



ILLINOIS CAMPUS CARES

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

ICC TAC Handbook

Trauma-Informed Higher Education



icctac.org



Institute for Trauma,
Adversity, & Resilience
in Higher Education

Table Of Contents

01	Introduction	Page
	Background & Local Context	04
	Development of this Handbook	05
02	Why Trauma Awareness Matters in Higher Education	
	Definition of Trauma-Informed Practices in Higher Education	10
	Reframing Challenges	11
	Supporting Educator Professionals	13
	Proactive Opportunities for Change	13
03	Oksana Case Study	
	Phase 1: Realize & Recognize	18
	Phase 2: Respond & Refer	23
	Phase 3: Reflect on Avoiding Re-traumatization	27
04	Renee Case Study	
	Phase 1: Realize & Recognize	30
	Phase 2: Respond & Refer	33
	Phase 3: Reflect on Avoiding Re-traumatization	37
05	Gabriella Case Study	
	Phase 1: Realize & Recognize	38
	Phase 2: Respond & Refer	41
	Phase 3: Reflect on Avoiding Re-traumatization	48
06	Ryley Case Study	
	Phase 1: Realize & Recognize	50
	Phase 2: Respond & Refer	54
	Phase 3: Reflect on Avoiding Re-traumatization	57
07	Conclusion	
	References	60
	Resources	67
	Acknowledgements	71

Introduction

*“The classroom remains the most radical
space of possibility in the academy.”*
– bell hooks in *Teaching to Transgress*

Colleges and universities have never been immune to defining national and international personal and community traumas—natural disasters, political violence, wars, forced displacement, interpersonal violence and distress, systemic violence, identity-based, cultural, intergenerational, and historical trauma. Behavioral health organizations such as Dr. Sandra Bloom’s Sanctuary Institute led the way in defining and operationalizing trauma-informed as not just individual practice, but as a collaborative and coordinated whole-systems framework. And while explicit awareness and recognition of how trauma in all its presentations—individual and collective, interpersonal, systemic—adversely impacts learning, and thus how recognizing this can productively orient pedagogies and practices, is not new in education—and most especially not new in educational sites that center oppressed communities— it is a relatively new construct that since COVID has found traction more broadly in higher education.

It’s difficult to overestimate COVID’s impact. In addition to the pandemic’s death and disability, its mandatory and indeterminate isolation from the social communities that define us, the forced isolation worsened mental health and en masse shifted collective primary experience to the disembodied virtual realm. International trauma researcher, clinician, and scholar Bessel van der Kolk’s 2014 *The Body Keeps the Score* quickly regained intense relevance, and it remains now in early 2026 over 370 weeks later on the New York Times best seller list; precisely because it centers experiences of trauma—with so many readers expressing gratitude for how they feel seen for the first time—and helps people make sense of trauma, isolation, and suffering. The entire educational experience of course shifted online forcing a seismic reorganization of pedagogies and practices that made the question of how to create effective teaching and learning environments urgent in the face of overwhelming distress. The higher education community has seen an intensified focus on and receptiveness to trauma-informed strategies and interventions since 2020, with a significant increase in published and unpublished research, trauma-informed training and educational offerings, and a brain-based approach to understanding trauma that describes many practical interventions supporting holistic teaching and learning.

Background & Local Context



This Illinois Campus Cares Technical Assistance Center (ICC TAC) trauma-informed higher education handbook emerged from the Illinois higher education community's commitment to trauma-informed teaching and learning. The ICC TAC is part of the Mental Health Early Action on Campus (MHEAC) Act, which collaborates with the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) to address gaps in mental health services on public college and university campuses. The ICC TAC is responsible for working with public higher education institutions across the state to provide guidance and assistance to ensure that MHEAC Act deliverables and mandates are achieved and sustained. It plays a crucial role in promoting mental health awareness, policy development, and collaboration across Illinois college campuses. ICC TAC is funded by the State of Illinois and administered by the Illinois Board of Higher Education. While the ICC TAC was initially established as a partnership between the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine and the University of Illinois Chicago, it is now primarily led and administered by the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine.

ICC TAC exploratory survey research identified two primary obstacles to the adoption of trauma-informed practice: limited availability of training and resources for faculty and staff, and insufficient staff time. Faculty resistance stemming from a perceived need for clinical expertise in their role as educators was also identified as a significant factor. In response, this handbook serves as a practical resource for exploring trauma-informed higher education (TIHE) pedagogies and practices, and contributes to the trauma-informed literacy, initiatives, and resources already active in Illinois public higher education.

Development of this Handbook

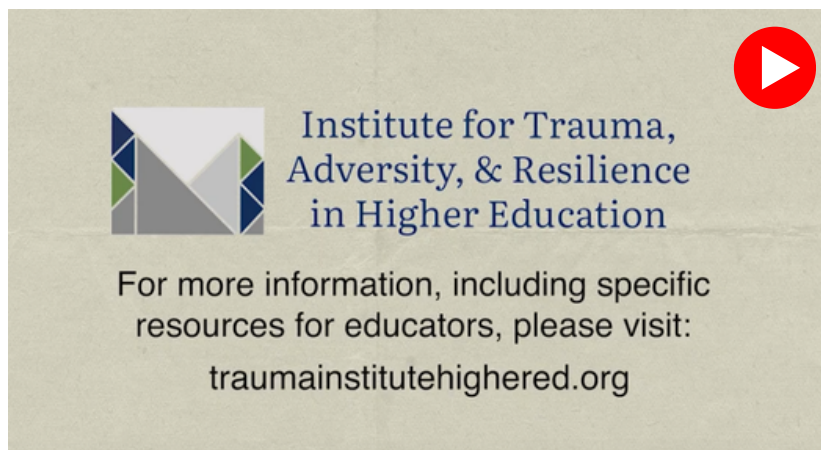
A dedicated, collaborative team of Illinois college and university educators met regularly for five months to share insights and resources that helped shape the material presented in these case studies. The team represented all Illinois regions and included counseling, teaching, advising, campus safety, case management, and student services. They translated realistic examples into accessible formats, addressing student presentation, contextual factors, supportive interventions, and recommendations. We additionally compiled and refined these with feedback and guidance from reviewers in trauma-informed higher education.

As a statewide resource, this handbook reflects the diversity of Illinois communities and intentionally incorporates regional, institutional, demographic, and resource variations. While grounded in Illinois-specific contexts, it also addresses factors applicable to other regions.

Why Trauma-Awareness Matters in Higher Education

Research increasingly confirms what many in higher education already recognize: trauma, adversity, and violence, including systemic violence from poverty and racism, exist in communities and negatively impact students' mental health, well-being, and academic trajectories, and therefore the teaching and learning objectives of education professionals.

Such threats can limit access to the executive functions essential to college success, including abstract thinking, problem-solving, impulse control, and task prioritization. For many college students, particularly those with experiences of marginalization, systemic violence, or trauma histories, threat responses are heightened, and the classroom itself can feel unsafe. Additionally, students increasingly enter college under increased stress from financial, personal, and community pressures. [This short video](#) provides an overview of how trauma and violence impact college learning communities, and why trauma-informed higher education pedagogies, policies, and practices contribute to collective success and well-being.





Contrary to the characterization of colleges and universities as ivory towers suspended from the concerns of ordinary existence, awareness of what used to be understood as non-academic factors operating in the educational space continues the shift towards a more holistic understanding of academic resilience, persistence, and success, additionally grounded in experiences external to conventional boundaries between what affects the classroom. For example, [The Hope Center's](#) research on basic needs insecurities such as food, housing, transportation, and access to technology advocates for reframing factors contributing to academic success: how profoundly, for example, the word "homework" is predicated upon a safe and stable home space.



Research

College Students' Experiences of Childhood Developmental Traumatic Stress: Resilience, First-Year Academic Performance, and Substance Use

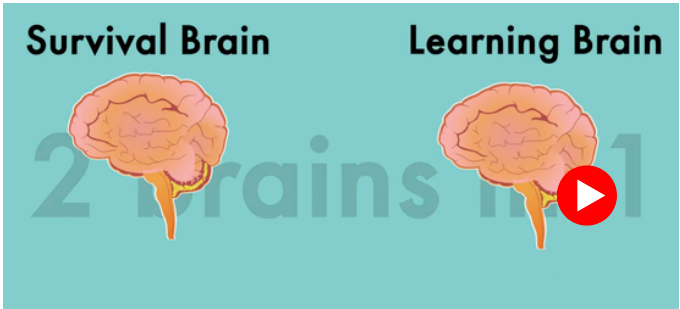
[Allison K. Arnekrans](#), [Stephanie A. Calmes](#), [John M. Laux](#) ✉, [Christopher P. Roseman](#), [Nick J. Piazza](#),
[Jennifer L. Reynolds](#), [Debra Harmening](#), [Holly L. Scott](#)

Often intersecting with the systemic violence and adversity of poverty, higher education institutions report greater awareness of trauma's prevalence and its impact on health, well-being, and academic functioning (Henshaw, 2022; Holmes et. al., 2025). Growing research explores connections between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), trauma, PTSD, mental health, and risky behaviors, including substance abuse, which collectively affect academic performance, persistence, and completion (Watt et. al. 2023; Dadi et. al. 2023; Counts & John-Henderson, 2022; Hinojosa et. al. 2018). Additionally, recent research from the Institute for Trauma, Adversity, and Resilience in Higher Education indicates that students with higher levels of adversity in childhood and identity-based violence are more likely to experience basic needs insecurity. This data offers additional evidence for what many in higher ed witness anecdotally: students enter and experience post-secondary settings as individuals navigating intersecting contexts and factors that directly affect academic success.

Education Northwest was one of the first in 2017 to identify student identities more likely to be managing experiences of trauma: veterans, LGBTQ+, non-white students, first generation. And as 21st century college demographics reveal, significant numbers of college students—increasingly referred to as the post-traditional or new traditional student—embody experiences that can construct additional stressors:

economic hardship (food, housing, and transportation insecurity)	caregiving of children, parents, or loved ones	part-time or full-time employment
challenges to mental and/or physical health	experiences from foster care, hospitalization, or state protective services/custody (what the University of Northern Oklahoma has named “hidden populations”)	military veteran experiences, especially readjusting to civilian culture
marginalization based on race, ethnicity, documentation status, gender identity, disability, neurodivergence, or other factors	campus policies, such as dining and housing access, or federal aid policies that unintentionally exacerbate hardship	having one or more identities affected by the history of gatekeeping and exclusionary institutional practices in higher education

Experiences of trauma, adversity, and violence fundamentally matter in higher education because they can affect learning, engagement, and relationships. Case studies in this handbook explore this in more detail, but this short video offers an overview of how threat affects functioning in the college classroom:



As one community college professor summarized: trauma is ultimately a retention issue. Informed by the prevalence of trauma, adversity, and violence in our campus communities, we are called/compelled as institutions to understand that:

...when higher education institutions fail to adequately acknowledge and address students' trauma, and particularly intergenerational trauma, by default, we create an "ideal" student. By not acknowledging the diversity of student experiences, we inadvertently partake in the homogenizing influence that Wynter critiques: that there is an "ideal" student who comes into our institutions being trauma-free. This reinforcing of the dominant, privileged narratives is a form of betrayal. (Imad, Bitanirwe, and Barranco, 2025)

In addition to effects on students, educator professionals, and most especially the front-line faculty and staff, themselves embody and manage stressors facing higher education (Flannery, 2024):

- juggling multiple roles because of reduced staffing
- high caseloads in student affairs
- heavy teaching loads, especially for part-time faculty
- outdated compensation scales
- lingering effects of COVID-era remote learning
- economic models of higher education replacing full-time with adjunct or part-time labor, whose compensation levels are inadequate to the cost of living
- secondary trauma, often from witnessing and helping students in distress
- legislation and policy actions that seize core academic rights and functions, including the dismantling of DEI-related offices and initiatives.



These stressors significantly affect mental health and well-being, with a 2023 Journal of College Health survey showing that faculty and staff rates of severe depression, anxiety and stress nearly match student data (Flannery, 2024). According to "The Mental Health Crisis Among Faculty and College Staff," an interview with the University of Massachusetts Employee Counseling and Consultation Office:

We are hearing more faculty who describe feeling overloaded by student needs. A lot is expected of faculty—and if you go to a meeting about student need, many of the ideas are like 'let's have professors do this or that...' says Griffin, who notes that the burden of supporting students in need also falls disproportionately to women. "And some faculty are great at it, and it's a satisfying part of their job to help students in that way, but for others, it feels like a great burden. (Flannery, 2024)

Illinois educators in the Educator Voice Academies likewise characterize student stress as parallel to faculty and staff stress and burnout, describing it as "two sides of the same coin" ([Sayed, 2023](#)). In addition to the toll on mental health, the same stressors also affect workplace well-being and effectiveness, leading to significant percentages of [burnout](#). According to a 2022 Compass report from NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, 84% of student affairs professionals report that "the stress and crisis management responsibilities of their jobs lead to burnout," undermining the health and functioning of the institution as a whole (De Sawal, D. et. al., 2022; [Whitford, 2022](#)). And burnout presents as attrition and shortened terms in office regarding executive leadership as well, with the president emeritus of Macalester College characterizing the current climate as "traumatizing for campus leaders who struggled not to get snowed under by all the challenges they face" (Moody, J., 2026).

Specific to this national moment, it's important to acknowledge that the harmful effects of federal policies and actions on institution-wide supports such as offices, departments, and curriculum identified as centering diversity, equity, and inclusion are also manifesting explicitly in trauma-informed domains. In February of 2026, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2026) removed one of its framework's six core principles— Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues— from those established and endorsed since 2014 as professional best practices foundational to any trauma-aware and informed intervention and support.

6 GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

The CDC's [Center for Preparedness and Response \(CPR\)](#), in collaboration with SAMHSA's [National Center for Trauma-Informed Care \(NCTIC\)](#), developed and led a new training for CPR employees about the role of trauma-informed care during public health emergencies. The training aimed to increase responder awareness of the impact that trauma can have in the communities where they work.

Participants learned SAMHSA'S six principles that guide a trauma-informed approach, including:



Adopting a trauma-informed approach is not accomplished through any single particular technique or checklist. It requires constant attention, caring awareness, sensitivity, and possibly a cultural change at an organizational level. On-going internal organizational assessment and quality improvement, as well as engagement with community stakeholders, will help to imbed this approach which can be augmented with organizational development and practice improvement. The training provided by [CPR](#) and [NCTIC](#) was the first step for CDC to view emergency preparedness and response through a trauma-informed lens.

[SAMHSA.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov)

Consistent with the current federal Administration's rejection of anything it sees as DEI, the updated SAMHSA Strategic Priorities published in September of 2025 explains its rationale: "SAMHSA will no longer be sidetracked by misguided policies" or "any unlawful focus on specific populations" in its federal commitment to addressing mental illness, trauma, addiction, loss of life, crisis, recovery, and national public health, materializing a policy erasure of the actual cultural, historical, and identity-based contexts in which trauma occurs (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2025) Erasing "specific population" experiences is not only anti-historical and counter-factual, but it also obscures opportunities for profound change in educational justice this nation has long seen and identified as one of its best sites for collective social and economic progress.

While naming the trauma, adversity, and violence in our communities constitutes a critical aspect of the work of trauma-informed, the urgency likewise stems from the science of resilience as what resilience scholar Ann Masten explains as "ordinary magic" (Masten, 2014). Educational communities thrive and flourish when they see themselves as sites of connection that seat transformative teaching and learning. Research on resilience-based best educational practices — many of which readers will recognize in this handbook's case studies— invites an empowered attunement to our interdependent pedagogies and practices, thereby generating the opposite of burnout and academic cynicism.

Definition of Trauma-Informed Higher Education

Trauma-informed education is an educational alliance, not a therapeutic or clinical intervention.

It requires collective awareness of how trauma, adversity, and violence affect academic resilience. Unlike clinical practice, the focus is not on diagnosing individuals but on recognizing how personal and systemic violence affects all campus members and shapes institutional history and practices. Trauma-informed education leverages research findings on resilience behaviors and interventions to build progressive, positive outcomes. Knowing the prevalence of trauma, adversity, and violence in our communities, we add these practices to other values-based models such as equity-centered and universal design. When educators understand what students are managing and the resources they draw on, their responses through pedagogy, policies, and interventions more effectively support student success.

Academic resilience refers to problem-solving in response to stressors and setbacks in order to achieve educational, professional, and personal goals.

Productively referred to as a lens, being trauma-informed means that individual educator professionals across the institution consider, evaluate, revise or invent their own current practices additionally informed by an awareness of the prevalence of trauma and trauma-informed principles. While sharing core commitments such as avoiding re-traumatization or harm, trauma-informed in practice looks different depending on the practitioner's best judgment. Trauma-informed does not ask educator professionals to abandon all the successful and effective work they've been doing for some single right pedagogy or professional approach that can be uniformly applied to all situations.

While often misunderstood to imply absence of any kind of stress or discomfort, including the positive levels of stress correlated to learning, safety in the context of trauma-informed classroom and communities describes absence of threat, and specifically of activation of the threat-response. Therefore, tending first to awareness of what constitutes a threat in our community orients us to how we can work to mitigate threats. This approach is essential to effective post-secondary education, especially given the pivotal role public colleges and universities play in fostering personal, socioeconomic, and community well-being.

For an excellent discussion of trauma as a neurobiological fact as distinct from cultural conversations around trauma, and for trauma specific to the context of higher education see Imad, M., Bitanhirwe, B., and Barranco, K. (2025).



Reframing Challenges

Trauma-informed Higher Education (TIHE) calls for a shift from viewing trauma as an individual deficit to recognizing it as a collective, institutional experience and responsibility. Addressing the complex intersectionality affecting academic resilience requires a holistic lens and a paradigm shift: colleges view higher education not merely as content delivery but as a site of transformation and growth that appreciates multiple factors that strengthen or present challenges to learning outcomes. Or put more succinctly, rather than solely expecting students to be college-ready, colleges commit to being student-ready, explicitly orienting to centering learning by meeting students precisely where they are. “Reimagining Institutional Change” (Macdonald, L. and G. Davis, 2023) similarly argues that the higher education landscape has shifted so profoundly that student success—including conventional metrics of graduation rates—must be a collective responsibility that considers “the multiplicity of internal and external factors” (4) and one that at every level and across divisions intentionally merges “academic and socioemotional aspects of the student experience” (3). This urgently-needed reframing of what actually constitutes academic resilience requires that we analyze and identify the “true roots” (6) of the factors that threaten and then also those that support student success, and that we do so mindful of how the pedagogies, policies, and practices traditional to higher ed—historically linked to social and economic privilege—likely do not serve the spectrum of students we serve today.



