



# Getting to know Student Disability & HawkReach Counseling Services

## Who are we and what do we do?

Welcome to NSU for the Fall 2020 semester. This semester will be like none other; strong bonds will be forged as we all work together to form a helpful, supportive community. As we prepare for the Fall semester, there is further information relating to the ever changing global pandemic, here is the link to the [NSU RiverHawk Response - Student Guide to COVID-19](#) to stay up to date.

Student Disability Services is committed to ensuring an atmosphere of understanding and awareness of special needs in a welcoming, friendly environment. By providing or arranging reasonable accommodations and services, Student Disability Services collaborated with the campus community to promote equal access to educational and enrichment experiences for the academics and personal growth of the students we serve. The advocacy each student receives supports the student's endeavor for self-sufficiency and determination to succeed.

Success as a student means so much more than just making good grades. Work, relationships, stress, adjusting to college life, and so many other factors can challenge us and at times make success more difficult. In these times of need, HawkReach Counseling Services can help.

HawkReach Counseling Services offers sessions delivered through a brief, Solution-Focused modality. While it is often difficult to talk about the problems we are having, from time to time we can all use a little bit of help managing issues in our lives. Making the commitment to the process really can make a big difference in our day to day lives.

## Did you know?

Misconceptions regarding higher education and accommodations happen all the time.

Established requirements are the same for all students. Accommodations may be appropriate, depending upon the "essential elements" of the program.

Accommodations are not alterations.

## **Services We Offer**

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Students enrolled in postsecondary education are required to self-identify if they would like to request services on the basis of disability. The responsibilities of postsecondary schools are significantly different from those of school districts. Postsecondary schools are charged with the responsibility of providing appropriate academic adjustments and to ensure that the student is not discriminated on the basis of disability.

**HawkReach Counseling Services** offers free counseling services to all students while they are enrolled at NSU. It is often difficult to talk about the problems we are having, from time to time we can all use a little bit of help managing issues in our lives. Making commitment to the process really can make a big difference in our day to day lives.

### Commonly Addressed Issues:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Choosing a major and other classroom issues
- Adjustment issues
- Grief
- Trauma
- Relationship problems
- Dating and sexual violence
- Pre and Post Deployment and other Veterans issues
- Crisis Response
- Other personal and Mental Health concerns

The staff of Counseling Services encourages and practices inclusiveness, and we strive to be respectful of the diversity of our students regardless of age, ability, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, or other differences.



### From the Therapist's desk:

As the '20-'21 academic year is underway, students, faculty and staff alike are facing unique challenges. While new social expectations are emerging (literally and figuratively overnight) like social distancing, mask-wearing and Zoom for...well, everything – University community-members have also experienced a -type-of displacement in being “moved” to online platforms. We all have “*journeyed*” these experiences-albeit, the travel feels as if we have been alone.

I, like many of you, have “*tuned-in*” to internet satire as a method of coping with current events of 2020. From memes to Tik Tok videos, it would seem that many of us have chosen to “distance” ourselves from the reality of our individual and collective – challenges. In these unprecedented times, our internal search and figurative compass – a sort-of sense of “motivation” driving us toward our life-goals may seem to be lost...or, at least, missing.

During life's (undesired yet unavoidable) moments of collision with reality's existential questions, I find it helpful to consider (and engage with others) discourses on life's meaning. This could be conversations with a trusted friend, discussion with a peer over coffee or a short walk with a coworker.

In these moments in time, we begin “*a collective experience*” – something together...rather than alone. We are likely to find that the person next to us has shared in (an all too familiar) emotional and psychological journey of-late.

“*It is this engagement that counts*” I think to myself. Reaching out to another person acts as a catalyst...a sort-of, “redirecting” of our motivations toward a positive place – hopeful one.

Lives shared. Mutual participation in the present state of being. Hope.

As we connect (and reconnect) with others, we may find that the question of the meaning of life may be elusive. But hope beckons as we engage, with respect for each other, concerning a shared reality and similar circumstances...Person to person, we immerse ourselves into the river of life and let our questions, challenges and differences drift away. When we do, we realize that we are not alone...and this fact – above all other – may be the reality we choose to live in.

