

April 9, 2015

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for the constructive discussion on the faculty listserv regarding the deaths of two UW students in the past week.

We join President McGinity in expressing our sorrow over the students' deaths. Tragedies such as these touch everyone in the university community, and we encourage all who need support to seek out assistance from our university and Laramie resources.

As the vice presidents for academic and student affairs, we are writing to advise faculty and staff members on how to help students experiencing personal challenges and stress. Please share this message with anyone you believe would benefit from it.

Coupled with the growing stress that students, faculty and staff experience as the end of an academic semester approaches, these tragic events warrant increased awareness by all. In some cases, special instructional accommodations may be warranted.

If you haven't already, you might consider raising the issue of student well-being in your classes and outside the classroom -- and possibly express to your students that you care not only about their academic performance, but also about them personally.

Please encourage students who are feeling overwhelmed to seek help from the UW Counseling Service or any of the other resources available to them. If you or your teaching assistants have concerns about an individual student, please know that there is a welfare system in place that is described at www.uwyo.edu/dos/welfarecheck/. If it's an urgent situation, please contact the UW Police Department at 911 or the Dean of Students Office at 766-3296.

Below is information from the UW Counseling Center that should be of assistance to you.

Thank you for your work in educating, mentoring and caring for our students.

Sincerely,

David Jones

Vice President for Academic Affairs

Sara Axelson

Vice President for Student Affairs

The UW Counseling Center is located in room 341 Knight Hall. The phone number is (307) 766-2187, and it is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Same-day appointments are available for crisis situations. We also have daily walk-in appointment times Monday 9 a.m.-noon and 1-4 p.m., and Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m.-noon and 1-4 p.m. If a person experiences a crisis outside regular business hours, call (307) 766-8989 and ask for the counselor on call.

Please keep in mind that as people move through grief and loss they may experience thoughts of ending their lives. If this happens, it is important to reach out and ask for help, and if a person is unable to stay safe to call 911 for immediate assistance.

The University Counseling Center will be offering a Gatekeepers Training on April 16 from 9-11 a.m. This training helps people recognize when someone might be struggling with thoughts of ending her/his life and how to assist the person to get connected with professional mental health services. If you would like to attend this training, please call (307) 766-2187 to get registered.

The following is a list of signs that may indicate someone is thinking of ending his/her life, how to intervene, and several options for connecting the person to crisis services.

- talking about wanting to die
- looking for a way to kill oneself
- talking about feeling hopeless or having no purpose
- talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- acting anxious, agitated or recklessly
- sleeping too little or too much
- withdrawing or feeling isolated
- showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- displaying extreme mood swings

The more of these signs a person shows, the greater the risk. Warning signs are associated with suicide but may not be what causes a suicide. If someone you know exhibits warning signs of suicide:

- Do not leave the person alone.

- Remove any firearms, alcohol, drugs or sharp objects that could be used in a suicide attempt.
- Take the person to an emergency room, call 911, or seek help from a medical or mental health professional.
- Call a crisis line:

University of Wyoming Counseling Center, daytime (307) 766-2187 or after-hours (307) 766-8989

PEAK Wellness Center, Laramie, daytime and after-hours (307) 745-8915

Ivinson Memorial Hospital, Laramie, crisis line (307) 742-0285

U.S. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 800-273-TALK (8255)