Readers will see more specific examples in this handbook’s case study scenarios, but one example of this collective responsibility and “true roots” in action might in practice be faculty awareness of the significant number of students with transportation insecurity that affects timely attendance for an in-person class, and signaling this awareness by including resources supporting transportation needs as part of the syllabus policy on attendance. Awareness informing practice recognizes that the problem does not singularly affect one struggling individual, but reorients to recognizing and making preemptive, responsive room for supports that might help this student and others be more successful. Because often educator professionals do not see the true roots, refining pedagogies and practices that are informed by a general literacy around stressors—external and internal factors—leads to building in responsive practices and campus resources for all students that increase the likelihood of positive outcomes.

Sustainable trauma-informed communities depend upon clear boundaries, referral processes, and collaboration. Educator, scholar, and writer Karen Costa’s formulation of “An Educator’s Scope of Practice: How Do I Know What’s Mine?” (2022) represents a valuable tool that refers to the skills, training, and level of experience defined within your professional role. Clarifying your scope of practice ensures effective collaboration between roles, renders clearer accountability measures, and can mitigate burnout from scope creep. All too often, when a professor or staff member learns what students are having to manage– such as a biology faculty learning their student with missing homework has recently been evicted–the scope of addressing that challenge results in an overwhelming feeling of powerlessness. Homework and homelessness merge into one. A feeling of powerlessness to single-handedly solve the scope of the homelessness problem affecting the nation and higher education obscures the very real and accessible positive responses–such as referring to housing supports on campus, flexibility in attendance and late work policies–that faculty can and do have. Given the complexity of challenges in the current context of higher education, understanding individual scope of practice is critical, urgent, and ultimately empowering, as it fosters a collective problem-solving approach. Responsive to actual conditions and resources, including constraints, the scope of practice also respects limits and boundaries and can reveal areas that need more professional development and better resources to support staffing needs that in turn nurture student success.

Costa distinguishes between what is in and out of the scope of practice as *Mine and Not Mine*. We only illustrate Costa’s formulation with two examples (see below) but encourage this invaluable exercise as a dynamic practice.

Within Educator Professional SOP	Outside Educator Professional SOP
active listening	diagnosing student
referral to campus supports	finding the student improved housing and health care

Resilience essentially describes the ability to recover functioning after injury, and academic resilience refers to problem-solving in response to stressors and setbacks in order to achieve educational, professional, and personal goals. Individual success always occurs within the infrastructure of multiple related supports. Trauma-informed higher education frames individual experience, including academic, as plural, with persistence and graduation as collective responsibilities and accomplishments. This handbook’s case studies explore just some of the pedagogies and practices that testify to the educational alliance as responsive, dynamic, connected, and capable of profound transformational resilience.

Supporting Educator Professionals Regarding Vicarious Traumatization



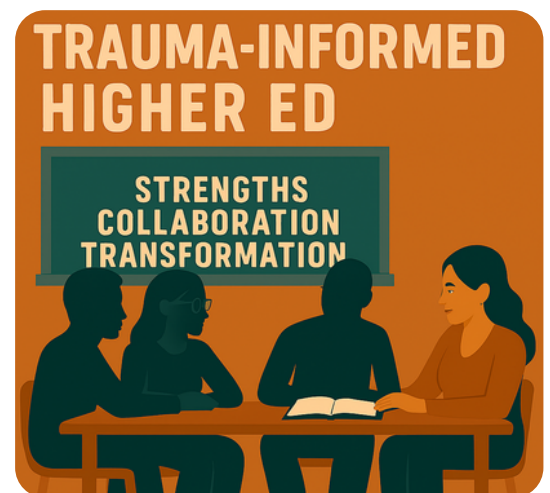
Education is fundamentally relational. We are relational. Faculty, staff, and students exist within an interconnected system in which each person affects and is affected by others. Because trauma is pervasive and part of life, many educators enter the classrooms and institutions carrying their own histories of distress and loss while also navigating the pressures of uncertain social, political, and academic landscape. They do this while teaching, mentoring, and collaborating with students and colleagues who likewise bring their own trauma histories and present-day burdens into shared spaces.

In this context, exposure to others' pain is not incidental but built into the relational nature of educational work. For this reason, meaningful institutional support for educators experiencing vicarious and secondary trauma is essential and ethical: "helping the helpers" is very relevant in education where the educator and student exist within an interconnected ecology (Hammoudi et al., 2023; Van Dyke et al., 2024; Artze-Vega, 2025). As such, to care for educators is to strengthen the conditions that make student learning, belonging, and wellbeing possible. For resources and suggestions, please see the Resources section on Supporting Educator Professionals Regarding Vicarious Traumatization. **(Mays Imad, PhD)**

For resources and suggestions, please see the [Resources section on Supporting Educator Professionals Regarding Vicarious Traumatization.](#)

Proactive Opportunities for Change

In the critical collection *Trauma-Informed Pedagogies: A Guide for Responding to Crisis and Inequality in Higher Education*, authors and co-editors Janice Carello and Phyllis Thompson frame the transformative opportunities available to post-secondary communities as "developing a new default" (5) in which campus culture not only recognizes trauma, adversity, and violence in our midst but actively creates alternatives. Each according to their own role engages in pedagogies, policies, and practices that "promote resilience and prevent retraumatization" (5) grounded in the primary neurobiological truth that humans have evolved interpersonally, relationally; as much as humans are uniquely equipped to hurt, we are by that same evolutionary dynamic equipped to heal, empower, and strengthen one another (4-6).



Handbook Goals

This handbook serves the broader community by building on problem-solving and resilience-building strategies that communities already practice, with additional higher education awareness, pedagogies, and practices. More specifically, it will:

- Increase literacy around trauma-informed pedagogies, affirming what faculty and staff already do, and sharing additional strategies to consider
- Provide an intuitive and flexible step-by-step process to address overwhelm and burnout
- Integrate with existing resources, such as the [Red Folder](#), to support faculty and staff

How This Handbook is Organized

Using case studies as its educational framework, this handbook:

- identifies how a student may present trauma and adversity with a focus on classroom settings,
- highlights some common obstacles to student success, teaching, and learning,
- considers challenges through a trauma-informed lens,
- suggests trauma-informed responses grounded in resilience science and the power of community connection, and
- provides practical resources for campus professionals in diverse roles.

The case studies portray realistic challenges that students often face, which can jeopardize their success. The content in these case studies represents complex, intersecting academic and non-academic issues, exploring how problem-solving might commence in the context of classroom or student affairs.

- **Oksana:** focuses on a student forcibly displaced because of war who is currently struggling academically, financially, and with international student concerns.
- **Renee:** focuses on a student who is balancing the academic and attendance/participation demands of the nursing program with her caregiver obligations while also struggling to cover the costs for reliable transportation.
- **Gabriella:** focuses on a student who appears to be experiencing emotional distress, avoidance coping, and group work issues.
- **Ryley:** focuses on a student whose legal paperwork does not reflect her correct name or pronouns, experiencing distress because of misgendering, and who is also struggling with housing insecurity and mental health.

We've chosen to investigate how faculty and staff might respond to those challenges by breaking them down into three phases:



Phase 1: Realize & Recognize

Realize the prevalence of trauma in the higher ed community, and recognize how it affects behaviors, especially those related to teaching and learning



Phase 2: Respond & Refer

Operating from the whole community approach, this phase explores trauma-informed responses that encourage student success and strengths-based problem solving, including appropriate referral



Phase 3: Reflect

Reflecting on how pedagogies, policies, and practices can avoid retraumatization and contribute to the best possible outcomes

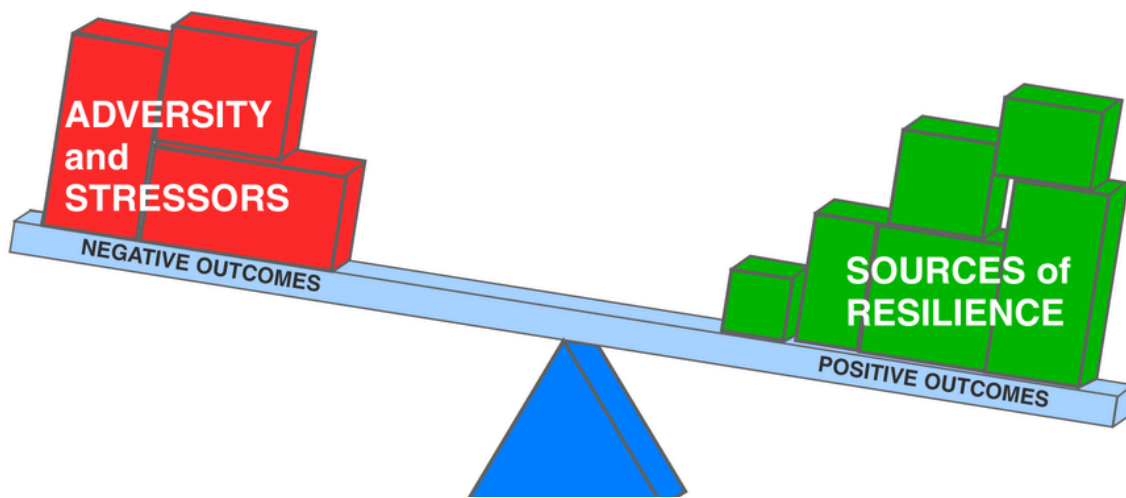
This three-phase structure modifies those generally understood within the context of SAMHSA's Key Assumptions of trauma-informed care as the 4 R's: Realize the prevalence of trauma, Recognize signs in self and others, Respond informed guided by the six principles of trauma-informed, and Resisting any practices or policies that Retraumatize. Illinois's Red Folder presents these as Recognize, Respond, and Refer.

This handbook centers on some common obstacles students face, and while case studies can be limited, we believe the ones described here will resonate with readers, affirm resilience, and welcome opportunities for further learning, collaboration, and growth.



Merging Public Health and Higher Education

Adapting the Resilience Scale from the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative (2023) and Harvard's Center on the Developing Child (2015) as problem-solving mechanisms, we can identify adversities the student is facing, strengths they currently possess, and community supports and resources that can help counteract these adversities and make positive academic outcomes more likely. This clear and practical tool seeks everyday opportunities to reduce distress and increase functioning. Dynamic and context-responsive, these tools reflect change-making factors offered at any given moment using whatever resources are available.



Putting the case studies into the Resilience Balance allows for:

- Representing how Sources of Resilience including trauma-informed pedagogies, a network of campus supports, and collaboration with the student create ongoing and positive opportunities to invest in positive outcomes available at any given moment.
- Emphasizing the importance of acknowledging the real factors of trauma and adversity students and educators face. Even if the college can't solve all the challenges, acknowledging them shows that the community and particularly students, are affected, and that their academic lives are interlaced with holistic factors.
- Affirming that the Sources of Resilience come from every role and office at the institution, and that all contribute positively to the collective goal of an effective teaching and learning community.
- Shifting from the individual to collective engages understanding resilience a whole community responsibility rather than expecting individual students, faculty, or staff who manage more to be superheroes (Munoz, Vigil, Jach, & Rodriguez-Gutierrez, 2018): as Muna Abdi, an Education and Racial Equity Consultant, explains, the focus of institutional change should be that "instead of praising people for being resilient, change the systems that are making them vulnerable" (qtd. in Nusslock & Farah, 2022, p. 1806).

Never Worry Alone

Given the prevalence of trauma, adversity, and violence affecting our communities, educator professionals, and especially faculty and staff in direct collaboration with students, regularly learn of distressing situations working against educational success. Further, and especially for part-time and adjunct faculty and staff who may be less connected to campus resources and relationships, such disclosures themselves may generate feelings of helplessness. For example, if a student discloses homelessness to a part-time faculty member teaching an evening class, that professor may not be aware of existing resources and may struggle to know what to do and how to help the student with such a critical, basic need. As one community college director of counseling services summarizes: *never worry alone*.

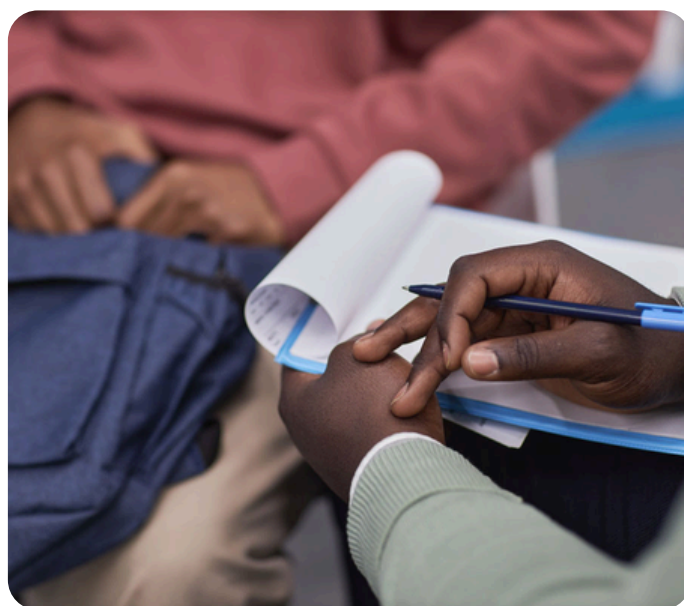


This trauma-informed assertion necessitates continuous attention to referral logistics unique to your campus: messaging across communication modalities (e.g., orientation, faculty and staff meetings, media), mobilizing against silos such that individuals in their respective roles are not alone, but instead function as part of a community of problem-solving, strengths-building network supports in the community.

The handbook is a freely available educational and training resource to support trauma-informed practices in higher education. The Resources section includes an extensive list of guidance, insight, and models to continue your knowledge and reference. Our passion for this work is fueled by a deepening understanding and support for trauma awareness as a strengths-building framework for higher education; we encourage you to share this handbook with colleagues and others who are beginning to explore this work.

DISCLAIMER

This handbook is designed as an educational tool. Consult your institutional and regulatory policies and procedures before implementing the thoughts shared in this handbook. Nothing in this document constitutes a direct or indirect endorsement by ICC TAC, the authors, contributors, scholars, or case study team, or contributors.



CASE STUDY:

OKSANA

This case study focuses on a student forcibly displaced by war who is currently struggling academically, financially, and with international student-related concerns.

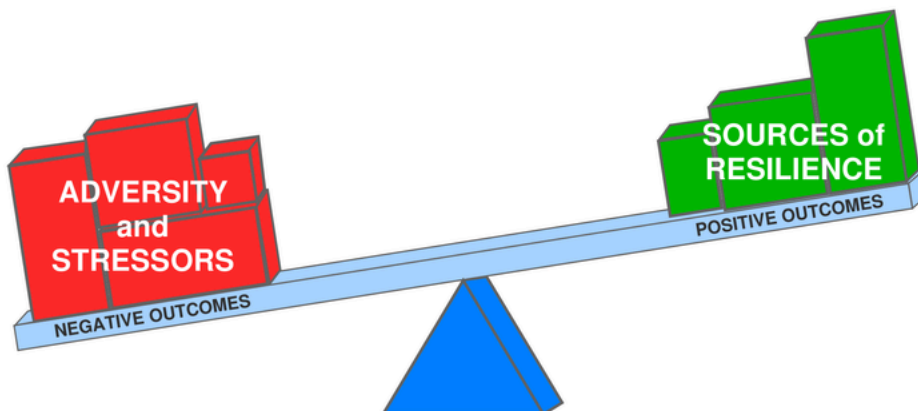
Presenting Issue/Challenge for Oksana

Oksana is enrolled part-time in her second semester at community college. In an essay for her English class, she describes how her family has been affected by the war against Ukraine that began with the 2022 Russian invasion. Her father sustained serious injuries in a drone attack and is now dependent on his parents, Oksana's grandparents in Kyiv, as he recovers and adjusts to life with significant mobility issues. Oksana's mother lives in Hamburg, Germany, with Oksana's two younger siblings as part of a nonprofit humanitarian relief program. In discussing her draft with her professor and a writing center tutor, she also disclosed that she is an au pair and her host family regularly expects her to work overtime without compensation, and to pay for her own meals and gas even when driving the host family's children to school. Oksana worries that if she reports her host family, she'll be fired, which could endanger her visa and income. In conversation with the writing center tutor, she also discloses that she is struggling in her online statistics course. She doesn't know what to do and feels she has little choice but to quit school.

Phase 1: Realize & Recognize

Typically, problems represent intersecting and overlapping issues that combine a landscape of concerns, including basic needs insecurities, environmental stressors from family/work/life, physical and/or mental health (often co-occurring), academic challenges, etc. It may seem limiting and artificial to isolate only one aspect but remember that this resilience-focused problem-solving approach can be used many different times, so the job of this case study is really to identify the presenting problem with the most immediate and urgent impact on academic resilience. Further, as the problems intersect and overlap, so too do interventions and supports.

Identifying Stressors & Student Sources of Resilience



Adversity & Stressors

- Oksana's family has been directly affected by the war in Ukraine, including her father being seriously injured in a drone attack, resulting in his adjustment to a major disability, family members being relocated to Germany, and forced migration.
- The trauma, stress, displacement, and ongoing war her family faces present new and additional challenges since she is separated from them and living in relative safety. Further, it's likely that much of the stress and anxiety Oksana faces in her current life increases a feeling of isolation and of being alone, and she may feel as though she is on an island by herself with no one to turn to.
- Oksana's living and working situations are intertwined, resulting in enduring unfair circumstances such as unpaid labor and fear of losing her visa if the job ends. Ongoing financial insecurity from low wages, housing tied to the au pair situation, and transportation also tied to the au pair situation adds additional stress to her need to succeed in school.
- Oksana is not a US citizen, which affects her access to resources and may pose language barriers that could affect her academic performance and her understanding of available resources. Additionally, with ICE enforcement and raids in the local area, she may be concerned about being stopped while transporting the host family's children or while commuting to campus.
- While counseling and support services may be offered to students, the counselors may not be well-versed in complex situations like Oksana's. Additionally, budget cuts and outsourcing to telehealth services may leave counselor availability insufficient.