My best wishes for all of you,

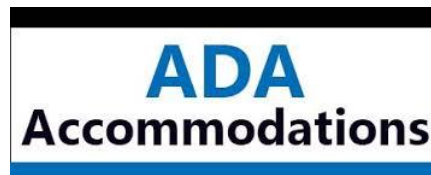
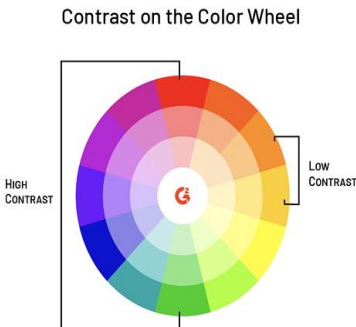
Renee Wilson, MS, LPC

## Did you know?

Text with poor color contrast for both people with unimpaired vision and people with color blindness is difficult to read.

Text should have a good contrast ratio again its given background.

Best practice would be using a minimum threshold of 5.0-1.



## How a student applies for accommodations:

- 1) Obtain documentation of disability?
  - What serves as documentation?
    - \* Documentation is written information that states:
      - (a) What is the student's **SPECIFIC** disability?
      - (b) How the disability affects the student's academic performance.
    - \* Documentation must be current in relation to type of disability.
    - \* Documentation will become the property of Northeastern State University.
    - \* Documentation **Must** be typed. **HAND WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION WON'T BE ACCEPTED.**
    - \* Documentation must be **SIGNED** by the Doctor or Specialist.
    - \* Documentation **MUST** be on the Doctor or Specialist's official letterhead. Official medical records are not appropriate and will not be accepted to meet our documentation requirement.
- 2) Schedule intake meeting with Student Disability Services at [sdsba@nsuok.edu](mailto:sdsba@nsuok.edu) for the Broken Arrow Campus or [sdstah@nsuok.edu](mailto:sdstah@nsuok.edu) for the Tahlequah Campus.
- 3) Depending on the accommodation request, the student may be asked to provide further documentation.

## **Disability Highlight: Anxiety:**

### Educational Implications

Students with Anxiety disorders are easily frustrated, they may have difficulty completing their work. They may worry so much about getting everything right that they take much longer to finish than other students. Or they may simply refuse to begin out of fear that they won't be able to complete it correctly. Their fears of being embarrassed, humiliated, or failing may result in school avoidance. Getting behind in their work due to numerous absences often creates a cycle of fear of failure, increased anxiety, and avoidance, which leads to more absences. Furthermore, students are not likely to report anxious feelings, which may make it difficult for educators to fully understand the reason behind poor school performance.

### Instructional Strategies and Classroom Accommodations

- Consider allowing students a flexible deadline for worrisome assignments.
- Consider modifying or adapting the curriculum to better suit the student's learning style – this may lessen a student's anxiety.
- Post the daily schedule where it can be seen easily so students know what to expect.
- Maintain regular communication with students.
- Consider the use of technology. Many students will benefit from easy access to appropriate technology, which may include applications that can engage student interest and increase motivation (e.g., computer-assisted instruction programs, YouTube or webinar demonstrations, videotape presentations).

*Resources:* See <https://macmh.org/publications/mental-health-fact-sheets/> for more anxiety disorder specific resources.

## **Did you know?**

Symptoms and Behaviors of Anxiety can include:

- Frequent absences
- Refusal to join in social activities
- Isolating behavior
- Many physical complaints
- Excessive worry about homework or grades
- Low frustration tolerance
- Irritable
- Dizzy
- Shortness of breath
- Fear of new situations
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Unrealistic, obsessive fears
- Tension about everyday life events

## Meet Our Team

**Dr. Sheila Self, Asst VP, Dean of Students** I graduated from NSU in 1998 and 2000 with my bachelor's in Psychology and master's in Counseling Psychology. I worked in community mental health for five years before coming back to NSU to be a mental health counselor for Student Affairs. I then moved into the Counseling Director position in 2008, and AVP/Dean of Students position in 2013. I am happy to help students navigate any issue or concern they may have while working to obtain their degree. The road to graduation is often bumpy and curved, and I enjoy helping students overcome their challenges and find their way.

