

# Identifying and Supporting Students in Distress

Dr. Jennifer Crofts, Psy.D.



Counseling and  
Psychological Services

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA  
A Division of Student Development and Enrollment Services (SDES)

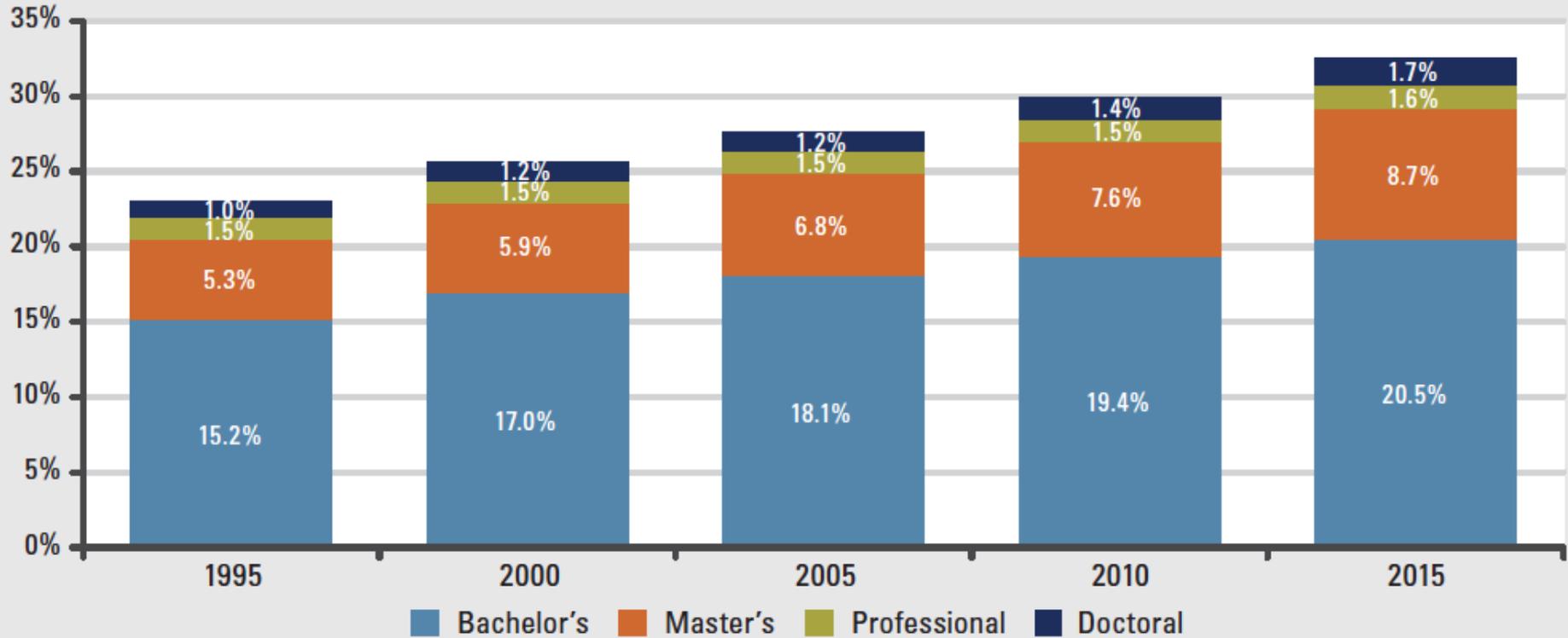


UCF

# Learning Objectives:

1. Learn how to identify common signs of distress in college students
  - Explore the unique stressors faced by graduate students
2. Explore effective strategies to support students in distress