Sources of Resilience Oksana already demonstrates

- Her willingness to share with the professor and writing center tutor indicates a level of trust and suggests that she believes others can help her solve problems.
- Help-seeking behavior as self-advocacy.
- Expressing concern about the online statistics class indicates that Oksana doesn't want to drop out but isn't sure how to proceed.
- Ability to express herself in her writing.
- Remarkable resilience in managing forced migration, traumas of war, new culture/job, and all the while pursuing a college education.



Neurobiological Insights Relevant to Teaching and Learning

Oksana's feeling that the solution to failing her statistics course is to drop out might be understood as an example of All-or-Nothing Thinking.

All-or-Nothing Thinking is a tendency to frame issues in binary terms. Also referred to as black-or-white, polarized, or dichotomous thinking, this conceptualization tends towards absolutes or extremes (Salla, M. et. al., 2025). When a person feels overwhelmed and perceives a threat, often due to adverse environmental factors and real experiences of trauma, she is more likely to consider herself powerless to take meaningful action. That feeling of powerlessness represents a hallmark of trauma: added to which, indeed, many factors in this complex situation are not in Oksana's control. Facing a challenging problem, such as failing her online statistics class, acts as a negative stressor on the body and brain, not in isolation but in the context of past and current stressors.

The survival brain craves clarity because ambiguity has often been correlated with actual threat. Oksana has experienced significant trauma, including war, forced migration, and displacement affecting her entire family, loss of familial and community networks, stressors of living, working, and studying in the United States, where English is not her first language, and basic needs insecurities due to low-wage employment.

Understanding that the neurobiology of the stress response operates within the context of past experiences and on a continuum of varying intensities is critical. Our brains function predictively, shaped by what has come before: this means that the stressful stimulus of the statistics course is more likely to activate more quickly and with greater intensity in a brain that is already "tuned up" by previous and current trauma, adversity, and potential dangers.

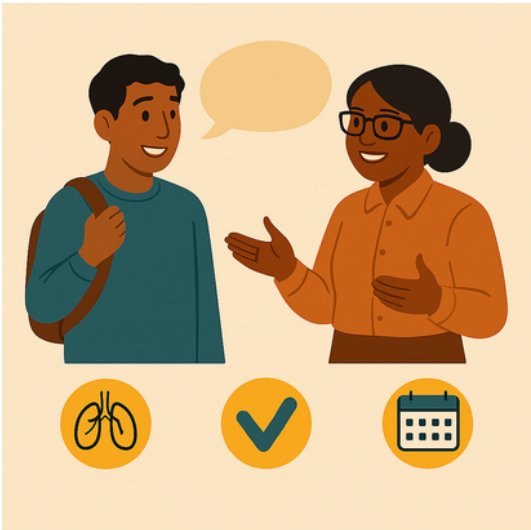
Especially if Oksana is unaware of existing supports to which the college might connect, understanding this All-or-Nothing response (currently failing one class versus dropping out of college altogether) as a coping mechanism helps us understand that Oksana thinking about dropping out altogether may actually provide a momentary sense of relief from the negative stressor of failing statistics (Salla, M. et. al., 2025, p. 982), since dropping out of college is a clear, definable action. In fact, taking action or mobilizing often mitigates or buffers against the trauma-induced powerlessness that undermines agency (Guy-Evans, O., 2025).

Regulation vs. Dysregulation. Regulation and Dysregulation refer to states of neurobiological readiness to engage. When a person is regulated, their stress—in neurobiological terms, anything that disrupts the normal range of biological functioning—stays within a manageable range, and they have access to the executive functioning skills so critical to learning. Neuroscientist, clinician, and researcher Bruce Perry’s *Neurosequential Model of Education* describes how regulation creates conditions essential for learning; in a regulated state, the prefrontal cortex will be “open for business” (Perry, B., 2020). Conversely, when a person is dysregulated, their energy and attention are directed toward managing the stressor. Mindful of the ubiquity of trauma as well as the fact that threat responses exist in a context and along a continuum of arousal, individuals with trauma histories, more likely to be alert to potential harm, are also more likely to have a lower threshold for getting dysregulated, anxious, and overwhelmed. At opposite ends of the continuum of nervous system responses and occurring outside the “window of tolerance”:

- Hyperarousal (fight-or-flight) involves high-energy anxiety, panic, and rage
- Hypoarousal (freeze/flop) involves low-energy shutdown, numbness, and exhaustion

Both are trauma-related survival mechanisms, and Perry offers further that:

The key to understanding the long-term impact of trauma on an adult learner is to remember that he or she is often, at baseline, in a state of low-level fear. This fear state reflects either hyperarousal, a dissociative adaptation pattern, or a combination of both. The major challenge of the educator working with highly stressed or traumatized adults is to furnish the structure, predictability, and sense of safety that can help them begin to feel safe enough to learn (Perry, B., 2006, “Fear and Learning,” p. 25).



All persons within the learning community, regardless of exposure to trauma and violence, benefit by understanding how to recognize and respond to dysregulating factors.



While the term self-regulation refers to an individual's ability to regulate strong emotions in pursuit of goals, unpacking regulation from a neurobiological perspective reveals that *self* formulated solely as *individual* misnomers because individuals do not develop in a vacuum. Brains and consequent behaviors continually evolve in response to human context, interpersonally, what Dan Siegel explores as interpersonal neurobiology (2012). Over the course of a life span and especially in critical growth periods such as childhood and adolescence, mechanisms of brain function profoundly shape in the plural context of “we”---of human relationship and connection—affecting states of being, including cognitive and emotional (Siegel, D.J., 2012, p. 19:1-8). This matters to educators because this attunement to the human environment of relationship and connection offers the opportunity to design pedagogies that strengthen access to regulatory skills for all learners. Elementally, human learning implies human relationship, so while assessment and grades, the currency of higher education, are typically awarded to individuals, the neurobiological truth is that learning functions collectively.

Phase 2: Respond & Refer

Presenting Problem for Writing Center Tutor, composition instructor, & Oksana: Oksana shared with both with her professor as well as her writing center tutor that she is failing her online statistics course and feels she has no choice but to drop out of college.

Awareness of supports and resources and how to navigate them creates powerful communities that collaborate across different educator scopes of practice. Resource and navigational literacy—knowing the resources and how to access them—should be a professional development priority across the campus community. Ideally, all faculty and staff should be supportive, know how to listen to students, check in with them, and connect with them.

Within Educator Professional SOP	Outside Educator Professional SOP
active listening	diagnosing student
referral to campus supports	finding the student improved housing and health care

The writing tutor can:

- **Reframe:** When exploring challenges and strengths through a trauma-informed lens, the first move is to reframe the question from “what’s wrong with you?” to “what happened to you or what is happening for you?” (Bloom & Sreedhar, 2008). In Oksana’s example, “what’s wrong with you” might be expressed in ways that focus more on what the writing center tutor or faculty cannot control, leading to reduced opportunities for problem-solving and a feeling of overwhelm and powerlessness: *My heart just goes out to Oksana. Her entire family has been negatively affected in many ways by this terrible ongoing war, and now she has all these issues related to her displacement. These are such big problems that it’s hard to know if there’s anything I or the college can actually do to help. Honestly, a statistics course feels to me like the least of her problems.* Framing the question away from “what’s wrong with you?” creates:
 - opportunities for empathic listening and speaking
 - awareness and recognition of adversity and stressors being managed
 - emphasis on a growth mindset in which individuals have agency
 - a stage for identifying which factors present immediate opportunities for change
- Access [The Red Folder](#) as a practical guideline & support for responding appropriately to students managing stress and distress.
- Offer to spend a few extra minutes showing Oksana where tutoring opportunities are located and how to sign up.
- Since Oksana has demonstrated her strong writing skills, the writing tutor can suggest ways to convey in an email to the teacher that she is struggling and would like help.
- The tutor might also share a resource on “all or nothing” thinking, as it often applies to college and university students, such as [Stanford University’s handout on “Challenging Unhelpful Thinking in College.”](#)

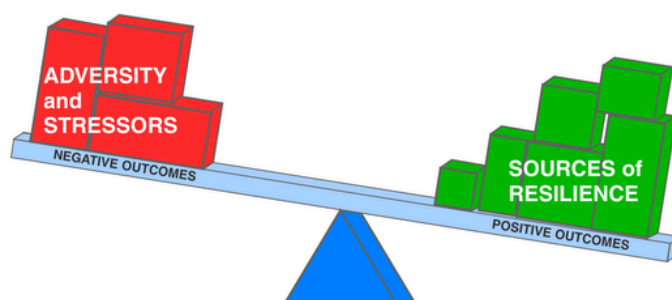
Growth versus Fixed Mindset: Especially when under-resourced and facing complex, multifaceted issues, it's critical to stay mindful of the dynamic changes that are possible. Deliberate attention to growth and change as everyday opportunities functions as a counterpoint to the powerlessness and helplessness many of us feel in the face of the complexity of the challenges to teaching and learning. The reality is that even if we can't change everything—in Oksana's case, the war in Ukraine, the damage and disruption to her family—we can affect and access meaningful supports that are more likely to produce positive outcomes. In addition to examples in Section 8, some practical opportunities include: verbal acknowledgement after class or brief email noticing a specific student behavior such as participating in class or seeking out extra tutoring, brief statement to class as whole (either in person or online) articulating that despite the many challenges we all face, we've learned a lot in these last X weeks, and can work together to finish successfully; articulating to students/advises/tutors that seeking out tutoring is precisely what successful students do.

The power in connection: Research demonstrates that the simple act of listening to and being aware of Oksana's experiences reduces her sense of isolation, lowers stress hormone levels, and is associated with increased oxytocin levels, which, in turn, promote positive engagement. and connects her lived experience to the college community. By decreasing the brain's threat response, such conversational interactions activate positive states of being, making it more likely that people can strategize, think, and plan for positive change. (Balboa, N. and R.D. Glaser, 2019).

Reflection: Reminding ourselves and those with whom we work of how much has changed—or could change—and calling attention to these changes in our own minds and interactions with others restores confidence in the ordinary ways we possess to make positive outcomes more likely. Reflection can be private, or it can take the form of a thank-you in the hallway or an email acknowledging action taken or change, no matter how small.

Community Supports as Sources of Resilience

Using some version of the tools below, reflect on how one or more actions, resources, or supportive interventions can result in decreased distress and/or an increase in functioning for Oksana, and for the educator professionals engaged in supporting her. The content included here reflects suggestions provided by the case study teams representing Illinois colleges and universities but will be most useful when described in local terms to your own campus roles, resources, and practices.



Supportive ways to address the issue/challenge

FACULTY TOOLS

- Within the class syllabus, include language about how students can communicate their need for additional time/support. Include details such as your guidelines for how a student should reach out, how much time you can give the student, how extended time might affect the student's grade, etc.
- Demonstrate for students where central resources are located and encourage them to utilize the resources. Offering extra credit to students who interact with these resources is a great way to encourage them to check them out.
- If during the course, there is an increase in immigration troubles, you can either email or address students in person regarding your flexibility and where to find resources.

STAFF AND ADMINISTRATION TOOLS

- Make sure resources are easily available for students to find on websites, student portals, bulletin boards, etc.
- Make Title IX resources easy for students to find (e.g., bulletin boards, websites). Title IX resources are available on campus to promote an environment free from discrimination. Title IX staff can be contacted for questions about accessing resources and fair treatment.
- Keep up to date with the news and needs of your student population. Make sure that you clearly explain the resources, where they can be found, the cost, etc.
- IT can collaborate with faculty and staff to make sure the resources match the students' needs. Technical resources that enable efficient documentation and data collection in each department, as well as seamless information sharing throughout the college, help provide students with the most comprehensive student experience. This also requires proper training for each department on how to use the systems. In Oksana's case, we would want to document the resources provided to her and use a warm hand-off when referrals are necessary. Due to the traumatic nature of her situation, discretion with documentation would be advised where personal or sensitive information is shared.
- Peer Support Leaders: Under Illinois's Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act, Peer Support Leaders have been hired and extensively trained to support students in a peer-to-peer format as an alternative to traditional services. Peer support leaders are visible and available on campus. They are present in classrooms, featured at campus tabling events, and hold drop-in hours for students who need support. Bilingual peer support leaders represent student population groups and provide aligned support to students who may be developing English language proficiency. This also recognizes that for most people, discussing difficult experiences may be easier in their most fluent language. Students have access to many community resources that the counseling staff can refer them to.

INSTITUTION AND LEADERSHIP TOOLS

- Send an email to all faculty and staff acknowledging the difficulties that students who are immigrants or may be perceived as immigrants are experiencing. The message should contextualize and validate the possible impact on student experience and performance. It should encourage faculty and staff to consider offering flexibility to students who have been impacted and may need additional time or support with course-related assignments or services that affect student success. The message should also include a list of resources, both on- and off- campus, that faculty can share with students individually or upload to their learning management system. Sending this message to both faculty and staff creates a shared campus tone of compassionate awareness, provides practical information on resources, and gives team members space to consider the type of flexibility that would be most appropriate for their classes or service settings. For example, some faculty are working with students to offer flexible classroom options or online work for those unable to come on campus. Offices have been more intentional in offering and promoting virtual appointments to provide this flexibility.
- Train/encourage staff to work with students as things come up so that they can continue to succeed. Including coordinating speakers and presentations. Academic advisors are often trained on the nuances of academic programs at their school and on careers requiring credentialing that may not be accessible to undocumented students. Program coordinators are well-versed in and stay current on legal requirements, including alternatives to accessing career training, such as using an ITN (Individual Taxpayer Identification Number) rather than a Social Security number to participate.
- Administration can schedule and execute “Biscuits with the Boss” meetings - Regularly schedule meetings (monthly or quarterly) for faculty and staff to meet in person or virtually to collectively ask the president and executive leadership questions in a supportive environment. These meetings can provide opportunities for open discussion on how to manage rapidly changing situations that impact student populations. By collectively asking questions about shared uncertainty, both models provide opportunities to engage frontline faculty and staff in the 4 C's. This enables the sharing of ideas for solving problems and fosters trust and connection among leadership, faculty, and campus services at all levels.
- Administration and leadership can schedule and facilitate town hall opportunities for students. Allowing students the opportunity to collectively voice and discuss their concerns, ask questions, and share feedback on potentially traumatic challenges the campus may be experiencing. Faculty with aligned interests and backgrounds may team up to deliver talks on relevant topics for students, faculty, and staff, with the opportunity to engage in Q&A at the end. For example, political science, history, economics, sociology, and counseling faculty might team up in various combinations to deliver structured talks on immigration or the conflict in Ukraine, and to provide opportunities for college community engagement.
- Leadership can utilize a third-party paid referral system called IRIS. –IRIS stands for “Integrated Referral and Intake System (IRIS),” a HIPAA-compliant system designed by a team to help organizations connect those they serve to the right resources in their communities. Through IRIS, a student can quickly be connected to appropriate external social services resources.

Phase 3: Reflect on Avoiding Retraumatization

Institutional Courage: Trauma-Informed Educational Practices in Leadership and Administration

Strengthening a trauma-informed, learning-centered community as a collective responsibility means that all members of the campus community, not just faculty and front-line staff, gain valuable insights from basic brain literacy and trauma awareness that can be applied to decision-making. In fact, trauma-informed educators from the K12 domain have long argued that executive leadership is necessary to develop a truly functional trauma-informed campus. In *Higher Education Today*, “Trauma-Informed Colleges Begin With Trauma-Informed Leaders” asserts that because of local, national, and indeed global stressors such as continued threats to racial justice, sweeping federal political and policy changes including science and research funding, changes to student aid, explicit legal pressures dismantling DEI-related offices and activities, enrollment declines due to birth rate, affordability, and immigration restrictions, and environmental impacts due to climate change, **trauma-aware and informed leadership is urgent, relevant, and necessary.**

And while siloes are a natural consequence of a complex workplace, and while individual faculty or staff or departments practicing trauma-informed pedagogies and practices can positively impact teaching and learning success, the most substantial and effective campuses are those with support from executive leadership. Especially in harrowing times, executive leadership, including trustees, can assess current functioning through a trauma-informed lens aligning principles such as safety, collaboration and mutuality, and cultural awareness to establish priorities and allocate resources to where needs are most critical. In fact, college leadership bears the unique and powerful responsibility for discerning and sustaining meaningful change that widely conducts throughout the many roles and communities on campus, unified by a commitment to the best possible teaching and learning.

An antidote to institutional betrayal, Jennifer Freyd at the University of Oregon defines such leadership commitment as *Institutional Courage*:

It is an institution’s commitment to seek the truth and engage in moral action, despite unpleasantness, risk, and short-term cost. It is a pledge to protect and care for those who depend on the institution. It is a compass oriented to the common good of individuals, the institution, and the world. It is a force that transforms institutions into more accountable, equitable, healthy places for everyone. (Center for Institutional Courage)

Parallel to the “root-cause analysis” (MacDonald and Davis, 2023, p. 6) referred to earlier, this courage begins with awareness—also called perceptive listening (Hopper, 2020)—of the multiple forms of trauma, adversity, and violence as systems-wide and embodied. In practical terms, identifying the most potent threats to learning necessitates devoting time on a regular basis to listening to the diverse members of the campus community because experience occurs in a cultural context, affecting students, faculty, and staff differently and in many cases—such as experiences of racism or sexism—unequally. Engaging data collection and assessment, even small scale, local to specific groups or services additionally sharpens understanding that works against historically embedded assumptions and practices, providing evidence for action, and creating conditions for assessing interventions. Such instruments that evaluate obstacles and successful supports through the lens of threat, threat response, bolster further development of predictable structures and mechanisms that center access to learning, including the human connections neuroscience testifies promote trust, resilience, rigor—educational alliances that collaboratively empower the best academic outcomes.



