to identify her participation patterns. Tonya regularly said that she wanted to make friends and have a strong support system, but then started to recognize that she would frequently put herself in isolating situations that limited social contact. For instance, she had two campus jobs, but they were independent work, and she never worked with other people. Tonya became aware that she was gravitating toward situations which didn't present her with opportunities to develop natural supports.

After several weeks of researching events, Tonya shared that she had become friendly with a classmate, and had been invited to her birthday party, which she happily attended. She took further action by starting to share her contact information with new people she would meet, and inviting them out for coffee or lunch on campus.

Objective #5: Support student by providing encouragement

Occasionally, Tonya would say that she felt discouraged if someone declined her invitation, or if a new friend wouldn't respond to a text right away. She would say that these experiences made her feel like she didn't want to try to reach out to others to develop natural supports. The SES acknowledged these disappointments, and encouraged Tonya to continue to reach out to others. The SES asked Tonya to consider what reasons someone might have for not being able to get together, such as having a previous engagement or too much schoolwork.

Objective #6: Process the steps and celebrate success

In their last meeting, the SES and Tonya reflected on all the steps she took to increase her campus engagement and natural supports. Tonya had gone from spending nearly every day by herself in her dorm, to decreasing the number of meetings with the SES because she had become so involved with her peers. Her social life became so busy that she always seemed to be going somewhere on campus or in her community with a friend. Tonya said that she was very proud of herself for making this change, which was something she had been wanting to address for several years.

Sarah

Sarah wanted to enhance her natural support network after she experienced several conflicts with friends for various reasons. She was also balancing work, school, and home responsibilities, and she wanted to make sure that she was consistently reaching out to her support network.

Objective: Support student in strengthening natural support network

The SES told Sarah about Circles of Support, and asked if she would be interested in creating a Circle. Sarah said that she wasn't comfortable with the idea of creating a formal Circle, but thought the concept could be adapted in order to work for her specific needs.

The SES then asked Sarah about the different people in her life, and the various domains they occupied. Sarah talked about friends, family members, and academic and professional mentors which were tied to different life domains (work, extracurricular activities, academics, and friendships and relationships).

The SES then asked Sarah how each person supported her in relation to her college education. Sarah was able to not only identify specific ways each individual supported her, but she also found that she had been asking certain individuals for support that may not have been appropriate. She realized that rather than being upset about not getting the support she wanted from a certain person, that they may have been better suited to offer a different kind of support.

The SES then asked Sarah to consider the ways is able to support each of the individuals in her natural support network. Sarah remarked that it was vital for her to feel just as important and supportive to her friends, family, and classmates as they had been to her.

Brianna

Brianna believed strengthening her natural supports and increasing her levels of community participation would help her transition back to school after taking a medical leave. During one meeting with the SES, Brianna shared that she had been invited to attend a fair with a couple of friends from college. She said that she really wanted to go, but would probably decline the invitation due to mental health symptoms. The SES took the following steps to help Brianna make a decision.

Objective #1: Support student in identifying barriers to participation

The SES asked Brianna to list the reasons that would keep her from going to the fair with her friends. Brianna said that she was concerned about feeling too hot or too cold, about feeling fatigued and wanting to take breaks to rest, and about feeling overwhelmed and anxious. She was also concerned that her friends wouldn't understand if she wanted to leave early or take a break.

Objective #2: Support student in identifying potential benefits of participation

Next, the SES asked Brianna if she could think of any potential benefits of going to the fair. Brianna said that being around people, getting outside, and seeing the vibrant colors of that fair would bring her joy, and could energize her for several days.

Objective #3: Support student in problem solving/identifying facilitators to participation

The SES then guided the conversation toward problem-solving strategies that could help Brianna feel more comfortable going to the fair with her friends. The SES cited each

specific concern that Brianna had mentioned earlier, and asked her what she could do to plan ahead to address these concerns. Brianna said that she could bring a sweatshirt in case she got cold, sit down and rest for a few minutes if she felt tired, and ask her friend to park close to the entrance of the fair so that they wouldn't have to walk very far.