**Figure 1: Educational Attainment of Adults Ages 25 and Older over Time**



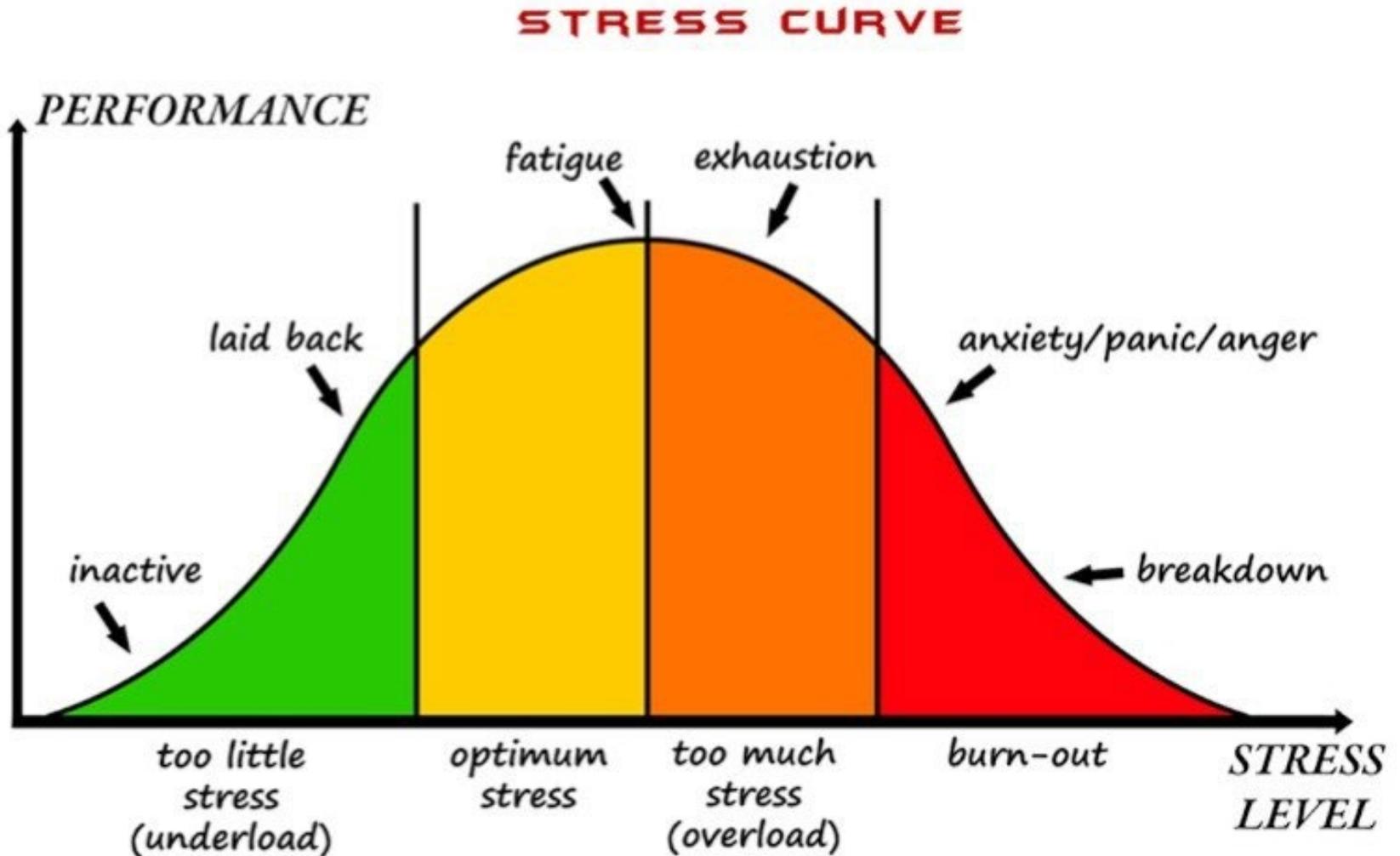
Baum, S., & Steele, P. (2017)