The History Of
Trauma-Informed
Higher Education



Trauma-Informed
Pedagogy



Neurobiology Of Trauma And
How That Matters In Higher Ed



Equity Centered
Trauma-Informed



Trauma-Informed Virtual
Learning



Trauma-Informed Campus Safety
And Policing



Trauma-Informed Student
Services



Trauma-Informed Facilities
Including Desk And Classroom
Design

CASE STUDY:

RENEE

This case study focuses on a student who is balancing the demands of the nursing program with her caregiver obligations while also struggling to cover the costs for reliable transportation.



Presenting Issue/Challenge for Renee

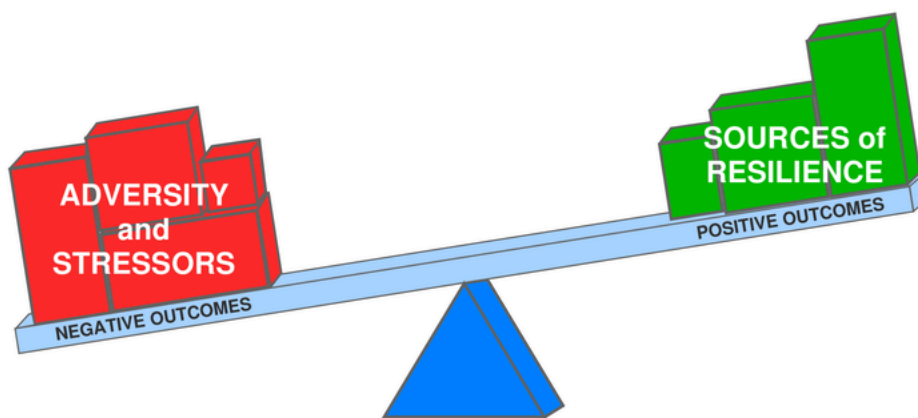
Renee is a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) transfer student in her thirties, currently enrolled full-time with three semesters remaining in her university program. Her GPA at the community college was 3.9, and she earned her Associate's degree as a part-time student while working full-time for 4 years. When Renee enrolled at her four-year institution, she reduced her work hours to part-time so she could attend classes full-time and maintain a 3.8 GPA in her first semester. Increasingly, however, she shows up late to class, leaves immediately, and no longer attends the extra study sessions with her cohort. Her close friend in the program, Cam, lets the professors know when Renee is running late or misses class, and Renee emails her professors to request extra time to submit assignments.

She barely passed a recent high-stakes pharmacology exam and asked to meet with the professor. In the meeting, she explained that her car frequently breaks down and that she does not have the money for adequate repairs. She further explained that while she does have family to help with drop-off and pick-up for her two young children, her partner struggles with depression, and that her mother is staying with them while she undergoes radiation treatment. Dismayed that the recent poor performance on her exam threatens her viability in the nursing program, she visibly struggles to keep from crying as she speaks with her professor, and the text alert on her phone sounds repeatedly.

Phase 1: Realize & Recognize

Typically, problems represent intersecting and overlapping issues that combine a landscape of concerns, including basic needs insecurities, environmental stressors from family/work/life, physical and/or mental health (often co-occurring), academic challenges, etc. It may seem limiting and artificial to isolate only one aspect but remember that this resilience-focused problem-solving approach can be used many different times, so the job of this case study is really to identify the presenting problem with the most immediate and urgent impact on academic resilience. Further, as the problems intersect and overlap, so too do interventions and supports.

Identifying Stressors & Student Sources of Resilience



Adversity & Stressors

- Increasing occurrences of late or missed class attendance. Consider if getting to class has become more challenging for the student. This could mean transportation issues or having more commitments that interfere with the time needed to come to class.
- Poor exam scores on a recent exam.
- An increasing number of late submissions of assignments where the student is not proactively communicating with the professor.
- Non-participation in cohort study groups. Transportation and/or caregiver responsibilities, plus mental strain, might mean Renee is unable to focus as much on the discussions, and thus reduce participation.
- Unreliable transportation because her car keeps breaking down. The inability to afford reliable transportation often signals financial strain. For Renee, if this is the case, it can also signal that she doesn't have the money to retake classes if she doesn't earn the required grade in the BSN program.
- Multiple family responsibilities, including care of young children, supporting a partner with depression, and a parent in cancer treatment.
- Frequent alerts on her phone distract her from focusing her attention on the learning environment.

Strengths and Positive Factors

- Renee is pursuing a college education with a goal of becoming a nurse.
- She earned a 3.9 GPA in her first two years and a 3.8 in her first semester at a four-year college.
- Renee has a close friend in the program.
- She communicates with faculty regarding deadlines.
- Initiating a meeting with her faculty after a poor academic performance indicates that she perceives the professor as a potential ally in problem-solving.
- Renee actively supports young children, partner, and parent.
- She successfully balanced academics, part-time employment, and caregiving while maintaining a high GPA during her first semester.
- Renee shows motivation and dedication to her goal. Though she is experiencing situational factors that are pulling her time and attention away from her studies, she is demonstrating her motivation by still attending class (even if running late). She is both intrinsically motivated and extrinsically motivated to achieve her goal of becoming a nurse.

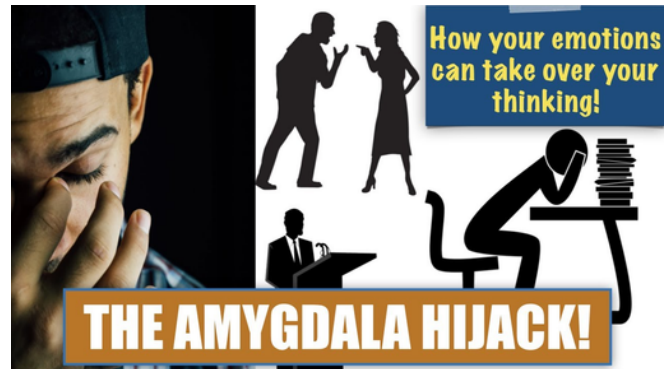


Neurobiological Insights Relevant to Teaching and Learning

Predictability as a source of regulation/co-regulation. While often invoked perjoratively, predictability actually functions as a key asset in regulating stress and disruption, and a regulated learner is more likely to be a productive learner (Brunzell, Stokes, and Waters, 2016). In simplest terms, survival brains constantly scan settings, faces, body language, sounds, and the like for potential threats to be prepared for harm. For those managing adversity and threat, and even more so with histories of trauma, the unknown that might be threatening often registers as if it is threatening, and trauma's hallmark is overwhelming force that renders one without agency. Evolutionarily speaking, guardedness makes all the sense in the world. And the activated threat response, what this handbook earlier referred to as Survival Brain, is much more primed to switch on at lower thresholds in what is referred to as an amygdala hijack: temporarily suspending access to the higher cortical functions so critical to higher education: executive functioning such as abstract thinking, goal and priority setting, delaying gratification, problem solving. Here are links to two videos explaining the amygdala hijack in the context of the college setting:



Procrastination is a pain: A trauma-informed look at this common issue in college (2025). Institute for Trauma, Adversity, and Resilience in Higher Education. Motion graphic design by Isabella Faulkner. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIbqZ17mxbc&t=5s>



Vargas, G. (2020). The Amygdala Hijack: How our emotions hijack our thinking brain! Legacy Mastery Academy.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PglInxZfUc>

Familiarity that is not charged with danger or harm lessens the need for the threat alert mechanisms in the brain and body to activate, and because the brain functions predictively, predictable routines scaffold trust, reliability, and make room for curiosity and openness. It's easy to forget that learning is by its nature vulnerable because learning involves failing and getting things wrong: classroom settings can thus be sites charged with potential for humiliation and shame, powerful negative stressors in the human social realm.

Predictability doesn't look the same for all faculty or staff, but some examples include a uniform structure for learning modules or units, consistent communication mechanisms, and the use of rubrics. Particularly for students like Renee with multiple responsibilities outside the classroom, clarity and predictability in expectations, course pacing, and structure form are practically valuable in terms of time management and planning, but they also structure action and responsibility as those linked to success (Anderson et. al., 2024). Scheduling software such as Calendly in the email signature line or clear ways to register for time with academic tutors are examples of predictability that generate trust and build connection. Awareness of co-regulation does not imply we are responsible for another's actions, but rather empowers us to seize the positive potential we have to co-create with our communities. Click [this link](#) for additional examples of predictability as a container or structure that supports academic rigor.



Phase 2: Respond & Refer

Presenting Problem: As the faculty learns more about what Renee is managing, they begin to understand the sudden decline in Renee’s academic performance and her increasingly late attendance. The nursing program is fast-paced, characterized by high-stakes exams and assignments, and it is difficult to catch up once a student falls behind. Reflecting on her GPA and previous success in the first semester, the faculty affirms that Renee is clearly capable and yet worries she is managing an overwhelming number of factors, and decides with Renee that the first priority is to get to class regularly, on time, and ideally to the study sessions with her cohort.

Within Educator Professional SOP	Outside Educator Professional SOP
active listening	diagnosing student
referral to campus supports	finding the student improved housing and health care

Reframing away from a False Binary: Academic Rigor and Compassionate Pedagogies and Practices.

Rigorous, fast-paced, high-stakes testing programs such as BSN, often described as sink-or-swim, highlight the ongoing tension in higher education between academic rigor and compassionate, flexible practices. Higher education frequently creates a false binary between these priorities through its pedagogies, practices, and policies. For nursing students, the stakes are especially high, as their future roles involve managing serious risks, including injury, distress, disability, and death. The demand for qualified nurses and health care professionals remains acute in many communities, and these careers offer stability and financial security.

Renee’s case study illustrates the tension between high-stress academic environments and the need for educational systems that acknowledge students’ complex personal responsibilities. Too often, models of academic resilience and resource allocation leave students, faculty, and staff struggling with limited time and financial resources. Educational environments that assume students are well-resourced and focused only on academics do not reflect the reality for many students today.

...according to the latest data from the 2020 National Post-Secondary Aid Study (NPSAS), nearly one in five undergraduate students (18 percent) are raising children while enrolled. This represents 3.14 million individuals who are leveraging postsecondary education to change their own futures and shape the futures of their families... They are more likely to be mothers—nearly three-quarters of parenting students (74 percent) are women, compared to just over half of non-parenting students (54 percent). The majority of undergraduate student parents are students of color (55 percent), which is slightly higher than the rate among non-parenting students (51 percent). With an average age of 35, student parents are also more likely to be older than non-parenting students, whose average age is 23. (Anderson et. al., 2024)

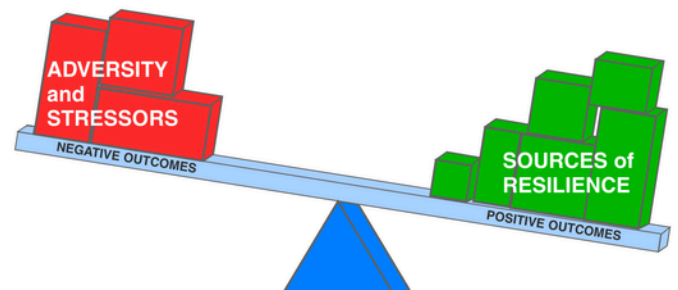
As a result, many qualified and capable students do not persist. Institutions and bureaucracies are often slow to change and tend to equate learning with access to resources. However, there are many opportunities to better align educational infrastructures with responsive student supports, fostering both student success and rigorous learning outcomes.

The faculty can:

■ **In the context of a 1:1 meeting:**

- Listen and affirm what Renee is managing.
- Access [The Red Folder](#) as a practical guideline supporting faculty and staff responding to students managing stress and distress.
- Articulate Renee's successful academic history, including the first semester in the nursing program.
- Normalize challenges as part of the nursing program and the academic journey, indicating the need for coordinated support.
- The faculty member could potentially set up a meeting with a prior graduate of the program to speak with Renee and offer words of encouragement (and to show there is light at the end of the tunnel of nursing school). A lot of nursing programs do this for cohort-wide meetings, and the undergraduate students find it extremely helpful.
- Connect Renee to resources, including on-campus counseling supports, transportation, and funding resources such as emergency scholarships designed to help cover unexpected expenses negatively affecting academic success.
- Try to end this initial appointment with 1-2 resources to explore to help with some of the struggles she mentioned. Additionally, scheduling a follow-up meeting further emphasizes your care and helps ensure Renee doesn't fall through the cracks.

Using some version of the tools below, reflect on how one or more actions, resources, or supportive interventions can result in decreased distress and/or an increase in functioning for Renee, and for the educator professionals engaged in supporting her. The content included here reflects suggestions provided by the case study teams representing Illinois colleges and universities.



Supportive ways to address the issue/challenge

FACULTY TOOLS

- 1:1 meeting with student - Reach out directly to the student to set up a one-on-one meeting (in person, virtually, or by phone) and find what works best for the student.
- Bring the student to counseling services if possible. I.e, walk the student to resources or provide an introductory email between the student and the resource.
- Remind via all-class email of campus counseling and wellness services. You can offer extra credit points for attending a wellness event, such as yoga or a gaming club.
- Throughout the semester, it is encouraged to discuss resources at the beginning and throughout the semester to normalize them, and to include language in syllabi and online classroom information about all available resources. Please provide an overview at the beginning of the course.
 - Discuss resources at the beginning and throughout the semester to normalize them and to include language in syllabi. Also, take ownership and responsibility for being aware of and learning from all the valuable resources on campus.
 - Identify free tutoring supports, including hybrid and online options for study groups, tutoring, and test preparation.
 - Encourage peer partnerships and study groups that can take place online using free options such as Zoom rooms, WhatsApp, or LMS forums.
- At the beginning of the semester, invite counseling or wellness for a brief visit to class. Allowing students to be more familiar with these resources and put a face to a name.
- Faculty should normalize or discuss the action steps they can take when concerns arise. It is also essential for faculty to take advantage of professional development opportunities on mental health and to gain a better understanding of how to support students through a trauma-informed lens.
- Schedule Student Success Meeting: A meeting with faculty from the major program and the student, in which the faculty discuss their concerns, ask the student what is happening, and provide the student with information on access to campus resources that may help them.
 - Tutoring and Writing Center
 - Counseling Center
 - Access Center/Center for Disability
 - Title IX Coordinator - Understand rights as a student parent
 - Academic Advising to explore further alternative formats for classes
 - Food pantries, career services, career closet, daycares (some), personal and success counseling, TRIO, Perkins, Mass transit options, Emergency funds, and State-mandated housing liaisons.
- Spend time familiarizing yourself with the abundant research on the community of classroom instruction and study cohorts as belonging and connection factors that support academic success and overall well-being.
 - Perry, R., Sciolla, A., Rea, M. et al. Modeling the social determinants of resilience in health professions students: impact on psychological adjustment. *Adv in Health Sci Educ* 28, 1661–1677 (2023).
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10459-023-10222-1>
 - India Bryce, Brooke Weston-Hill, Jessica Gildersleeve, Kate Cantrell & Katherine Preece (19 Feb 2026): Prioritising relationship, community, and student-centered learning: a systematic literature review of trauma-informed pedagogy in higher education, *Higher Education Research & Development*, DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2026.2627874

STAFF AND ADMINISTRATION TOOLS

- Email part-time and full-time faculty with a simple version of best practices.
- School Website & Portals: create/review a decision tree with resources and levels of intervention as a campus (covering from faculty, to support staff, athletics, security, etc.). Make sure these resources are in the places students would look for them and encourage engagement.
- Review mechanism for best practices in referring students. Ask for 5 minutes with a department or division meeting to share best practices.
- Marketing & Counseling Services - Review navigational literacy messaging to students on mental health supports and resources.
- Bring/promote mental health and community resources that align with students' needs directly to campus. – Collaborate with outside agencies to host regularly scheduled Wellness Days to bring valuable mental health and community resources directly to campus. Working closely with students to provide individualized referrals for counseling and support services based on each student's unique needs and access requirements.
- Clearly promote additional assistance in your area, such as shelters, food banks, mass transit, religious organizations, and community centers.
- For Veterans - [Aid and Attendance](#) for wartime vets is a little-known resource for assisted living support.

INSTITUTION AND LEADERSHIP TOOLS

- Inquire with resources and services offered to students to understand how they are utilized. Stay up to date with caseloads and concerns to address problems as they arise.
- Educate faculty and staff on trauma-informed ways to approach challenges that students may face. Such as:
 - Leow, C., Wu, J., Twiste, T., & Lundquist, A. (2025). Addressing Transportation Barriers Faced by Community College Students in New York City: An Intervention with Free MetroCards. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2025.2553045>
 - Cojocar, Laura and Serena Hoermann. 2025. "Getting There Matters: How Transportation Barriers Can Derail College Dreams." New York: MDRC.
 - <https://hope.temple.edu/newsroom/hope-blog/creative-solutions-college-student-transportation-insecurity>
 - <https://kresge.org/initiative/advancing-student-transportation-solutions/>

SAMPLE LANGUAGE TO EMAIL STUDENT:

- *"Hello Renee, thank you for meeting with me. I wanted to focus our time together on discussing some observations I've seen while you have been in class. I really want to support you in any capacity I have and also discuss with you how I can help you get connected with additional support."*
- *"I've noticed some changes in your attendance and your academic performance. I wanted to check in to see if there are any challenges you are facing or if anything has come up for you."*
- *"Thank you, Renee, for your willingness to share what has been going on outside of the classroom. I can help support you by (academic/faculty/class flexibility). However, some of the other challenges you have mentioned would be better supported by connecting with our Counseling Center. They have many resources and tools to help you further. Are you open to taking their information, or can I help you connect with them directly?"*

Phase 3: Reflect on Avoiding Retraumatization

Fast Car: Reframing Academic Resilience Beyond Test Taking

Reliable and affordable transportation is a key factor in academic persistence and success. As a basic need, transportation remains a significant barrier for many students, affecting in-person attendance, access to off-campus employment, and the ability to meet school, work, and caregiving responsibilities. In Renee's program, clinical sites additionally require dependable transportation as a precondition for clinical rotations or specialized training sited in healthcare settings. An MDRC 2025 review of transportation as a structural barrier in higher education further explains that:

Transportation insecurity is not just about logistical hurdles; it also has more subtle behavioral implications, shaping how students make decisions and navigate their education. Minor hassles, like a missed transfer or an unclear route, can lead students to avoid early or late classes or skip optional support sessions. Over time, these challenges, which are individually small but collectively taxing, can lead students to shift their priorities and widen the gap between those who persist and those who fall behind. Students may begin skipping class, disengaging from school, or opting out entirely. (Cojocaru & Hoermann, 2025)

Students at rural colleges often travel long distances without reliable public transportation. Renee, for example, needs a dependable vehicle not only to reach campus but also to transport her children to school and her mother to treatment. The combined costs of insurance, fuel, repairs, and maintenance mean that a minor issue, such as a dead battery or flat tire, can become a major disruption, affecting both her attendance and her family's daily functioning.