Objective #4: Support student to connect with natural supports

At this point, Brianna was feeling more comfortable with the idea of going to the fair. The SES then asked Brianna what she thought of talking about her concerns with the friend who had invited her to the fair. Brianna said that now felt more comfortable doing this, and that she would make her final decision to attend the fair based on her friend's response.

Objective #5: Process the steps and celebrate success

During their next meeting, Brianna told the SES that her friend was very supportive and understanding about her concerns. She went to the fair and had a great time. She also said that she believed that going through the process of identifying barriers and facilitators to participation provided her with valuable tools that she would be able to implement independently when she returned to school.

Academic Achievement

Brian

Brian was attending school full-time, working full-time, and also preparing to take the LSAT in preparation to apply to law school. He had very specific goals—he wanted to get a certain score on the LSAT, and graduate with a certain GPA. Because his schedule was so full, he had difficulty coming up with a study plan for both his school work and the LSAT. Additionally, he would frequently experience symptoms, and was concerned about his symptoms getting exacerbated when he was feeling particularly stressed out. The SES took the following steps to support Brian in reaching his academic goals.

Objective #1: Support student in developing time management skills

In the beginning of their work together, the SES asked Brian how he had been managing his time and school work—did he use any scheduling apps or a day planner? Did he

prioritize his assignments? Did he schedule time to study for the LSAT? Brian said that he had never really had a system for getting his work done, and that he wanted to come up with a specific study routine that would further enable him to reach his goals. Early in their meetings, the SES would ask Brian what things he had to do that week, and he would write down a list. Then she would ask him when these things could be done, and he would write his schedule on a piece of paper. She also suggested using paper planner or an app like Google Calendar to keep track of his schoolwork.

Objective #2: Support student in developing independence and competence

In their meetings, Brian would frequently mention that he felt like he needed help from the SES in order to meet his academic goals—at first, he requested weekly meetings. However, Brian had independently started sticking to the study schedule that he made. He also signed up for a weekend LSAT class that he regularly attended. The SES reminded Brian that he independently took the initiative to take these actions, and that weekly meetings may not be necessary. Brian said that the encouragement from the SES was very important to him, and he agreed to meeting biweekly, and then monthly.

Objective #3: Support student in recognizing growth and goal achievement

Brian was thrilled to share with the SES that he achieved the score he wanted on the LSAT. The SES prompted Brian to reflect on the action and initiative that he took in order to reach this goal. He is also on his way to graduating with his target GPA.

In their last meetings, the SES noticed that Brian came to the meetings prepared with a detailed schedule. After asking about it, Brian said that he had been using a paper planner for certain things, and a scheduling app for other activities. He then shared that he had scheduled specific goals for himself, with deadlines, throughout the next several months—all of these goals were related to applying to law schools.

Objective #4: Process the steps and celebrate success

The SES commented to Brian how remarkable it was that he went from planning daily, then weekly, and now has been able to independently plan long-term goals for himself. In their last meeting, Brian said that he felt competent and confident in moving forward independently with his goal of going to law school.

Jasmine

Jasmine had two hospitalizations in the beginning of her fall semester when she started working with the SES. She was feeling overwhelmed because she had fallen behind in her classes and wanted to make plan to catch up.

Objective #1: Support student in connecting with the Office of Disability Services

The SES first asked Jasmine about the status of her disability accommodations. Jasmine had accommodations and went a step further and made an appointment with the Office of Disability Services. The person she was working with in the office reached out to her professors to ensure that Jasmine's accommodations were being used in all of her classes. Jasmine also maintained communication with her professors and was granted extensions on all of her assignments.

Objective #2: Support student in connecting with academic campus resources

The SES asked Jasmine if she knew of any existing campus resources that she could use that would help her catch up in her classes. After looking at her school's website, Jasmine visited the campus writing center and scheduled private tutoring sessions to get help with her assignments.

