

Faculty: Improving Campus Culture

Promising strategy:

This works because:

Create opportunities throughout the early weeks of the semester **for your students to get to know each other** 1:1 and integrate peer-to-peer study groups or meaningful group projects into class expectations. Ensure students have the scaffolding to skillfully and equitably engage in group work. Learn more [classroom management and learning practices](#) through the Center for Teaching and Learning.

Providing structure for students to meet their peers can increase the likelihood of each student making a new meaningful friend at CU. Campus Culture Survey results show that our students struggle to make friends and forge connections with study peers. Providing multiple opportunities to start conversations with new people, and focusing that connection on their hobbies, interests, etc., may lead to more academic friend-making.

Students who make a new, close friend at CU have a stronger sense of belonging (stronger than if their friend is a friend from home). This friendship helps mitigate the negative impact that sexual and identity harms have on sense of belonging and retention at CU.

Require a meaningful assignment to be completed within the first week of the semester, especially if your course is predominantly for first- or second-year students.

Bad actors take advantage of novel situations, which can make new environments - like starting or adjusting to college each year - a high-risk time. This is in addition to the risk that heavy partying can have on students' academic success (learning, grades, and attendance). Increasing meaningful academic engagement and demands in the first weeks of the semester helps reduce the likelihood of harm from being in high-risk environments.

Model prosocial communication skills, including active listening, conflict management, and setting norms around behavior and accountability with your students.

Setting positive norms and expectations and addressing harmful behavior that happens in the classroom is a statistically significant predictor of students feeling like they belong at CU. Prosocial expectations can also reduce the likelihood of harm happening in the first place.

Normalize that students can struggle in college, and still belong in college (and at CU). Use resilience-building strategies like connecting them to peers who can offer guidance, reminding them that immediate mastery of new skills is not expected, and helping students access academic and wellness offices and resources. You can **model this growth mindset** (i.e., the belief that a person's abilities can be improved through effort, learning, and persistence, rather than being innate) through your teaching and how you create course content.

Academic and social challenges can weaken a student's feeling of belonging, making them more susceptible to the adverse effects of identity and sexual harm. Modeling a growth mindset can counteract this when you:

- Share your belief in their ability to learn and that mistakes are part of the learning process.
- Are open about your own struggles and what you've learned from them.
- Commend students for their strategies, perseverance, and planning, rather than just their intelligence or effort.
- Recognize their small successes and improvements over time.

Center your students' wellbeing by operating from a place of care and concern. Be sure to **articulate to students the ways you are trying to offer that care**. Learn about [trauma-informed classroom practices](#).

Campus data show that students don't feel like most of their faculty care about their wellbeing. Yet, when students do feel like a faculty member cares about them, their ability to successfully navigate general college stressors and acute harm increases. Having a robust sense of belonging is the most powerful predictor of retaining a CU student with a GPA of ≥ 2.0 . Increased belonging also protects against sexual and identity harms and some of their negative impacts.

Learn and **practice strategies for responding effectively** if a student discloses a traumatic experience. Attend [OVA's Supporting Survivors Workshop](#) to strengthen these skills.

A listener's supportive reaction to a student's disclosure of harm influences their willingness to seek further help and can positively impact their recovery.

Develop clear participation, makeup, and absentee policies. **Articulate those practices in the syllabus and class discussion**. Consider allowing students to miss class without disclosing why.

Setting the expectation that you are open to responding to different student needs increases student perception that they matter and that faculty are invested in their success.

Survivors of interpersonal and sexual harm may need to access mental health, legal, or medical support on an ad hoc basis. Needing to justify an absence as "deserved" poses an unnecessary barrier.

Review the content available on [Don't Ignore It](#).

While you do not need to be equipped on every issue a student might face - by being familiar with this resource, you may be better able to connect the people you support with campus services if needed..

Students: Shaping Campus Culture

Promising strategy:

This works because:

Take advantage of the opportunities course instructors offer you to **connect with other students** to help build friendships and support networks.

It is common to feel like it is hard to make friends. In fact over half of CU students say that it is difficult to make friends in class, even when they want to. By being intentional - sharing things about your background and experiences and listening for commonalities that might help build ongoing connection - you can use classroom icebreakers and small group discussions to overcome those barriers that make finding friends challenging.

Take the time **to let your friends know that they matter** to you. Try your best to demonstrate your care, concern, and support.

"Mattering" is the feeling that others depend on us, are interested in us, and are concerned with our fate. People feeling like they matter is the key to building community.

Our campus data show that a sense of belonging, of which mattering is a part, helps protect against the negative impacts associated with experiencing sexual and interpersonal harms.

Before going out, talk with your friends about who will stay more sober in case someone needs help.

It is harder to notice problems in party environments, because of intoxication, dimmed lights, and loud music. Bad actors may try to take advantage of these environments. Having some people stay more sober during a night out may increase the chances that you all stick together and look after each other.

Pay attention to the fact that **in new environments** and/or with people we don't know very well, it can be difficult for us to pick up on behaviors that let us know a problem is unfolding.