Students in urban areas may struggle to afford public transportation or access it safely. Aging infrastructure often leads to frequent delays or service interruptions, and shuttles may not align with student schedules. While rideshares offer alternatives, they can be costly, and availability varies by location. Students in suburban or exurban areas are even less likely to have viable public transportation options and are often dependent on personal vehicles.

In summary, transportation is directly linked to student retention and academic success. Addressing transportation gaps can remove barriers, reduce academic, work, and caregiving stressors, and empower students like Renee to better manage their responsibilities and achieve their long-term goals.



CASE STUDY:

GABRIELLA

This case study focuses on a student who appears to be struggling with emotional distress, avoidance coping, and group work issues.

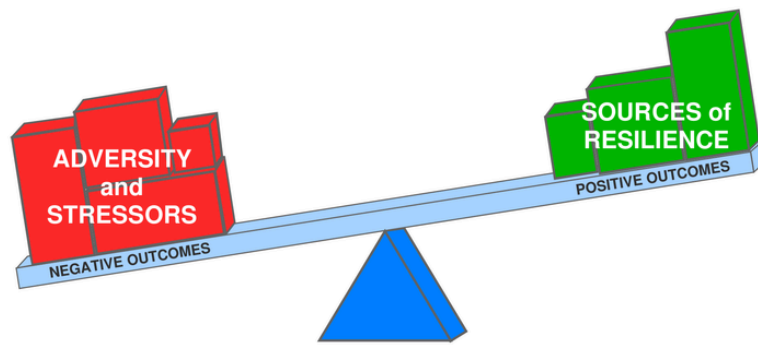
Presenting Issue/Challenge for Gabriella

Shortly after midterms, Gabriella engages less and less actively in class discussion. The quality of her work is generally good, fluctuating in the B range, though she often turns in work late, sometimes without requesting an extension. The professor notices she is falling asleep in class and frequently leaves for short periods. On her way to class one morning, the professor stops in the bathroom and hears crying in one of the stalls. Troubled, the professor asks from outside the stall, “Are you okay?” And a female voice responds, “Yes, I’m okay”. Not knowing what else to do, the professor leaves, walks to the classroom, and gets set up as students file in. The professor notices that Gabriella has the same green backpack and brown shoes she had seen on the bathroom stall floor, and realizes it was Gabriella in the bathroom. About 15 minutes into class, Gabriella looks down at her phone, grabs her backpack, and leaves the classroom. Unlike previous short absences, this time she does not return. During class time and after Gabriella left, the teacher goes around to student groups to check in on progress. One of Gabriella’s group members reports that Gabriella attended their Zoom planning meeting but didn’t participate. The group is frustrated by Gabriella’s failure to contribute her fair share to the group project and by how her lack of participation will affect their individual grades.

Phase 1: Realize & Recognize

Typically, problems represent intersecting and overlapping issues that combine a landscape of concerns, including basic needs insecurities, environmental stressors from family/work/life, physical and/or mental health (often co-occurring), academic challenges, etc. It may seem limiting and artificial to isolate only one aspect but remember that this resilience-focused problem-solving approach can be used many different times, so the job of this case study is really to identify the presenting problem with the most immediate and urgent impact on academic resilience. Further, as the problems intersect and overlap, so too do interventions and supports.

Identifying Stressors & Student Sources of Resilience



Adversity & Stressors

- Decline in class participation, including: attending class, leaving class early, frequently stepping out of class for short periods of time, falling asleep during class, and not engaging with the classwork.
- Not engaging appropriately with group work.
- Class assignments turned in late sometimes without communicating with faculty requesting an extension or giving a reason.
- Emotional distress is expressed by crying in the bathroom before class. After crying in the bathroom, she left class early when she checked her phone. The professor might infer that what is going on outside the classroom is urgent or causing her distress.

Student Sources of Resilience

Identify Gabriella's current strengths and positive factors that make it less likely she will engage in behaviors presenting obstacles to her fuller class participation.

- Her current class grade evaluation is in the B range despite her absences and late work, and her early performance in the class was very strong.
- She is showing signs of participation by coming to school, starting class, and attending group work.
- Trying to manage emotional distress in a way that does not disrupt others in the classroom.



Neurobiological Insights Relevant to Teaching and Learning

Avoidance Coping refers to how humans manage problems. Determined by both an individual's personality and the context (Sirois, 2023) in which they operate, coping strategies evolve to protect individuals from perceived danger, threat, and fear. Such strategies are often characterized as adaptive or maladaptive behaviors depending on the outcomes.

For example, a student might manage anxiety about a class assignment by streaming the latest episode of a favorite Netflix program, providing temporary relief from the assignment's anxiety. However, this strategy of avoiding the assignment or procrastinating produces more problems than it solves. And then, when faced with attending class the next day with the assignment not done, avoidance coping doubles down by arriving late and leaving early, not communicating with the professor about alternative due dates if available, and not being prepared to productively participate in group work or class.

While the faculty may not ever know, and does not need to know, the specifics of Gabriella's stressors, regarding avoidant behaviors as coping mechanisms for managing what may not be apparent creates a brain-based understanding that helps us see why and how even non-dangerous tasks can unknowingly activate threat. And given what we know about the prevalence of trauma exposure, understanding some basic brain science is all the more imperative. Lived experiences of trauma and chronic stressors such as discrimination, unstable housing, experiences of sexual violence, or bullying in previous school settings can tune up the nervous system to be more highly sensitive to perceived threats.

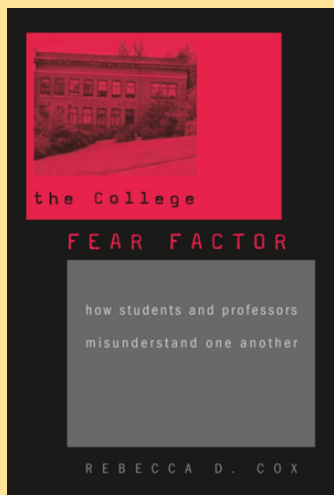
Viewed this way, we can see that while Gabriella has not given up entirely, her behaviors increasingly become, in sum, maladaptive to meeting course requirements. Understanding inconsistent attendance and time not spent in class, lack of active participation in group work or in class as coping mechanisms, albeit ultimately counterproductive strategies, opens up the possibility for insight and reflection. Neither the professor, nor peers, nor the student views avoidance behaviors as successful, and this all-too-common situation can result in poor academic assessment and outcomes, a student dropping or failing the class, and an intensification of shame, failure, and self-blame for the student. As Rebecca Cox summarizes so powerfully in her exploration of student fear and anxiety in the post-secondary setting for how it impacts academic resilience: "quitting is the ultimate fear management strategy" (32).

With academic expectations intact and attuned to course outcomes, faculty can be more prudent about what is happening and why, procuring new opportunities for supporting students struggling with avoidance coping. Indeed, students themselves can learn alternative and more effective ways to regulate negative emotions. For more reading on how "avoidance coping" functions, and how it connects to student persistence and success see Boyraz, Zhu, and Waites, 2019. Additionally, this five-minute video provides more on recognizing and responding to procrastination in the college context:



Phase 2: Respond & Refer

Presenting Problem for Gabriella and the Professor: Gabriella’s most pressing challenge is that decreasing engagement in class impacts her ability to meet course outcomes, and she is showing signs of emotional distress.



Within Educator Professional SOP	Outside Educator Professional SOP
active listening	diagnosing student
referral to campus supports	finding the student improved housing and health care

The professor can:

- Check in with the student via email to see if you can help keep her on track for her current grade. Here is a sample outreach email:

New Message

To

Subject: Quick Check-In

Dear Gabrielle,

I hope you're doing well. I've really enjoyed working with you in our class, and I can't believe we only have six weeks left in the semester!

I have noticed that you've missed a few classes and have had to leave early recently, so I wanted to check in.

I'd like to schedule a brief 15-minute Zoom or phone call to discuss your course attendance and progress.

Please let me know what works for you.

Thanks,

[your name]

Email: [your email]

Phone: [your phone number]

Schedule a meeting: <https://calendly.com/your-link-here>[1]

Send





- In a 1:1 meeting (ideally) or via email (less effective), connect her with the available resources (see a more specific list of examples in the Community Resources and Supports section below).
- Consider protocols guiding group work, such as clear individual roles, individual grades/assessment within the group function, and check-ins to preemptively scaffold the commonly identified resistance to group work.
- If possible, explain why attendance and group work are valuable to the subject you teach and to the learning outcomes.

Mental Health, Academic Persistence, and Misperceptions of Trauma-Informed as group therapy

Extensive and established research, data, and literature substantiate how college students managing mental health issues such as trauma and PTSD, anxiety, and depression experience adverse impacts on health and well-being, including academic persistence and success. A growing number of studies explore the relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and physical and mental health, as well as behaviors, in the specific context of higher education, examining their impacts on academic performance. In addition to what students manage, the complexity of ongoing threats to mental health and stressors in the higher education landscape likewise negatively affects faculty and staff well-being, burnout, and sustainability.

As a relatively new movement in higher education, a trauma-informed perspective originates in the recognition that trauma, adversity, and violence should be framed as primary issues affecting academic resilience, persistence, retention, and success. Just as importantly, it progresses based on the science of everyday, ordinary resilience behaviors that communities can enact to support holistic academic success.

In part because of the clinical history and vernacular of the word itself, trauma, a common misperception endures that to be trauma-informed means that faculty and staff become like therapists, and the campus becomes one collective group therapy in response.

This is incorrect.

A professor of biology, engineering, or literature is not a trained clinician, and neither are students enrolled in a biology, engineering, or literature class seeking mental health care. Faculty and frontline staff are not being asked to diagnose each student or calibrate individual pedagogies and practices accordingly.

This powerful and pervasive misperception not only increases risk, including burnout, it *de facto* assumes that all stressors can only be responded to in counseling services, even while mental health and wellness professionals are already overstretched and underresourced (Chessman, 2023).

The reality is that mental health and well-being **function collectively**. Faculty, staff, students, administrators, indeed all members of the educational community, have a role to play according to their individual roles in decreasing distress and supporting one another. **No one person is responsible, but all of us collectively capable of ordinary, small decisions and actions that reduce distress and adversity and contribute to strength and functioning.**

Gaining the literacy of referral should be an institutional mandate: how to refer, when to refer, to whom specifically, communities support one another by knowing how, given the resources and roles of a given campus.

Trauma-informed approaches are not a clinical intervention, nor are they a diagnostic or reactive pedagogy or practice. Rather, trauma-informed proactively understands the pervasive presence of trauma, adversity, and violence as impacting academics, health, and well-being in our communities. The data tells us in advance of ever meeting our students what our communities (including faculty, staff, and administrators) are managing. Consequently, we can build into our pedagogies and practices supports and interventions that have been proven as high impact practices: normalizing mental health and well-being as issues students face by identifying campus resources in the syllabus, converting that artifact solely from a contractual document to a strengths-building resource, articulating that stress management can be challenging and that it is absolutely an academic issue, and other best practices.

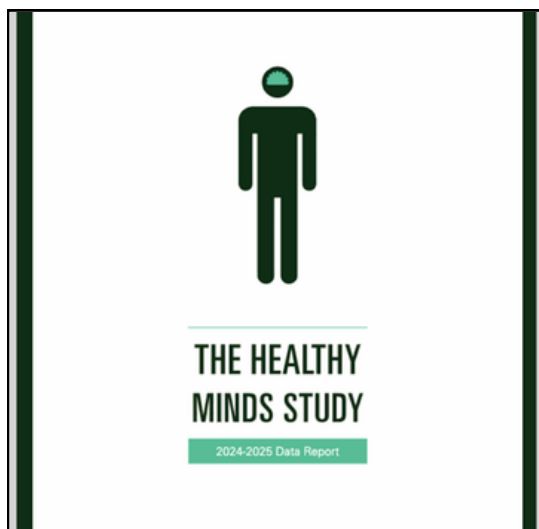
[This short video](#) from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine's 18-month consensus study on student mental health and well-being represents students reflecting on what it's like to manage these challenges in the context of pursuing a college degree (12 January 2021).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9P-rrDhVX7Y>





Mental health researchers share tips for addressing mental health concerns on campus



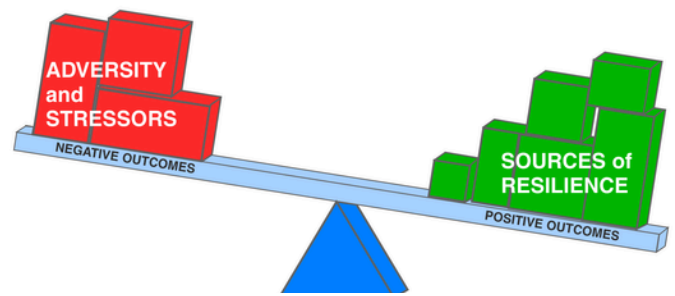
84,000 students across 135 colleges and universities report:
 Anxiety 32%
 High levels of loneliness 52%
 Health Minds Study
 Released Fall 2025

Hope Center for Student Basic Needs at Temple University (2025). The Hope Center 2023-2024 Student Basic Needs Survey Report.

<https://hope.temple.edu/sites/hope/files/media/document/Hope%20Student%20Basic%20Needs%20Survey%20Report%20202324.pdf>

Community Supports as Sources of Resilience

Using some version of the tools below, reflect on how one or more actions, resources, or supportive interventions have resulted in decreased distress and/or an increase in functioning for Gabriella, and for the educator professionals engaged in supporting her. The content included here reflects concrete steps taken by Illinois colleges and universities and was provided by the case studies team.



FACULTY TOOLS

- Email Student: Post-meeting follow-up email to create a log.
 - A trauma-informed protocol might include a “warm hand-off” email template for faculty to connect a distressed student to counseling or advising—reducing the burden on both parties. For this to happen, staff need to be more comfortable speaking with the student, inquiring about their needs, and offering resources. Some schools report having Spartan Alerts for this process; however, all too often, staff do not have a conversation with the student, and Wellness communications blindsides the student.
- Check in privately using non-judgmental language (“I’ve noticed you seem overwhelmed—how can we support you?”). This promotes safety and connection while downregulating amygdala threat responses.
- To help identify when to engage supports, such as:
 - Student Success Navigators
 - Counseling Services (personal, academic, and career)
 - [TRIO](#), Multicultural Student Engagement, and International Programs
 - Food Pantry and Basic Needs Center, etc.
- Counseling Services: You can bring the student to counseling services if possible. Additionally, you can remind students via all-class email of campus counseling and wellness services. Taking it a step further, you can invite counseling or wellness to a brief visit to class and/or offer an extra credit point for attending a wellness event, such as yoga, gaming club, etc.
- Encourage engaging with resources. Incentivize visiting with the professor, wellness, success coaching, and tutoring by granting extra credit points.
- Trauma-informed training (like [Caring Campus](#) or Faculty Wellness PDs)
- Use CPI ([Crisis Prevention and Intervention](#)) non-verbal interventions.
- Explore opportunities to increase basic brain literacy around procrastination with the class as a whole. You can include in your classwork:
 - homework on procrastination, such as a procrastination video or a TED Talk Master Procrastinator
 - Reflective writing
 - Class discussion, brainstorming strategies for options to avoidance coping and procrastination.
 - Develop policies and practices to support group work. For example, independent grades, clear role definitions, accountability checks, and group meeting times during class. Additionally, faculty can build in regular check-ins to in-person and online classes.
 - Group Work: -- develop policies and practices to support group work, including clear role definitions, accountability checks, independent grades, and group meeting times held during class time.
 - Regular check-in times are built into in-person and online classes.

STAFF AND ADMINISTRATION TOOLS

- Advisors: touch base with faculty via email or in town hall meetings to remind staff about ways you can help and how to connect with students.
- Ensure that resources are easily accessible for students on various platforms.
- Offer to meet with faculty for check-ins to talk about things they might be experiencing and how to navigate.
- School Website & Portals: create/review a decision tree with resources and levels of intervention as a campus (covering from faculty, to support staff, athletics, security, etc.).
- Get feedback from students and faculty as to what resources they need. Take the feedback and make sure resources available match the needs of the population.
- Review navigational literacy messaging to students on mental health supports and resources.
- Wellness Resources:
 - Bring/promote mental health and community resources that align with students' needs directly to campus.
 - Personal and Student Success Counselors collaborate with outside agencies to host regularly scheduled Wellness Days to bring valuable mental health and community resources directly to campus. Working closely with students to provide individualized referrals for counseling and support services based on each student's unique needs and access requirements.
 - Clearly promote additional assistance in your area, such as shelters, food banks, mass transit, religious organizations, and community centers.