Objective #3: Support student in identifying barriers to academic achievement

The SES noticed that Jasmine was pointing out the same problems with her academic achievement—attendance and procrastination. This led to a conversation in which Jasmine was able to clearly identify her barriers: waking up early for classes, finding motivation to attend class, and issues surrounding planning and organization regarding homework and studying. Jasmine said that she had missed her morning class several times because she had trouble waking up when her alarm went off.

Objective #4: Support student in identifying facilitators to academic achievement

The SES asked if anything else had helped her wake up on time for her class, and Jasmine said that a friend used to give her a wake-up call, and that this was helpful, but she didn't currently have a natural support to ask to do this. The SES started giving Jasmine a wake-up call on the days of her early class until she was able to find a natural support she could ask to do this.

The SES made a chart that she shared with Jasmine to help guide her to identify facilitators to studying and academic achievement. The chart included prompts such as environmental factors, time of day, studying with natural supports, and creating a weekly schedule. By using this chart, Jasmine identified that she was better able to focus in the library or in the living room of the suite she shared with her roommates—she had been trying to study in her bedroom and realized that this wasn't helpful to her. She also found that she liked studying with her friends, and she started reaching out to them to plan study dates on campus. For the first time, Jasmine came up with a weekly study schedule that was based on knowing what times of day she had the most energy and ability to focus. Jasmine is still using this chart to help her finish her current semester successfully.

Dev

Dev told the SES that he was continuously anxious that he wasn't studying enough or learning fast enough. While he was excelling in his coursework, he wanted to learn more than what was required. He said that he thought he should already know the things he was learning, which left him feeling like he was unable to reach his educational and professional goals.

Objective #1: Support student to connect with peers in academic program

The SES encouraged Dev to connect with his classmates that he admired and ask them about their study habits. Everyone he talked with told him that what they were studying was exceptionally challenging and required a lot of effort. They also told him that they thought he was a great student, and that he might even be pushing himself to study too much. His classmates encouraged him to relax and put less pressure on himself, because he was doing so well in their program.

Objective #2: Support student to recognize and track his own academic successes

The SES suggested that Dev create a daily goal sheet of material he wanted to learn. This allowed him to know when he had been successful according to his own standards. Dev found that he was able to more practically measure and recognize his own success by having achievable goals. This goal sheet also served as a reminder of the things he was learning. He said that it helped to motivate him to accomplish a certain number of things each day.

Objective #3: Support student to establish relationships with faculty

The SES also encouraged Dev to reach out to faculty. Dev started scheduling ongoing meetings with his mentor to discuss new information as he learned, and these meetings served to remind him of how much he was growing professionally, and also helped to ease his stress. It also allowed a set time for him to request guidance on the directions he should take in his education and beyond the classroom.

Objective #4: Support student to develop ways to avoid burnout

Dev shared with the SES that every few months, he would get so exhausted that he could hardly pull himself out of bed. When the SES asked him about leisure activities he did with friends, he said that socializing and connecting with peers on campus made him feel anxious, because he wasn't putting that time toward working on his academic goals. The SES suggested that he could make a list of people he would like to spend time with, and how he would like to spend that time. After Dev started an internship, he developed natural supports who shared his passion for their work, which helped Dev to connect with them outside of the world of academia on a more casual basis.

The SES also suggested that Dev start scheduling breaks into his daily routine in order to avoid anxiety and burnout. Dev started scheduling time to take a break from his work to walk around campus with a friend or read for fun. While this was challenging, Dev found that he was more connected with his peers and more relaxed by taking these breaks.

Objective #5: Process the steps and celebrate success

The SES checked in with Dev and encouraged him to recognize and celebrate the action steps he'd taken to not only achieve high academic standing, but to develop balance in his life by connecting with peers, mentors, and to realize his own accomplishments.