Especially in new environments or when out with new people, it can be difficult to interpret situations correctly and we risk second-guessing ourselves.

This is why actively noticing concerning behavior is such an important skill. Bad actors taking advantage of a novel environment will be less successful in harming others when people around them are paying attention.

Look out for each other when going out, and **have a plan for how to regroup** with your friends if people get separated.

Most sexual misconduct that happens in our campus community is committed by acquaintances or someone a student just met who takes advantage of a vulnerable situation. By sticking together you are reducing the chance of people in your group ending up isolated or alone with less trusted peers.

Learn and **practice strategies for responding to hurtful comments** and behaviors that may happen in your friend groups, residence halls, or classes.

Responding to problematic words or actions can set the expectation that harmful behavior isn't okay, regardless of the intent. Addressing these behaviors can help build "muscle memory" so that it is easier to intervene in harder situations.

Attend an [OIEC Bystander workshop](#) to strengthen these skills.

Additionally, people on the receiving end of harm generally feel more supported when another person notices and validates their experience.

Learn and **practice strategies for responding effectively if a friend discloses a traumatic experience**.

A listener's supportive reaction to someone's disclosure of harm or traumatic experience influences that person's willingness to seek further help and can positively impact their healing. Our campus data shows that the first person students tell is usually a friend or roommate.

Attend [OVA's Supporting Survivors Workshop](#) to strengthen these skills.

Reflect on how your values about sex and relationships influence your behavior, especially how you treat others and yourself. CU's [Sex Education Workbook](#) may be a useful resource.

Society has a lot of expectations for how sex is meant to go and how we are meant to treat our partner(s). Reflecting on your own values can help you make sense of these messages, set your own boundaries, and navigate conversations with partners and friends about sex, intimacy, and relationships.

Review the content available on [Don't Ignore It](#).

While you do not need to be equipped on every issue a friend might face - by being familiar with this resource, you may be better able to connect the people you care about with campus support services if the need arises.

Staff: Enhancing Student Support

Promising strategy:

This works because:

Cultivate mentoring relationships with the students you employ, see frequently as part of your role, or who seek you out for information or to solve a problem.

Students with two or more mentors are more likely to be retained at CU. They are more likely to seek out resources when they face challenges, including experiences of sexual and identity harm.

Regularly share with the students you interact with the value they bring and **your appreciation** for them.

“Mattering” is the feeling that others depend on us, are interested in us, and are concerned with our fate. Our campus data show that having a robust sense of belonging, which mattering is a part of, is the most powerful predictor of retention of students with a GPA of ≥ 2.0 . Our data also show that a sense of belonging protects against the negative consequences associated with experiencing sexual and identity harms.

Model prosocial communication skills, including active listening, conflict management, and setting norms around behavior and accountability with your students.

Creating a culture of respect through modeling expectations and addressing harmful behavior helps socialize students to be accountable to their community. Using these communication skills may reduce the likelihood of harm happening in the first place, and may increase the capacity for repair when harm does occur.

Normalize that students can struggle in college, and still belong in college (and at CU). **Use resilience building strategies** like connecting them to peers who can offer guidance, reminding them that immediate mastery of new skills is not expected, and helping students access academic and wellness offices and resources.

Academic and social challenges can weaken a student's feeling of belonging, making them more susceptible to the adverse effects of identity and sexual harm. Modeling a growth mindset can counteract this when you:

- Share your belief in their ability to learn and that mistakes are part of the learning process.
- Are open about your own struggles and what you've learned from them.
- Commend students for their strategies, perseverance, and planning, rather than just their intelligence or effort.
- Recognize their small successes and improvements over time.

Strengthening peer connections can enhance a sense of belonging and mattering, which helps protect students from sexual harm and its negative repercussions.

Identify strategies for how you will respond when a student discloses an experience of sexual misconduct.

Attend [OVA's Supporting Survivors Workshop](#) to strengthen these skills.

A listener's supportive reaction to a student's disclosure influences a victim/survivor's willingness to seek further help and can positively impact their recovery.

Attend programs and events with your students. Plan to meet up beforehand so students don't enter the space alone.

Social and educational programming has benefits but only supports the students who attend. By setting the expectation that you and your students will attend together, students who would have missed out may be more likely to go. This also offers more opportunities for students to build the friendships they need to feel like they belong. Making a new friend helps mitigate the negative impacts of sexual and identity harms.

In student programming and student employment, **implement strategies** like small groups and pair-and-share as opportunities for students to get to know each other more deeply

Culture Survey results show that our students struggle to make friends. Providing multiple opportunities to start conversations with new people, and focusing that connection on their hobbies, interests, etc., may lead to more friend-making. Students who make a new, close friend at CU have a stronger sense of belonging (stronger than if their friend is a friend from home). This friendship helps mitigate the negative impact sexual and identity harms have on sense of belonging and retention at CU.

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While you do not need to be equipped on every issue a student might face - by being familiar with this resource, you may be better able to connect the people you support with campus services if needed..