INSTITUTION AND LEADERSHIP TOOLS

- Inquire with counseling services regarding their case loads and any concerns they may have to share.
- Market resources to be visible to students, faculty, and staff: Inquire if the Academic Achievement Center or Teaching & Learning Office can visit classes to do a mini-workshop on effective group work. Additionally, post a general reminder to all students in the Learning Software (e.g., Blackboard) that says stress is normal and that smart students seek out supports!
- Supportive Culture: Support and encourage staff to create a more inclusive classroom culture.
 - Ask faculty to build check-in times into their courses to see how students are doing and identify areas where they can step in to provide support. Check-ins can be built into the course by offering a few points if completed.
 - Access [The Red Folder](#) as a practical guideline for responding to students managing stress and distress
 - Improve faculty training on how to initiate connections with students on potential resources
 - Encourage faculty to set clear guidelines and expectations for attendance and class participation.
- Credit Union on Campus: Having a credit union/bank on campus to assist with financial assistance. If the space is not available for a bank to be on campus full-time, offer a space for a satellite office. Make sure the days the credit union is open/on-campus are well communicated to students.
- Wellness Resources: Establish committees to collaborate with external agencies to expand on-campus services and present on specific topics impacting students. When offering these presentations, keep in mind that staff schedules aren't always aligned, so offering virtual attendance or recordings helps give everyone access to the materials and efforts.
- Town Hall Meetings: Administration and leadership can schedule and facilitate town hall opportunities for students. Allowing students the opportunity to collectively voice and discuss their concerns, ask questions, and share feedback on potentially traumatic challenges the campus may be experiencing. Faculty with aligned interests and backgrounds may team up to deliver talks on relevant topics for students, faculty, and staff, with the opportunity to engage in Q&A at the end.

Phase 3: Reflect on Avoiding Retraumatization

As addressed previously, a common misperception regarding trauma-informed pedagogies and practices is that faculty and staff must become like therapists, and therefore that students become *de facto* patients, necessitating individual diagnoses as basic for pedagogy and practice. Understanding ACEs, mental health challenges, identity-based aggressions, and violence, including poverty and inequality, our students carry—that we as educator professionals carry—means that trauma-informed pedagogies and practices communicate relevant value even when we do not know the specific struggles individual students, like Gabriella, actively manage.

A key component of a trauma-informed approach has to do with perceiving and defining behaviors. Education Northwest (Davidson, 2017) identifies some of the following behaviors as linked to trauma:

- Difficulty focusing, attending, retaining, recalling
- Tendency to miss a lot of classes
- Fear of taking risks
- Anxiety about deadlines, exams, group work, or public speaking
- Anger, helplessness, or dissociation when stressed
- Withdrawal and isolation
- Challenges with emotional regulation

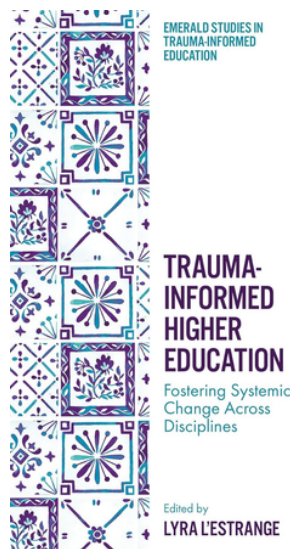
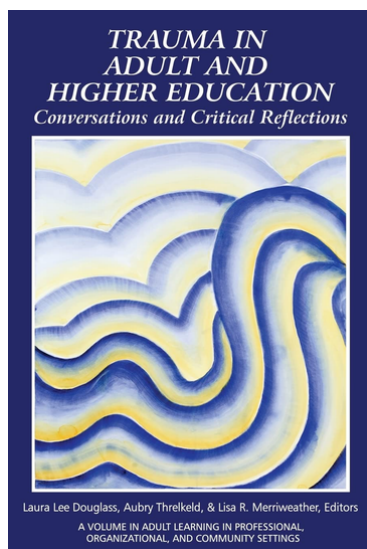
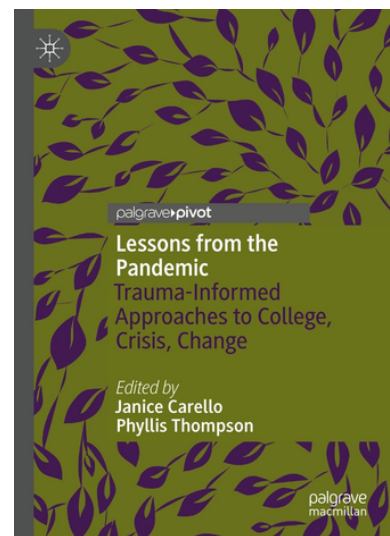
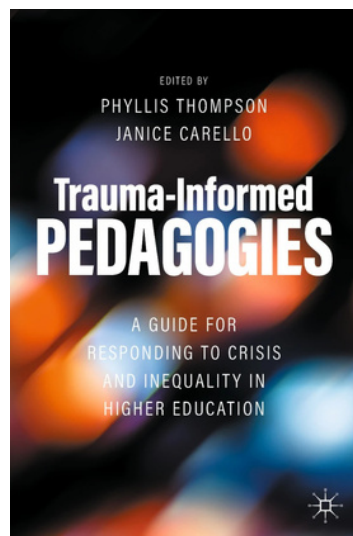
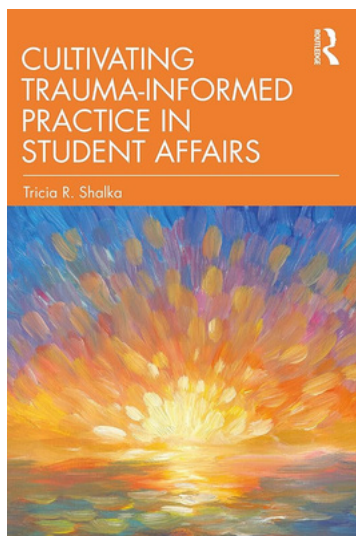
This is not to say that any or all these behaviors necessarily indicate trauma nor that trauma is the sole causal factor; rather, these academic issues often correlate to managing trauma. For example, a student like Gabriella who evidences emotional distress may have difficulty focusing in class, struggle with group work, and may show a decline in attendance. Such issues challenge students and educator professionals alike, and often enough, reduce to negative assessments of a student's capability as in "I'm not smart enough" or "I don't belong here". The many students historically excluded or underserved by higher education are often at higher risk for assessing themselves this way in addition to being assessed as lacking by faculty/staff managing trauma, and doing so in the context of institutions of higher education not designed for the complex stressors many students balance today.

Trauma-informed pedagogies and practices do not terminate in static, deficit-based assessment, but rather view behaviors of all sorts as language. As originally formulated by Sandra Bloom, trauma-informed practices entail asking "what's going on here?" rather than "what is wrong with this student?" (Bloom & Sreedhar, 2008); the discipline of this intentional shift renders behavior as communication that initiates curiosity as well as accountability: what is happening for this student now, different from previously in the term and not necessarily indicative of the future, as the beginning of communication rather than the end. It sounds obvious to assert that students do not enroll in college to fail, and viewing challenging behaviors as best attempts to manage offers compassionate room for learning and for growth.

Not limited to the classroom, framing issues and behaviors as the beginning, not the end, of problem-solving, operationalizing this shift occurs in advising, financial aid, campus safety, and even technological issues such as AI:

For CIOs, implementing trauma-informed leadership is not just a matter of ethics—it's a strategic imperative... especially when addressing sensitive issues such as data privacy, cybersecurity, and the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI). Trauma-informed leadership creates an environment where employees feel safe to voice concerns about the ethical implications of technology without fear of retribution. In this context, staff are more likely to raise concerns about potential security risks or unintended consequences of an AI implementation, leading to more responsible and thoughtful decision-making...and ensures the stability of critical systems by minimizing disruptions that can derail student learning and progress. (D'Agustino, S. and Winders, T., 2025).

Indeed, this paradigm shift can productively apply across the campus community, regarding behaviors as dynamic, creating opportunity for change.



CASE STUDY:

RYLEY

This case study focuses on a student whose legal paperwork does not reflect her first name or pronouns, who is struggling with housing insecurity and mental health.

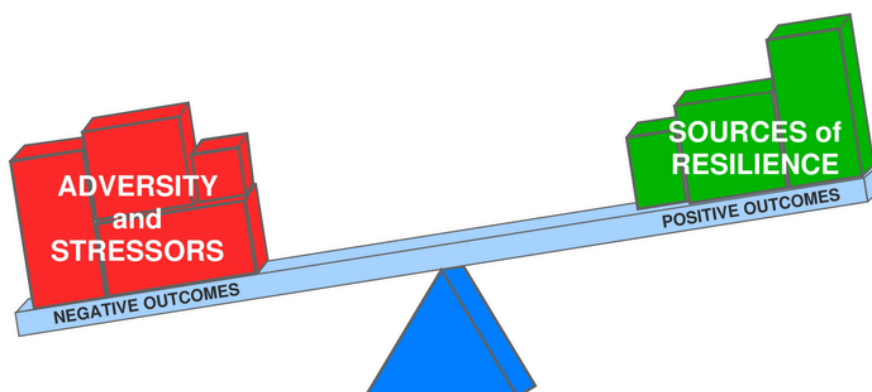
Presenting Issue/Challenge for Ryley

Ryley is a first-year transgender student whose first name and pronouns (she/her) do not match the legal documents she used to enroll. In the first week of classes, Ryley disclosed to her academic advisor that she was struggling in and outside of class. She was frustrated having to explain to professors and her peers that the first name and pronouns on the roster aren't accurate, and she would like to drop one of her classes because the professor had already misgendered her. She'd like to file paperwork that correctly reflects her first name and gender, but she does not have the money for the associated legal fees and lacks the social and financial support from her parents. This creates a home environment that Ryley describes as stressful and negative. She reports spending an increasing number of nights away from home and asked if there are affordable housing options since she doesn't have enough money to stay in the dorms.

Phase 1: Realize & Recognize

Typically, problems represent intersecting and overlapping issues that combine a landscape of concerns, including basic needs insecurities, environmental stressors from family/work/life, physical and/or mental health (often co-occurring), academic challenges, etc. It may seem limiting and artificial to isolate only one aspect but remember that this resilience-focused problem-solving approach can be used many different times, so the job of this case study is really to identify the presenting problem with the most immediate and urgent impact on academic resilience. Further, as the problems intersect and overlap, so too do interventions and supports.

Identifying Stressors & Student Sources of Resilience



Adversity & Stressors

- Ryley’s professor misgenders and uses incorrect pronouns. Research on misgendering and misnaming describes these experiences as a pervasive and chronic minority stress (based on gender identity), increasing risks to physical and mental health because of fundamental invalidation of human identity.
- Given the power differential between student and professor in the college classroom, identity violence or erasure—and conversely identity affirming—words and actions by the professor have additional impact (Breyer, C.N. & Mankowski, E.S., 2024).
- Ryley’s parents do not support her identity, thus making living at home very challenging. Not having a home that makes Ryley feel accepted can add to her stress and financial strain. She might be spending more time away from home to avoid her parents and more time looking for alternative housing that makes her feel more accepted - both take away time from her school work.
- Ryley reports that she is seeking affordable housing but cannot afford the cost of living in the college dorms. Students who cannot count on financial support from a parent or caregiver and who are effectively independent face obstacles in the financial aid system, such as the “dependency override.”
- The Hope Center’s most recent survey shows that 66% of LGBTQIA+ students experience food and/or housing insecurity, and students who are TGD are at even higher risk (Dockendorff, K.J. et. al., 2025). Research shows that LGBTQ+ youth are over 120% more likely to experience homelessness than their non-LGBTQ+ peers. They make up as much as 40% of all youth experiencing homelessness, despite representing only 9.5% of the overall population. (Covenant House)
- Ryley would like to change her legal paperwork to reflect her name and pronouns, but she can’t afford it. A lack of this paperwork creates a disconnect that leads to distressing experiences due to inaccurate names and gender, resulting in misnaming and misgendering, given that formal documentation is inconsistent across common artifacts such as student IDs, attendance rosters, and course management software.

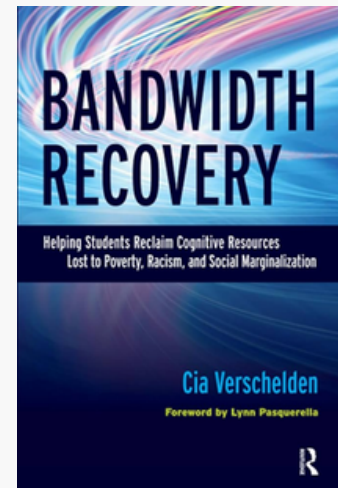
Student Sources of Resilience

- Ryley is reaching out to her advisor with the issues that are negatively impacting her academic progress and overall mental health and well-being.
- Help-seeking behavior as self-advocacy.
- Ryley is pursuing a college education and wants to be successful.
- Ryley understands herself and wants to be recognized and safe despite overwhelming discrimination and violence against trans and gender diverse individuals.
- Ryley understands that the conflict between her name/gender and the environments in which she functions will be made a little less stressful if she has legal documentation supporting her identity.
- Ryley has friends and social connections that give her alternatives to being at home.



Neurobiological Insights Relevant to Teaching and Learning

Cognitive Bandwidth: Higher education professional Cia Verschelden (2017; 2022) describes how factors such as poverty, identity-based violence, and trauma reduce the “cognitive bandwidth” students have available at any given moment to engage academically. This framing of cognitive bandwidth allows us not only to see how the energy it takes to manage threat takes away from teaching and learning, but also how colleges and universities can be sites that, through inclusive and supportive practices, can restore cognitive bandwidth. Individuals who are LGBTQ have historically faced marginalization in higher education, including expulsion due to queer identity. Recent federal policies restricting or criminalizing gender-affirming health care, along with the closure of DEI offices, have further complicated support for transgender and gender-diverse students. The financial aid process is also more challenging without legal documentation of a chosen name and gender marker. Students who are estranged from or no longer financially dependent on a parent encounter additional barriers when applying for scholarships and grants as independent students (Lange, A.C., 2024). Policies that affirm identity, such as gender-neutral bathrooms and the use of preferred names and pronouns, improve students’ sense of safety and belonging, both of which are linked to academic persistence.

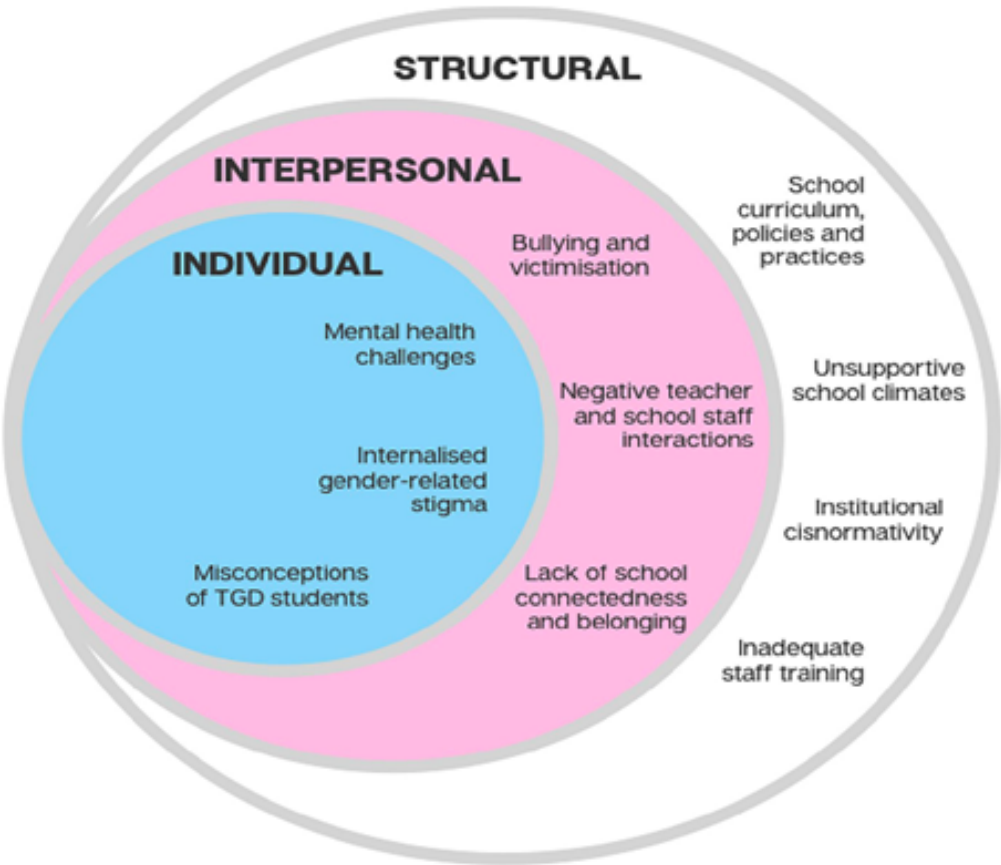


Bullying in Academic Settings as a Risk Factor in Higher Education

In 2022, the Williams Institute published the largest study to date on trans and gender-diverse adults in the United States, including research on college students. Transgender students were three times more likely than cisgender LGBTQ individuals to report:

“lifetime adverse treatment at school that impacted their academic success or educational attainment ... Nearly a third (32.1%) of transgender people reported any unfair treatment by teachers, staff, or school administrators across the higher education institutions that they had attended. More than a third (38.8%) had experienced any bullying, harassment, or assault in higher education settings. Over a quarter of transgender (26.0%) and almost one in ten (9.4%) LGBTQ cisgender people reported that lifetime school-based unfair treatment, harassment, or bullying due to being LGBTQ was a barrier to their academic success” (Conron et. al. 2022).

Although college offers a new environment, previous experiences of bullying, especially in high school, can continue to affect first-semester students’ academic performance and social adjustment (Goodboy et al., 2016). Students who have been bullied in earlier educational settings often experience symptoms of PTSD and depression (Manrique et al., 2020). These effects are more pronounced among marginalized groups, including Black and Latinx students, LGBTQ+, transgender, and gender non-conforming students (Grinshteyn et al., 2021). The National Center for Education Statistics’ “Student Reports of Bullying: Results from the 2022 School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey” (2024) found that students believe bullying negatively affects their self-esteem, relationships, academic work, and physical health, and increases their fear of future bullying. The following framework illustrates the individual, interpersonal, and structural dynamics, indicating that implementing inclusive pedagogies, practices, and policies, and ensuring access to resources, constitute critical interventions.