Self-Advocacy

Mia

Mia was having an issue with one of the professors in her department. After giving him her accommodations letter, he informed her that her accommodations were "unreasonable," and that she wouldn't be able to use them in this class. This was stressful because Mia had been going through a depressive episode, and believed that her accommodations would allow her to

complete the course successfully. The SES took the following steps in order to help Mia develop self-advocacy skills.

Objective #1: Support student in learning about the Office of Disability Services and the ADA

After learning about what had occurred with her professor, the SES asked Mia if she followed up with the Office of Disability Service (ODS) to tell them what happened. Mia said that she didn't know that this was an option, and that she believed she wouldn't be able to use her accommodations if the instructor rejected them. The SES also asked Mia if she was familiar with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Mia said that she wasn't and said that she wanted to learn more about it. The SES sent Mia a resource from the Department of Education, which outlined an overview of laws pertaining to disability discrimination.

Objective #2: Support student to advocate for herself and recognize action

The SES asked Mia if she wanted to use the information she had learned to advocate for herself. At this point in the semester, Mia no longer felt that the accommodations were necessary, and thought the process of going back to ODS would be too time-consuming. She did choose to advocate for herself by reporting what happened to the head of her program. She told the SES that this was a positive experience, and that she now felt more confident in looking up resources independently which would help her further develop self-advocacy skills.

Emmy

Emmy was about to graduate with her bachelor's degree and would then immediately be starting an online master's program. Her new school informed her that they wouldn't send her any books in advance or provide her with audiobooks, which were included in her accommodations through the Office of Disability Services (ODS). The SES took the following steps to support Emmy.

Objective #1: Support student to advocate for herself with ODS

The SES asked Emmy if she could call ODS to tell them what happened. Emmy said that she thought she would get so overwhelmed during this call that she might have difficulty advocating for herself. The SES offered support by staying on the phone with Emmy while she made the call. The SES didn't speak on the phone call, but Emmy said that

having the support helped her ultimately secure her accommodations, and she received her books and audiobooks before the semester started.

Objective #2: Support student in recognizing action

The SES reflected the action steps that Emmy took in order to secure her accommodations. By doing this, Emmy was able to recognize that she was developing crucial self-advocacy skills that would serve her throughout her education.

Maryann

Maryann worked a retail job while she was enrolled in nursing school. When she was hired, she told her manager that school was her priority, and that she would need some flexibility with her work schedule. However, Maryann's work schedule started to interfere with her ability to complete her schoolwork, which added to her stress and exacerbated her symptoms.

Objective #1: Support student to advocate for herself by talking with her manager

The SES encouraged Maryann to advocate for herself by having a conversation with her manager. Maryann was nervous about talking to her manager to advocate for herself. To prepare for this conversation, they discussed specific ways that Maryann could communicate to her boss that she would need her hours to be shifted in order to be a successful student. After meeting with the SES, Maryann was able to talk with her boss and get her work schedule changed.

Objective #2: Support the student in recognizing action

After Maryann met with her manager, the SES followed up with her about how things went. Maryann said that while she still felt nervous about the conversation, she was proud of herself for standing her ground and telling her boss that she needed a schedule change. Her manager was receptive to Maryann's needs, and she was able to change her schedule without losing any hours of work, so that she could have longer chunks of time to devote to schoolwork. The SES recognized the steps that Maryann took to achieve this, and Maryann expressed that she felt more comfortable advocating for herself in future situations.

Interpersonal Relationships

Tilly

Tilly was having difficulty communicating with her four roommates when she started working with the SES. Tilly experienced a lot of anxiety when she would try to talk about their conflicts, one of which involved a lack of communication regarding schedules, resulting in constant tension in the suite. The SES took the following steps to help Tilly communicate with her roommates.

