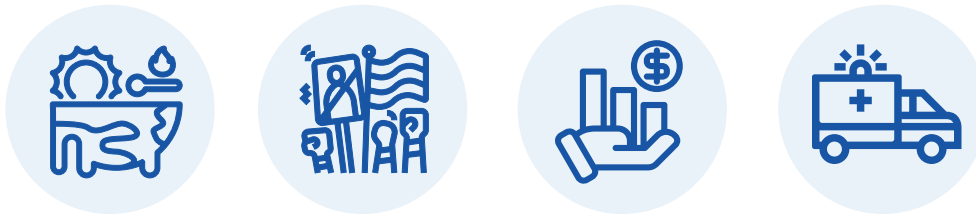




REFERENCES

Supporting post-secondary students in uncertain times

Post-secondary students are navigating a world of growing uncertainty. Global challenges such as climate change, political unrest, economic instability, and health emergencies can disrupt students' academic and personal lives, increasing stress, anxiety, and affecting well-being, engagement, and sense of security.¹⁻⁶



Current examples include the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, in Africa and in Eastern Europe, pervasive inflation with high prices and debts across the globe with protests and attempted coups, the continuing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and more.

What students are experiencing⁷⁻⁹

Students are feeling the effects of this instability in several ways:

- **Financial strain and basic needs insecurity:** Rising costs, high student debt, and reliance on multiple funding sources contribute to food, housing, and medical insecurity.
- **The burden of the digital age:** Constant exposure to global crises through social media and digital platforms leads to phenomena like “doomscrolling,” where the continuous consumption of negative news heightens anxiety and depression.
- **Uncertainty of employment:** The acceleration of artificial intelligence (AI) introduces uncertainty about future job market relevance. This is heightened by the current market difficulty in finding a job within one's field, leading to stressful job-hunting periods.
- **Mental health impacts:** Long-term uncertainty increases risk of depression, anxiety, and burnout, can interfere with learning and can worsen pre-existing mental health conditions.
- **Eco-anxiety:** Climate-related concerns contribute to a sense of future instability and worry.
- **Resource gaps:** Despite the availability of mental health and financial support, many students are either unaware of these resources or still feel unsupported by their institution. Some students may also no longer meet eligibility criteria for financial aid or for certain forms of mental health coverage/insurance.

Institutional and faculty challenges

Post-secondary institutions are also experiencing rapid and complex change. Emerging technologies including the rise of AI, demographic changes, and shifts in government funding are contributing to systemic uncertainty. These pressures require institutions to plan, adjust policies and procedures, and adopt flexible approaches to teaching, learning, and student support.¹

Faculty and staff are also affected by these pressures. Institutional rigidity, limited resources, severe financial constraints, leadership demands, and burnout influence both their well-being and their capacity to effectively support students.²

THE ROLE OF FACULTY & STAFF

Despite these challenges, post-secondary institutions and faculty play a vital role in supporting students through these uncertain times. By providing stability, empathy, and practical resources, faculty and staff can help students manage stress, promote student success, and build resilience.¹⁰

This infosheet provides guidance and strategies for supporting both staff and faculty in navigating these complex challenges.

How faculty and staff can help^{10,11}

1. Receive training and apply intervention models

- Participate in mental health training on a regular basis, including crisis response, conflict resolution, and suicide prevention. Depending on the context, this may also include cultural safety training and trauma-informed practice to ensure support is responsive to diverse student needs.
- Learn about institutional resources and referral pathways to financial aid, counselling, accessibility services, food/housing programs, and peer support programs.
- Use practical tools to support proactive interventions, such as checklists, conversation guides, syllabi statements, and relevant toolkits.
 - * **Example:** A sample statement is available on our website: [Syllabus Statement Samples](#)
 - * Consider also consulting the [CICMH Mental Health Crisis Response on Campus Toolkit](#) as a model for intervention approaches
- Apply the [More Feet on the Ground](#) model to effectively support students.
 - * **Recognize** (learn to identify changes in student behaviour, such as absenteeism, late assignment submission, participation withdrawal, or mood changes)
 - * **Respond** (know how to approach and listen to the student)
 - * **Refer** (be prepared to link the student to the appropriate campus resources)

2. Engage through connection and empathy

- Emphasize building relationships first, focusing on connection before course content.
- Offer flexibility with deadlines (when possible), attendance, accommodation to support students' well-being, and access to materials (for example, recordings and/or asynchronous options).

* **Note:** Recognize that faculty are often bound by institutional rules. When offering flexibility, it is important to emphasize the boundaries of what is possible within existing policy

- Create inclusive, safe spaces on campus and online where students can share challenges and reset.

3. Collaborate with colleagues

- Identify and work with faculty champions or mental health liaisons for guidance and support.
- Share knowledge and resources with peers to strengthen campus-wide support, extend departmental outreach, prevent siloing, and connect with community-based resources.

4. Model self-compassion and well-being

- Prioritize personal mental health to remain effective in supporting students.
- Encourage a culture where staff/faculty and students can discuss mental health openly without stigma.
- Promote personal resilience through reflective practices.

5. Participate in structural solutions

- Contribute to policy, program, curriculum development, and campus-wide wellness initiatives.
- Engage in postvention planning and structured response protocols following crises.
- Advocate for institutional strategies that integrate mental health into curriculum and campus life.

Conclusion

Faculty and staff help most effectively when they combine awareness, empathy, practical strategies, and collaboration while also taking care of their own mental health. Their proactive involvement creates a safer, more supportive campus environment for everyone. Achieving this level of support is challenging. Faculty and staff often operate within systems where institutional support is limited, administrative structures are rigid, and resources are scarce. They may already be experiencing extreme burnout due to managing heavy workloads and teaching multiple courses. Acknowledging this reality is essential; institutions must recognize that sustainable student support is impossible without investing in the well-being and structural support of their educators and staff.

Additional CICMH resources

- [More Feet on The Ground – Online Course](#)
- [Climate Change and Mental Health - Infosheet](#)
- [The Importance of Problematizing Resilience - Infosheet](#)
- [Social Media and Cellphone Addiction - Infosheet](#)
- [Empathic Strain - Infosheet](#)
- [Burnout Recovery: 3 Solution-Focused Steps - Infosheet](#)
- [Mental Health Crisis Response on Campus - Toolkit](#)
 - [How to Support Students Who Are Behaving Disruptively in Class - Infosheet](#)
- [Thriving in the Classroom - Toolkit](#)
- [Post-Secondary National Standard - Toolkit](#)
- [Supporting Resilience on Campus - Webinar](#)

**Tell us what
you think!**