(Watts, N. & Brömdal, A., 2026)

Phase 2: Respond & Refer

Within Educator Professional SOP	Outside Educator Professional SOP
active listening	diagnosing student
referral to campus supports	finding the student improved housing and health care

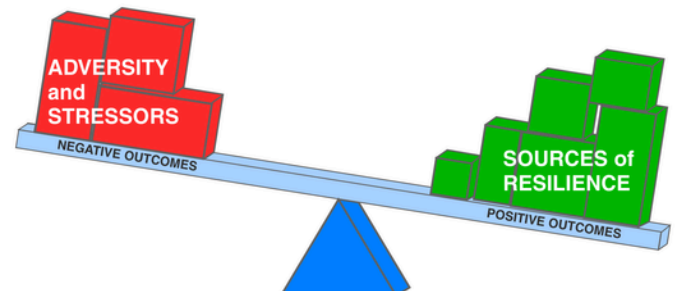
Presenting Problem for Ryley and the Academic Advisor: Ryley’s immediate identified challenge is that she is having trouble getting her professors and classmates to use her preferred pronouns.

The academic advisor can:

- Affirm Ryley’s identity by using the correct name and pronouns.
- Many institutions have mechanisms for correctly naming and identifying pronouns that do not require legal documentation. The advisor can assist Ryley in accessing this mechanism.
- Access [The Red Folder](#) as a practical guideline supporting faculty and staff responding to students managing stress and distress.
- If necessary, the advisor can explore placing Ryley in another class if that is a viable option.
- If not already aware, the advisor can show Ryley LGBTQ and financial resources available. Taking additional steps, such as finding websites, scheduling meetings, and showing her how to sign up, can further show your support.
- The advisor can link Ryley up with a writing tutor to help her convey, in an email to her teacher, how she is feeling and how she would like to be addressed in class.
- The tutor can connect Ryley with the basic needs office regarding housing support options.
- The advisor might share concerns by contacting the department chair or dean or through other college-wide reporting mechanisms, such as through the DEI office if one is available.
- The advisor might also be linked with LGBTQ groups or faculty who have undergone safe zone training.

Community Supports as Sources of Resilience

Using some version of the tools below, reflect on how one or more actions, resources, or supportive interventions can result in decreased distress and/or an increase in functioning for Ryley, and for the educator professionals engaged in supporting her. The content included here reflects suggestions provided by the case study teams representing Illinois colleges and universities.



FACULTY TOOLS

- Create an affirming environment:
 - Faculty and staff can: use affirmed names and pronouns consistently, refer to student success, counseling, and LGBTQIA+ advocacy resources, maintain privacy and discretion when addressing identity-related topics, and create an affirming classroom environment that emphasizes respect, belonging, and safety.
 - In some IL areas, several community initiatives model the kind of affirming, stabilizing support that can make a significant difference for students experiencing identity-related stress. For example, [The Liam Foundation](#) provides LGBTQIA+ individuals and families with advocacy, peer support, crisis navigation, and safe-space programming, which reduces isolation and reinforces a sense of belonging.
 - Interested faculty might consider safe zone or other training.
- Continue to find ways to support students by asking for feedback at the end of the semester.

STAFF AND ADMINISTRATION TOOLS

- Create an affirming environment:
 - Faculty and staff can: use affirmed names and pronouns consistently, refer to student success, counseling, and LGBTQIA+ advocacy resources, maintain privacy and discretion when addressing identity-related topics, and create an affirming classroom environment that emphasizes respect, belonging, and safety.
 - In some IL areas, several community initiatives model the kind of affirming, stabilizing support that can make a significant difference for students experiencing identity-related stress. For example, [The Liam Foundation](#) provides LGBTQIA+ individuals and families with advocacy, peer support, crisis navigation, and safe-space programming, which reduces isolation and reinforces a sense of belonging.
 - Referral/warm handoff model.
- Access to Resources Available: Bring in and promote resources to students. Consider making these resources available to both in-person and online students. – Advising offices, personal counseling and success coaching, food pantry and career closet, LGBTQIA+ student groups and allies networks, online student portals, walk-in services, and appointment-based support.
- LGBTQIA+ peer groups, community LGBTQ+ centers, legal aid referrals, affirming faculty/staff allies, and counseling services that encourage identity affirmation and resilience.
- Continue to understand the needs of the student and staff populations. Determine ways to improve resources to support students and engagement.

INSTITUTION AND LEADERSHIP TOOLS

- Create an affirming environment:
 - Regular programming and on-campus LGBTQIA+ Month programming. Serves as a key supportive intervention. These events not only celebrate identity and visibility but also create predictable, affirming spaces where students can connect with allies, access resources, and experience psychological safety. Additional examples include:
 - Peer mentoring or affinity groups, which offer connection and reduce the social threat response.
 - Educational workshops hosted by community partners (e.g., [Trevor Project](#) resources, local healthcare organizations) that normalize help-seeking and promote emotional regulation skills.
 - [The Safe Zone Project](#) or ally-training programs that increase staff and faculty competence in providing supportive, identity-affirming interactions.
 - Campus wellness events, counseling center outreach, and support circles that strengthen students' coping skills and promote nervous system regulation.
 - Participate in local Pride events.
- Highlight resources and access to all students regularly. Depending on the region, organizations exist that provide gender and identity-affirming supports, including legal aid, such as the following:
 - [Transformative Justice Law Project \(TJLP\)](#): Provides free, holistic, and abolitionist legal aid for transgender and gender non-conforming people in Illinois.
 - [UIC Law Pro Bono Clinic](#): Assists with navigating the name change process, updating gender markers on official documents, and fee waivers.
 - [Illinois Pride Connect](#): A forthcoming free legal hotline offering advice on healthcare, education, immigration, and family protections.
 - [TransLegal Program \(Advocates for Trans Equality\)](#): Offers holistic, affirming, and self-help legal resources.
 - [Brave Space Alliance](#): A Black-led, trans-led organization on the South Side of Chicago providing resources to the community
- Create an Inclusive Culture:
 - Audit current systems, resources, and events to improve your community. Update internal school systems to ensure students use correct names and pronouns.
 - Improve community understanding of unique issues that transgender and gender-diverse students experience and manage through formal and informal professional development.
 - Prioritize inclusiveness and belonging practices at the college at every level, from gender-neutral restrooms that are clearly identified and accessible, to visuals and facility resources celebrating diverse identities.
 - Educate and encourage leadership to better support LGBTQ students by querying the community as to priorities (e.g., hiring a TGD behavioral health or wellness professional)
 - Access and marketing of resources to students in different mediums (e.g., social media, bulletin boards, community events, texting, etc.)
 - Improve college resource websites to make it easier to navigate to the resources students are most in need of finding
 - Bring in professional speakers to educate staff and students about topics LGBTQ students and staff might be navigating, and how to be more inclusive.

Phase 3: Reflect on Avoiding Retraumatization

Reframing Homework and Hidden Populations: Many students contend with socio-economic violence manifesting as basic needs stressors, including food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness, as well as inadequate transportation. The Hope Center’s 2023-2024 Student Basic Needs Survey of 74,350 students across 91 colleges and in 16 states, found that three in five students experienced basic needs insecurities (The Hope Center, 2025). A primary expectation of academic functioning, such as homework, faces a fundamental challenge when a student does not have a secure home in which to work and study, and in fact, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in 2023, for the first time in its history, reported data on food and housing insecurity among college students. Such adversities profoundly impede academic progress, particularly for historically marginalized students. Basic needs insecurities intersect and overlap in significant and impactful ways with other factors, such as mental health challenges, with 71% of students who identify as managing anxiety or depression also having one or more BNI (The Hope Center, 2025).

Readers of this handbook likely need no further evidence of how basic needs insecurities adversely impact student success. And in the higher education landscape more generally the movement is growing to understand how navigating college and its challenges nearly always bears implicit assumptions about resources and skills students need to be successful. Concepts such as “hidden curriculum” work to reveal assumption and bias often based on privilege. Given the largely exclusive history of higher education, growing access for those previously underrepresented does not equate to success. Anthony Abraham Jack’s *The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges Are Failing Disadvantaged Students* (2019) discusses via research as well as his own experience how largely unexamined practices such as closing dorms and dining halls over winter, spring, and summer breaks center students with privilege and disadvantages students without additional resources for food, housing, and transportation during breaks (164-180). Even well-intentioned interventions and supports targeting students needing resources (156-164) can highlight disparity in ways that impact belonging, a dynamic powerfully linked to persistence, retention, and success.



The Hope Center 2023-2024 Student Basic Needs Survey Report. (February 26, 2025). The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs at Temple University.

Ongoing awareness of the diversity of inequities, including levels of academic preparation, must also be dynamic and locally attuned. Oklahoma State University's *Hidden Populations* project, for example, hosted its first conference in 2021 exploring the ways in which a specific population of students, those with lived experience in the foster and state custody system, have unique characteristics that are little recognized or understood in higher education. Most current data reflects that around 6% of foster youth who begin college successfully earn a bachelor's degree. A common and compelling stressor for foster-involved college students is that aging out of the system at 18 often results in housing insecurity, a need largely unseen in college and university. Students with experience in the foster care system can be understood as "hidden" in higher education because they "are not easily visually identified, do not generally have a formal voice in the system and who may be motivated to remain anonymous. Members of hidden populations often have experiences with socially stigmatizing trauma" (Oklahoma State University). New and forthcoming research (see the Foster Care Resources section) seeks to better define the ways in which specific identity populations that remain largely hidden intersect and share complex experiences of trauma and violence as a common denominator: foster care and/or justice-involved, survivors of sexual violence, current or former sex workers, those recovering from substance addiction, and those with needs such as reproductive or gender affirming healthcare in states where those are illegal. Given the prevalence of trauma, principles of trauma-informed higher education bring relevance and value as colleges and universities increase their understanding of hidden populations.

CONCLUSION

*All that you touch,
You Change.
All that you Change,
Changes you.*

—Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

The neurobiological truth is that we are exquisitely poised to support one another in everyday, ordinary ways, and this is the empowering reality of trauma-informed higher educational practices. Not a prescriptive, we hope this handbook has allowed you to consider the strengths of your own current practices. Trauma-informed educational pedagogies and practices animate by connection and collaboration that make problem-solving and responsive support accessible and realistic, emerging from a baseline confidence in our own capability and competence, even when facing complex challenges.

REFERENCES

- Alberta Family Wellness Initiative (2023). Tipping the balance towards good health. Resilience: Why do some of us bounce back from adversity better than others? Palix Foundation.
<https://www.albertafamilywellness.org/what-we-know/resilience-scale/>
- American Psychological Association. (2024, January 1). Higher education is struggling. Psychologists are navigating its uncertain future. *Monitor on Psychology*, 55(1).
<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2024/01/trends-higher-education-challenges>
- Anderson, Theresa, et al. (2024). Who Are Undergraduates with Dependent Children? An Updated Overview of Student-Parent Characteristics Using 2020 Data: Student-Parent Action through Research Knowledge (SPARK) Collaborative.
<https://studentparentaction.org/assets/r-file/Who-Are-Undergraduates-with-Dependent-Children.pdf>
- Artze-Vega, I. (2025). Prioritizing Faculty Well-Being During Politicized Times. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 57(6), 22–30.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2025.2568349>
- Balboa, N. and R.D. Glaser (2019, May 16). The neuroscience of conversations: a deep dive into the fascinating world of conversations. *Psychology Today*.
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/conversational-intelligence/201905/the-neuroscience-of-conversations>
- Bloom, S.L., & Sreedhar, S.Y. (2008). The sanctuary model of trauma-informed organizational change. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 17(3), 48-53.
- Boyraz, G., Zhu, Y., & Waits, J. B. (2019). Avoidance coping and academic locus of control as mediators of the relationship between posttraumatic stress and academic achievement among first-year college students. *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping*, 32(5), 545–558.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10615806.2019.1638681>
- Breyer, C. N., & Mankowski, E. S. (2024). “So, You’re Not Doing This Right”: Faculty and Transgender Students’ University Classroom Experiences. *College Teaching*, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2024.2392642>
- Brunzell, T., Stokes, H. & Waters, L. (2016). Trauma-Informed Positive Education: Using Positive Psychology to Strengthen Vulnerable Students. *Contemporary School Psychology* 20, 63–83.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-015-0070-x>

Bryce, I., Weston-Hill, B., Gildersleeve, J., Cantrell, K. & Preece, K. (2026, February 19). Prioritising relationship, community, and student-centered learning: a systematic literature review of trauma-informed pedagogy in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2026.2627874

Carello, J. & Thompson, P. (2022). Developing a new default in higher education: we are not alone in this work. In: P. Thompson and J. Carello (Eds.) *Trauma-Informed Pedagogies: A Guide for Responding to Crises and Inequality in Higher Education* (pp. 1-12). Palgrave Macmillan.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-92705-9_15

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022, June 2). 6 Guiding principles to a trauma-informed approach. <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/138924>

Center for Institutional Courage. <https://www.institutionalcourage.org/>

Center on the Developing Child (2015, June 6). In Brief: the science of resilience. Harvard University.
<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/videos/inbrief-the-science-of-resilience-2/>

Chessman, H.M. (2023, May 18). Effective Strategies for Combatting Faculty Burnout. Higher Education Today.
<https://www.higheredtoday.org/2023/05/18/effective-strategies-for-combating-faculty-burnout/#:~:text=Faculty%20burnout%20is%20a%20syndrome%20that%20can,issues%20that%20are%20manifesting%20in%20the%20classroom>

Cless, J. D. (2026). Applying neuroscience to a brief in-class activity: a trauma-informed quick fix to support students through sensitive content. *College Teaching*, 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2026.2642164>

Cojocar, Laura, and Serena Hoermann (2025). “Getting there matters: how transportation barriers can derail college dreams.” NewYork: MDRC. https://www.mdrc.org/work/publications/getting-there-matters#_edn2

Conron, K.J., O’Neill, K.K. & Vasquez, L.A. (2022). Educational experiences of transgender people: findings from a national probability survey. The Williams Institute, UCLA, and the Point Foundation, Los Angeles, CA.
<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Trans-Higher-Ed-Apr-2022.pdf>

Costa, K. (2022). An educator’s scope of practice: how do I know what’s mine?. In: P. Thompson and J. Carello (Eds.) *Trauma-Informed Pedagogies: A Guide for Responding to Crises and Inequality in Higher Education* (pp. 175-186). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-92705-9_15

Covenant House (2026). LGBTQ+ young people are more likely to experience homelessness.
<https://www.covenanthouse.org/homeless-issues/lgbtq-youth#:~:text=%20120%25%20LGBTQ+%20youth%20are%20120%25%20more,in%20residence%20with%20us%20identify%20as%20LGBTQ+>

- D'Agustino, S. and Winders, T. (2025, February 18). Beyond infrastructure: why higher education IT needs trauma-informed leadership now. *Educause Review*.
<https://er.educause.edu/articles/2025/2/beyond-infrastructure-why-higher-education-it-needs-trauma-informed-leadership-now>
- Davidson, S. (2017). *Trauma-informed practices in higher education*. Retrieved from Education Northwest.
<https://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/trauma-informed-practices-postsecondary-508.pdf>
- De Sawal, D., Peck, A., & Rosch, D.M. (2022). Defining and addressing professional burnout in campus activities. *Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship*, 4(2), 5-13.
<https://doi.org/10.52499/2022007> <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1359330.pdf>
- Dockendorff, K. J., Garvey, J. C., Duran, A., & Abelson, S. (2025). Life chances in college: the landscape of food and housing insecurity for trans* students. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 18(6), 912–923.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000619>
- Eisenberg, D., Lipson, S.K., Heinze, J., Zhou, S. (2025). The healthy minds study: 2024-2025 data report. Healthy Minds Network.
https://healthymindsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2024-2025_HMS-National-Data-Report_Student.pdf
- Flannery, M.E. (2024, March 7). The mental health crisis among faculty and college staff: high rates of anxiety, depression, and stress are prevalent on campuses. *neaToday*.
<https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/mental-health-crisis-among-faculty-and-college-staff>
- Givens, J. (2025). *American Grammar: Race, Education, and the Building of a Nation*. Harper Collins Publishers.
- Goodboy, A. K., Martin, M. M., & Goldman, Z. W. (2016). Students' Experiences of Bullying in High School and Their Adjustment and Motivation During the First Semester of College. *Western Journal of Communication*, 80(1), 60–78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10570314.2015.1078494>
- Gross, E.B., Kattari, S.K., Steel, M., Wilcox, R., Ernst, S., Parrish, D. (2025). 'I have had several providers who recognize my humanity': exploring overall health and positive healthcare interactions of transgender and gender diverse college students. *Thriving on Campus: Promoting the Inclusion, Academic Development, and Wellbeing of Diverse 2SLGBTQ+ University and College Students*. Eds. Wooford, M.R. et. al.
- Guy-Evans, O. (2025, July 7). 13 Cognitive Distortions Identified in CBT. *Simply Psychology*.
<https://www.simplypsychology.org/cognitive-distortions-in-cbt.html>
- Hammoudi Halat, D., Soltani, A., Dalli, R., Alsarraj, L., & Malki, A. (2023). Understanding and fostering mental health and well-being among university faculty: A narrative review. *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, 12(13), 4425.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm12134425>

- The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs at Temple University (2025). The Hope Center 2023-2024 Student Basic Needs Survey Report.
<https://hope.temple.edu/sites/hope/files/media/document/Hope%20Student%20Basic%20Needs%20Survey%20Report%20202324.pdf>
- Hopper, J. (2020). Important Things to Get Right About the “Neurobiology of Trauma.” Part 1: Benefits of Understanding the Science. End Violence Against Women International. https://evawintl.org/wp-content/uploads/TB-01_Benefits-of-Science.pdf
- Huff, M., Edwards, K.M., Mauer, V.A., Littleton, H., Lim, S., and Sall, K.E. (2025). Gender neutral bathrooms on campus: a multi-campus study of cisgender, transgender, and gender diverse college students. *Journal of American College Health*, 73(3), 1178-1182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2023.2239358>
- The Illinois ACEs Response Collaborative (2024). Widening the lens on ACEs: the role of community in trauma, resilience, and thriving. Health & Medicine Policy Research Group. <https://www.hmprg.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Role-of-Community-in-Trauma-Resilience-and-Healing.pdf>
- Illinois State University Student Counseling Services. Red folder: helping students in emotional distress. https://redbirdwell.illinoisstate.edu/downloads/24-27849%20Redbird%20Well%20Helping%20Students%20in%20Distress%20Brochure%20Red%20Folder_ADA%20PDF.pdf
- Imad, M., Bitanihirwe, B. & Barranco, K. (2024). Transforming higher education: building trauma-informed communities for healing and intergenerational wellbeing. *ADVANCE Journal* 5 (1).
<https://doi.org/10.5399/osu/ADVJRN.5.1.2>
- Institute for Trauma, Adversity, and Resilience in Higher Education (2025). Procrastination is a pain: A trauma-informed look at this common issue in college. Motion graphic design by Isabella Faulkner.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIbqZ17mxbc&t=5s>
- Kilgo, C.A. (2020). *Supporting Success for LGBTQ+ Students: Tools for Inclusive Campus Practice*. University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.
- Lange, A.C. (2024). Transgender men and non-binary students are managing their identities to pay for college. *The Review of Higher Education* 48(1), 129-159. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2024.a937146>.
- MacDonald, L. and G. Davis (2023). *Reimagining institutional change: toward a campus culture that centers student success*. In J. Arney, T. Dale, G. Davis, and J. Kinzie (Eds.) *Radical Reimagining for Student Success in Higher Education* (pp. 3-23). Routledge.
- Masten, A.S. (2014). *Ordinary Magic: Resilience in Development*. The Guilford Press.