Office Location: Tahlequah Administration 2nd Floor

**Deborah Graham, Administrative Assistant** spent 20 years in the health industry prior to joining the Counseling Services' team in 2015. She brings a wealth of knowledge in client-care and office organization/flow and management. Deborah is an integral part of connecting with students and assists the department in helping meet each person's unique needs.

Office Location: Tahlequah Campus, Leoser Complex, 99, HawkReach (North of the Housing Office)

Phone: 918-444-2042

**Donna Agee, Senior Coordinator of Student Disability Services**-Tahlequah works to ensure a climate of understanding, access, and awareness of the special needs, rights, and interests of students with disabilities. All efforts are directed toward the full integration of each student into all aspects of university life. Under university policy, federal and state laws, "qualified student's with disabilities" are entitled to reasonable accommodation that will allow them access to programs, jobs, services, and activities unless the accommodation would pose an undue hardship on the institution. To that end my job as Sr. Coordinator of Student Disability Services on the Tahlequah campus is to facilitate that charge. If you have a disability and would benefit from accommodations in the classroom please contact me to review your needs. All accommodations are individualized and range from extended time testing to audio books.

Office Location: Tahlequah Campus, Leoser Complex, 99, HawkReach (North of the Housing Office)

Phone: 918-444-2042

Email: [dstah@nsuok.edu](mailto:dstah@nsuok.edu)

**Kelli Simpson-Lembo, Educational Access Coordinator** in Student Affairs – Broken Arrow, coordinates classroom accommodations such as test proctoring and extended testing time for students with short- or long-term disabilities. Graduated from Kean University with a B.A. in Psychology and has an Oklahoma Special Education teaching certification. Growing up, sign language was a second language in her home and as a result, Kelli is also fluent in American Sign Language. Kelli serves the students on the BA and Muskogee campus.

Office Location: Broken Arrow, Administration Services Building, First Floor, Ste. 130

Phone: 918-449-6139

Email: [sdsba@nsuok.edu](mailto:sdsba@nsuok.edu)

**Renee Valcarcel-Wilson, LPC, Clinical Coordinator/Therapist** is an alumna of Northeastern State and a current doctoral student in the counselor education and supervision (PhD) program at the University of Arkansas. Her therapeutic work/interests include the use of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) for persons managing symptoms of post trauma and anxiety.  
Office Location: Tahlequah Campus, Leoser Complex, 99, HawkReach (North of the Housing Office)  
Phone: 918-444-2042  
Email: [hawkreach@nsuok.edu](mailto:hawkreach@nsuok.edu)

**Braden Cary, LPC, Clinical Coordinator/Therapist** on the BA campus. Through HawkReach I offer free counseling sessions to NSU students. Counseling can teach individuals new ways to cope, communicate, change perspective and establish healthy patterns. I am located in the Admin Building Suite 130 or you can seek counseling online just search HawkReach on the NSU website.  
Office Location: Broken Arrow, Administration Services Building, First Floor, Ste. 130  
Phone: 918-449-6131  
Email: [hawkreach@nsuok.edu](mailto:hawkreach@nsuok.edu)

**Elizabeth Mai, Student Advocate/Case Manager**-Tahlequah campus. Liz Coordinates education and outreach programs/trainings in the areas of domestic violence, stalking and sexual assault. She connects students with resources in and outside of the university. She collaborates with Law enforcement, DA's office, and Help in Crisis. Liz will be working on a second Master's Degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Northeastern State University. She serves students on all campuses.  
Office Location: Leoser Complex, 99, HawkReach (North of Housing Office)  
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Email: [hawkreach@nsuok.edu](mailto:hawkreach@nsuok.edu)