**Table 1: Graduate School Enrollment among Bachelor's Degree Recipients by Student Characteristics**

	<b>1992–93 bachelor's degree: Enrolled within four years</b>	<b>1992–93 bachelor's degree: Enrolled within 10 years</b>	<b>2007–08 bachelor's degree: Enrolled within four years</b>
<b>All</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>			
White	33%	40%	38%
Asian	39%	41%	42%
Black	34%	45%	45%
Hispanic	38%	43%	36%
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	33%	39%	36%
Female	35%	42%	40%
<b>Dependent students' family income</b>			
Lowest quartile	33%	41%	39%
Second quartile	35%	43%	42%
Third quartile	37%	49%	42%
Highest quartile	42%	49%	45%
<b>Age completed bachelor's degree</b>			
22 or younger	40%	49%	39%
23 to 26	28%	33%	37%
27 to 30	25%	29%	38%
31 or older	33%	36%	38%

Source: NCES, Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study, 1993–2003 and 2008–2012.

# What is distress?

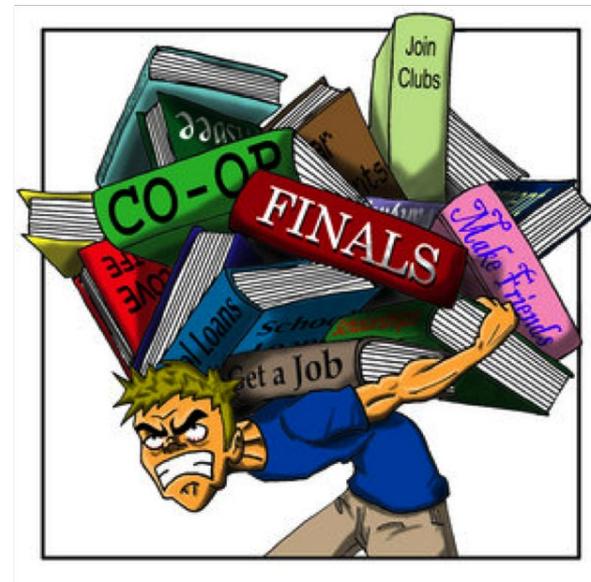


**Eustress:** stress that motivates you to continue working

**Distress:** when the good stress becomes too much to bear or cope with

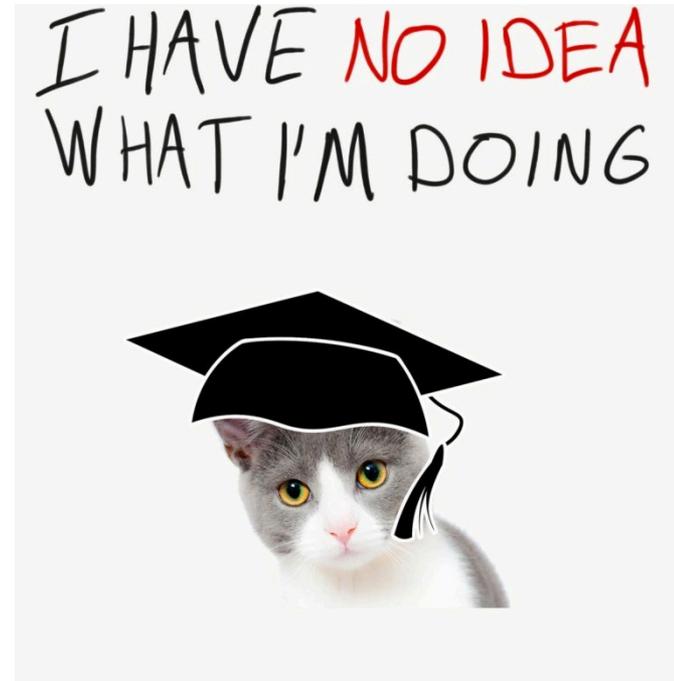
# Minority Stress

- Stressors experienced by minorities that are
- **Additive** to general stressors
- **Chronic** high levels of stress
- **Socially-based** stems from social structures
- Caused by
  - Prejudice
  - Discrimination
  - Micro aggressions
  - Harassment
  - Maltreatment
  - Low social support



# Impostor Syndrome

- Deep down they feel like complete frauds—their accomplishments are seen as the result of luck.
- A belief that they are inadequate and an incompetent failure, despite evidence that indicates they are skilled and quite successful.