- Moody, J. (2026, January 16). A bad year for college presidents. *Inside Higher Ed*.
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/governance/executive-leadership/2026/01/16/2025-was-bad-year-college-presidents-will-2026-be>
- Munakata, Y., Placido, D., Zhuang, W. (2023). What's next? advances and challenges in understanding how environmental predictability shapes the development of cognitive control. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Vol. 32(6), 431-438. DOI:10.1177/09637214231199102/www.psychologicalscience.org/CDPS
- Muñoz, S. M., Vigil, D., Jach, E., & Rodríguez-Gutiérrez, M. (2018). Unpacking Resilience and Trauma: Examining the “Trump Effect” in Higher Education for Undocumented Latinx College Students. *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal*, 12(3), 33–52. <https://doi.org/10.24974/amae.12.3.405>
- Muscanell, N. (2024, January 26). Teaching and learning workforce in higher education. *EDUCAUSE Research*.
<https://library.educause.edu/resources/2024/2/the-teaching-and-learning-workforce-in-higher-education-2024>
- National Academies of Engineering, Sciences, and Medicine (2021, January 12). Mental health, substance use, and wellbeing in higher education: supporting the whole student [Video]. Youtube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9P-rrDhVX7Y>
- Nusslock, R. & Farah, M.J. (2022). Introduction to the special focus: the affective neuroscience of poverty. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 34 (10), 1806–1809. https://doi.org/10.1162/jocn_a_01899
- Oklahoma State University. Hidden Student Populations, Graduate Certificate.
<https://go.okstate.edu/graduate-academics/programs/certificates/hidden-populations>
- Perry, B. (2006, Summer). Fear and learning: trauma-related factors in the adult education process. In: S. Johnson & K. Taylor (Eds.). *The neuroscience of adult learning*. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, No. 110, pp. 21-27.
- Perry, B. (2020, August 25). Episode 1: The Neurosequential Model. *Stress, Trauma, and the Brain: Insights for Educators*. 5:56. https://youtu.be/_3is_3XHKKs?si=bLc1W531iwL9Jq2
- Perry, B.D. (2024). Neurosequential model of education. <https://www.bdperry.com/education>
- Perry, R., Sciolla, A., Rea, M. et al. (2023). Modeling the social determinants of resilience in health professions students: impact on psychological adjustment. *Advances in Health Sciences Education*, 28, 1661–1677.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10459-023-10222-1>
- Rehr, T.I. & Nguyen, D.J. (2022). Approach/avoidance coping among community college students and applications for student affairs professionals. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 59:3, 237-251.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2021.1914641>

Rutgers Graduate School of Education (2017, February 15). How classroom predictability & student trust enhance student learning. <https://njalternateroute.rutgers.edu/blog/how-classroom-predictability-student-trust-enhance-student-learning>

Salla, M., Aguilera, M., Paz, C., Moya, J., Feixas, G. (2025, December). The effect of cumulative trauma and polarised thinking on the severity of depressive disorder. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, 98(4), 974-986. doi: 10.1111/papt. 12602

Sanctuary Institute (2025). The sanctuary model. <https://www.thesanctuaryinstitute.org/about-us/the-sanctuary-model/>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2025, September 10). *SAMHSA Strategic Priorities, Executive Summary*. <https://www.samhsa.gov/about/strategic-priorities>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2026, February 8). Trauma-informed approaches and programs. <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/trauma-violence/trauma-informed-approaches-programs>

Sayad, M. (2023, September 11). Faculty burnout and student stress: two sides of the same coin. *The Courier*. <https://codcourier.org/faculty-burnout-and-student-stress-two-sides-of-the-same-coin/>

Siegel, D. J. (2012). *Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology: An Integrative Handbook of the Mind*. W.W. Norton & Company.

Sirois, F. M. (2023). Procrastination and stress: a conceptual review of why context matters. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(6), 5031. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20065031>. <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/20/6/5031>

Thompson, P. & Marsh, H. (2022). Centering equity: trauma-informed principles and feminist practice. In P. Thompson, & J. Carello (Eds.), *Trauma-informed pedagogies: A guide for responding to crisis and inequality in higher education* (pp. 15-33). Palgrave Macmillan.

Tong, S. and Griffiths, J. (20 February, 2026). College can be a big life change. How can students navigate mental health challenges? WBUR. <https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2026/02/19/college-students-mental-health>

Van Dyke, A., Cline, K. M., Morley, S., Munusamy, S., Mnatzaganian, C. L., & Thurston, M. M. (2024). Prioritizing faculty well-being: Why it matters, what schools can do, and a call for action. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 88(11), 101286. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajpe.2024.101286>

Vargas, G. (2020). The amygdala hijack: how our emotions hijack our thinking brain! Legacy Mastery Academy. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PglInxZfUc>

- Watts, N., Brömdal, A. (2026). School absenteeism among trans and gender-diverse students: a scoping review and meta-synthesis of empirical literature. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 53 (20).
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-025-00921-6>
- Whitford, E. (2022, March 22). Student affairs staff quit because of burnout, low pay. *Inside Higher Ed*.
<https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2022/03/23/student-affairs-staff-quit-because-burnout-low-pay>
- Verschelden, C. (2017). *Bandwidth Recovery: Helping Students Reclaim Cognitive Resources Lost to Poverty, Racism, and Social Marginalization*. Stylus Publishing, LLC.
- Verschelden, C. (2022). Battle of the Bandwidth: How we can help students regain lost brainpower. AAC&U.
<https://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/articles/battle-of-the-bandwidth>

RESOURCES

There are so many wonderful resources available to support navigating situations while developing trauma-informed approaches to learning in higher education.

[The Institute for Trauma, Adversity, & Resilience in Higher Education](#) has an extensive list of trauma-informed resources, including practitioners, scholars, websites, books, certification & degree programs, research articles, and more, including:

Janice Carello, PhD, LMSW

<https://traumainformedteaching.blog/about/>

Mays Imad, PhD

<https://sites.google.com/view/maysimad>

Strong Brain Institute at Eastern Tennessee State University

<https://www.etsu.edu/institute/strong-brain/>

Debra Berke, PhD

Including her collaborative work with Trauma Matters Delaware

<https://traumamattersdelaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/A-Developmental-Framework-for-a-Trauma-Informed-Higher-Education.pdf>

Tricia Shalka, PhD

<http://www.triciashalka.com/>

Resources reviewed, adapted, or frequently used by the authors are categorized below.

Established Evidence-Based Trauma and Resilience-Informed Models of support were reviewed and adapted to design the handbook framework. The major sources from which we would like to acknowledge:

- [The Field Guide for Barefoot Psychology from Beyond Conflict](#)
- [The Resilience Scale from the Alberta Wellness](#)
- [6 Guiding Principles to a Trauma-informed Approach](#)
- [Trauma Sensitive Schools at the Trauma & Learning Policy Institute](#)

Illinois Specific Resources

- [ICC TAC Resources](#)
- [Illinois FAQs about Employee Reporting Obligations](#)
- [Illinois State Board of Education's Children's Adversity Index Report](#)
- [Illinois State Regional Tool](#)
- [Mental Health Early Action on Campuses \(MHEAC\)](#)
- [Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, Northern Illinois State U](#)

General Resources

- [Aid and Attendance](#)
- [Caring Campus](#)
- [“Challenging Unhelpful Thinking in College” handout by Stanford University](#)
- [Crisis Prevention and Intervention](#)
- [Crisis Response](#)
- [Integrated Referral and Intake System \(IRIS\)](#)
- [Neurosequential Model of Education](#)
- Bryce, I., Weston-Hill, B., Gildersleeve, J., Cantrell, K., & Preece, K. (2026). Prioritising relationship, community, and student-centered learning: a systematic literature review of trauma-informed pedagogy in higher education. Higher Education Research & Development, 1–22.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2026.2627874>
- [Question, Persuade, Refer \(QPR\) Institute](#)
- [Red Folder](#)
- Glaser, J.E. (2019, May 16). The Neuroscience of Conversations. Psychology Today.
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/conversational-intelligence/201905/the-neuroscience-of-conversations>
- [TRIO](#)
- [What is Public Mental Health?](#)

Supporting Educator Professionals Regarding Vicarious Traumatization

- [AAMC Well-Being in Academic Medicine](#)
- National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity (NCFDD)'s [Solution for Faculty Wellbeing](#)
- Hammoudi Halat, D., Soltani, A., Dalli, R., Alsarraj, L., & Malki, A. (2023). Understanding and fostering mental health and well-being among university faculty: A narrative review. *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, 12(13), 4425. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm12134425>
- Van Dyke, A., Cline, K. M., Morley, S., Munusamy, S., Mnatzaganian, C. L., & Thurston, M. M. (2024). Prioritizing faculty well-being: Why it matters, what schools can do, and a call for action. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 88(11), 101286. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajpe.2024.101286>
- Artze-Vega, I. (2025). Prioritizing Faculty Well-Being During Politicized Times. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 57(6), 22–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2025.2568349>
- Chessman, H. (2023, May 18). *Effective Strategies for Combating Faculty Burnout*. Higher Education Today. <https://www.higheredtoday.org/2023/05/18/effective-strategies-for-combating-faculty-burnout/>
- *7 Practical Faculty Burnout Solutions Every Campus Should Be Using*. (2025, June 11). Insight in Academia. <https://insightintoacademia.com/7-practical-faculty-burnout-solutions-every-campus-should-be-using/>
- Cao, B., Hassan, N. C., & Omar, M. K. (2025). Interventions to Reduce Burnout Among University Lecturers: A Systematic Literature Review. *Behavioral sciences (Basel, Switzerland)*, 15(5), 649. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15050649>

Transportation Resources

- Leow, C., Wu, J., Twiste, T., & Lundquist, A. (2025). Addressing Transportation Barriers Faced by Community College Students in New York City: An Intervention with Free MetroCards. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2025.2553045>
- Rudolph, J. (2025, April 28). *Creative Solutions for College Student Transportation Insecurity*. The Hope Center for Basic Needs. <https://hope.temple.edu/newsroom/hope-blog/creative-solutions-college-student-transportation-insecurity>
- Cojocar, L., Hoermann, S. (2025, October). *Getting There Matters*. MDRC. <https://www.mdrc.org/work/publications/getting-there-matters>
- [The Kresge Foundation - Advancing Student Transportation Solutions](#)

LGBTQ Specific Resources

- Conron, K.J., O'Neill, K.K. & Vasquez, L.A. (2022). Educational Experiences of Transgender People: Findings from a National Probability Survey. The Williams Institute, UCLA and the Point Foundation, Los Angeles, CA.
- Green, E.R. & Maurer, L. (2015). The Teaching Transgender Toolkit: A facilitator's guide to increasing knowledge, decreasing prejudice & building skills. Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes. www.teachingtransgender.org
- Gross, E.B., Kattari, S.K., Steel, M., Wilcox, R., Ernst, S., Parrish, D.(2025). 'I have had several providers who recognize my humanity': exploring overall health and positive healthcare interactions of transgender and gender diverse college students. *Thriving on Campus: Promoting the Inclusion, Academic Development, and Wellbeing of Diverse 2SLGBTQ+ University and College Students*. Eds. Wooford, M.R. et. al. (2025).
- Huff, M., Edwards, K. M., Mauer, V. A., Littleton, H., Lim, S., & Sall, K. E. (2025). Gender-neutral bathrooms on campus: a multicampus study of cisgender and transgender and gender diverse college students. *Journal of American College Health*, 73(3), 1178–1182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2023.2239358>
- Kilgo, C.A. (2020). *Supporting Success for LGBTQ+ Students: Tools for Inclusive Campus Practice*. University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.
- Lange, A.C. (2024). Transgender Men and Non-Binary Students Managing Their Identities to Pay for College. *The Review of Higher Education* 48(1), 129-159. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2024.a937146>.

Foster Care Specific Resources

- Jackson, L., Schelbe, L., Geiger, J., & Schoborg, C. (in press). Campus support program service use by students who experienced foster care, relative care, or homelessness. *Journal of Postsecondary Student Success*. doi:10.33009/fsop_jpss134703
- Schelbe, L., Geiger, J., Schoborg, C., & Jackson, L. (2024). How do students involved with a campus support program for students with a history of foster care, relative care, or homelessness fare after graduation. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 53, 25-49. doi:10.1007/s10566-023-09746-9
- Schelbe, L., Farinella, J., & Guthrie, K. (in press). Examining the graduate school transitions of students who experienced foster care. *The Journal of Foster Care*.
- Wetmore, J.K. (2025). Impact of hidden populations through faculty identification and intervention in higher education. Doctor of Nursing Practice Projects. 120. <https://arch.astate.edu/dnp-projects/120>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The content of this handbook incorporates the thoughtful input of [Illinois Campus Cares Technical Assistance Center](#) (ICC TAC) volunteers, subject-matter experts, scholars, and educators throughout its development.

Handbook Authors

- **Jeanie Tietjen, PhD**, Founder and Director of the [Institute for Trauma, Adversity, & Resilience in Higher Education](#) and Professor at MassBay Community College
- **Joanna Myerson**, Development & Communications Specialist at the [Institute for Trauma, Adversity, & Resilience in Higher Education](#) at MassBay Community College

Founded in 2012 at MassBay Community College, the Institute for Trauma, Adversity, and Resilience in Higher Education promotes understanding in higher education and the larger community of the profound impact trauma and adversity have on the learning brain and academic resilience in higher education, as well as how a strengths based, trauma-informed campus and community can productively support development of critical importance to academic and workplace success. Every encounter area of the higher education community — from pedagogy to campus safety, advising to financial aid, facilities to college policies and administration— can be informed by recognizing the prevalence of trauma, adversity, and toxic stress and how these impact academic resilience. Not a prescriptive list of teaching or institutional practices, trauma-informed education instead describes a perspective or lens through which practices and services can be evaluated in view of lived experience, basic neurobiology, as well as the resilience and strength students and educators bring and share as pursuing shared goals.

Trauma-Informed Expert Contributors

- **Janice Carello, PhD, LMSW**, Associate Professor, PennWest Edinboro
- **Mays Imad, PhD**, Associate Professor, Connecticut College

ICC TAC Case Study Team

- **Beth Groshans**, Highland Community College
- **Bethany Bilyeu, Psy.D.**, University of Illinois Springfield
- **Brittany Warren, LCPC**, Southeastern Illinois College
- **Camille Springer, MSW, LCSW**, Heartland Community College
- **Catherine Passananti, MA, MS**, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
- **Cynthia Carlson, PhD, MA, ATR-BC, LCPC**, Elgin Community College
- **Donna Price, LSW**, Shawnee Community College
- **Emily Reid**, Lake Land College
- **Erin Fabrizio, MA**, Waubensee Community College
- **Hoyam Tanon, LCPC**, Wilbur Wright College
- **Jason Lemberg, M.Ed.**, Triton College
- **Siobhan Dalrymple**, Governors State University
- **Jessica Contreras, LCPC, CADC**, Moraine Valley Community College
- **Kimberly Mann, PhD., LCSW**, Chicago State University
- **LaTia Lane, LCSW**, Olive-Harvey College
- **Laurie Wesselmann, LCPC**, Kaskaskia College
- **Marlen Ruiz, MS Ed**, Elgin Community College
- **Mindy Ashby, MS**, Shawnee Community College
- **Rasha Elhage, PhD**, Governors State University
- **Rhonda Hutter, M.S.Ed**, Rock Valley College
- **Romell Murden-Woldu**, Wilbur Wright College
- **Sara Levi, MA, LCPC**, Clinical and Higher Education Consultant
- **Shelly Ridgeway, MS Ed, LCPC**, Southern Illinois University Carbondale
- **Stephane Potts, MS**, Danville Area Community College

Handbook Designer

- **Ian Franzen**, College Web Pro

Additional Contributors

- **Ashleigh Broгна, MA**, Adjunct Psychology Professor, MassBay Community College
- **Brandi Perri, PhD**, Assistant Professor of Sociology, MassBay Community College
- **Brittany Tolar, LCSW**, Training and Project Coordinator, University of Illinois Chicago

Additional Supporters

- **Anita Sego, PhD**, Executive Director of Technical Assistance & Training Illinois Campus Cares Technical Assistance Center | SIU School of Medicine
- **Courtney Jackson, PhD**, MassBay Community College
- **David Podell, PhD**, MassBay Community College
- **MassBay Community College**
- **Lauren Curley**
- **Abigail Detweiler**
- **Kendra Oliveira**
- **Feby Sesar**
- **Andrew Bengtson, MArchUD**



www.icctac.org



Institute for Trauma,
Adversity, & Resilience
in Higher Education

www.traumainstitutehighered.org