Objective #1: Support student in identifying communication strategies

The SES asked Tilly if she could sit down and talk with her roommates about their schedules so that everyone's morning routine would be smoother, and so that Tilly wouldn't constantly be dealing with anxiety related to the conflict. Tilly said that she didn't want to talk with them face-to-face, because she would feel too anxious and uncomfortable. The SES and Tilly explored different communication strategies that would work for her. Tilly said that she would be comfortable texting her roommates, but she wasn't sure what to say. She discussed with the SES how she would write the text messages.

Objective #2: Support student in communicating proactively with roommates

The SES asked Tilly how she wanted to frame the conversation, and Tilly said that she wanted for everyone to come to a solution so that the conflict would be resolved. Tilly wrote and sent a text message to her roommates, making it clear that she wanted to work things out between all of them, while the SES stayed on the phone with her. Her roommates responded, and each person shared their morning schedules, which resolved the conflict.

Brian

In one of their meetings, Brian told the SES that he was having difficulty with one of his professors, who he believed had graded him unfairly on an exam. He told the SES that he was going to write him an email about it, and asked if she would look it over before he sent it.

Objective: Support student to identify proactive communication techniques

After looking at Brian's email to his professor, the SES read it aloud to him and asked him what he thought of it. He said that the email "sounded pretty aggressive," and that this hadn't been his intention. The SES then suggested to Brian that he could sit down with his professor and have a face-to-face conversation about his grade, or wait until the next exam to see if the same thing happened again. Brian decided to wait, and received a good grade on the next exam. He said that he was grateful that the SES was there to help him avoid a potential conflict with his professor.

Carrie

Carrie was having difficulty with her roommate, which was exacerbating her symptoms and causing her to feel like she was in a constant state of anxiety. The SES took the following steps to support Carrie in developing interpersonal skills and problem-solving to take action and change her situation.

Objective #1: Support student to identify useful communication strategies

Carrie told the SES that she and her roommate were having problems communicating, and that it seemed there was always a new conflict that would cause her roommate to stop speaking with her. When Carrie tried to talk with her, she said that she didn't get a response. She and her roommate then started communicating over social media, and Carrie said that these messages were passive-aggressive and stressful.

The SES asked Carrie what her desired outcome was regarding this situation. Carrie said that what she wanted the most with her roommate was open, direct communication and an equal living situation. The SES asked Carrie if she thought her communication strategies were serving her desired outcome, and Carrie said that they weren't. Although she was nervous, Carrie said that she would try a more direct approach by asking her resident advisor (RA) to sit down with them and discuss their conflicts.

After connecting with her RA, Carrie found that the situation with her roommate didn't improve. Unfortunately, it worsened. Carrie said that she started to feel trapped, and the thought of being in this living situation for the rest of the academic year was overwhelming.

Objective #2: Support student in identifying possible solutions

The SES understood that Carrie was in a situation that she believed wouldn't improve, and encouraged her to consider what action she could take to change the situation. At

first, Carrie thought that that she would need to remain in her current dorm for the entire academic year. The SES asked Carrie to look into her university's policy on changing dorms and roommates.

In their next meeting, Carrie told the SES that she had connected with the university's Head of Housing. After explaining her situation, the Head of Housing told Carrie that because the situation had become so negative, she could take steps to apply for a room change by the end of the semester. Carrie was very relieved to hear this, and started feeling hopeful.

Objective #3: Support student in identifying positive living situations

Shortly after learning of this solution, Carrie became very anxious, and feared that the same interpersonal issues would repeat in a new living situation. The SES asked Carrie what different factors she could address to facilitate a more positive experience. Carrie said that she would like to have her own room (she shared a dorm room with her previous roommate), and that she would like to have open and positive communication.

Objective #4: Process the steps and celebrate success

A few weeks later, Carrie moved into a four-bedroom suite where she had her own room. She told the SES that things were going very well, and that she got along with all of her new roommates. She also started becoming more engaged on campus, and felt more focused on her classes. The SES encouraged Carrie to recognize the many action steps she took to improve her interpersonal skills and change her situation.

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