# Signs of Emotional Distress

- Marked change in self-care or grooming
- Increased Irritability
- Losing interest in usual activities
- Withdrawal from social contact
- Sadness or tearfulness
- Feeling tired and drained most of the time
- Lowered immunity, feeling sick a lot
- Frequent headaches, back pain, muscle aches
- Change in appetite or sleep habits
- Procrastinating, taking longer to get things done
- Using food, drugs, or alcohol to cope
- Skipping class, coming late
- Apathy
- Sense of failure and self-doubt
- Feeling helpless, trapped, alone and defeated
- Increasingly cynical and negative outlook
- Decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment



# Your role is important!

- There is a unique relationship between students and mentors/professors
  - Ongoing and continuous
  - Change is more easily detected because of opportunities to observe and interact
  - Ability to be established as a resource
  - Perceived as knowledgeable and helpful
- Professors and staff are often the first ones students turn to when in distress
  - Early detection facilitates better outcomes
- Not expected to be a psychologist, therapist or counselor
  - Speak up and refer

# Sympathy vs. Empathy



**Pity:**  
I acknowledge  
your suffering.

**Sympathy:**  
I care about  
your suffering.

**Empathy:**  
I feel your  
suffering.

**Compassion:**  
I want to relieve  
your suffering.

**Engagement**



# How Not to Show Empathy

---

- *“I know exactly how you feel.”*
- *“Everything will be fine.”*
- *“It will all work out, stop worrying.”*
- *“You really shouldn’t feel that way.”*
- *“You just need to get out and have a good time.”*
- *“I did \_\_\_\_\_, and I know you just need to do the same thing.”*



## Free online game-based training simulations

Learn how to engage in conversations that support students struggling with life's challenges and more concerning mental health issues.

**Kognito** role-play simulations assist with building the capacity of faculty, staff, and students to lead real-life conversations that change lives.

VETERANS ON CAMPUS

LGBTQ ON CAMPUS



- Evidence-based program assessed in numerous national studies
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) **Best Practice**
- National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP)
- Adopted by 350+ colleges and universities
- Provides a low-risk environment to practice conversations



# CAPS Services

- LOCATION:** Counseling Building - Bldg #27 (Near Health Center)
- TELEPHONE:** (407) 823-2811
- WEBSITE ADDRESS:** [www.caps.sdes.ucf.edu](http://www.caps.sdes.ucf.edu)
- HOURS OF OPERATION:** Monday-Thursday 8:00am - 6:00pm\*  
*Walk-in hours from 8:00am-5:00pm*  
(\*5:00pm – 6:00pm services are by appointment only)
- Friday 8:00am - 5:00pm\*  
*Walk-in hours from 8:00am-4:00pm*  
(\*4:00pm – 5:00pm services are by appointment only)
- AFTER HOURS:** CAPS Hotline #5  
Victim Services  
Police  
Local Hospitals

# ARE YOU IN A CRISIS?



After-hours crisis services available by phone

## CRISIS HOTLINE

---

407-823-2811

---

 **UCF** COUNSELING &  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

For more information visit [caps.sdes.ucf.edu/emergency](https://caps.sdes.ucf.edu/emergency)

# Connect with CAPS

through our **social media sites**



Counseling and  
Psychological Services



@UCFCAPS



UCFCAPS



UCF Counseling Center



# We want to improve! So please take this evaluation to help us improve our services!

On your smartphones, use this site and take this **two minute** survey:

<https://bit.ly/2JhLi20>

Or use this QR code:



**Thank you!**

