



# GUIDELINES FOR HELPING THE DISTRESSED STUDENT

## Utilizing the SOS Report & Early Alerts

**Faculty may come into contact with students who are experiencing academic challenges or who are in distress. Learn to identify indicators of distress, how to interact with and assist students, & when to share concerns with others.**



University of  
La Verne | Office of  
Academic Advising

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## Acknowledgements

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our students well-being and academic success, creating this guide became a top priority for Student Outreach and Support (SOS) and The Office of Academic Advising. This resource was developed in collaboration with the SOS Coordinator & Case Manager, Adrienne Montero-Camacho, MSW and the Assistant Director of Academic Advising and University Catalog, Dr. Amanda Santos Miller.

The following individuals also provided valuable input and oversight during the creation:

Juan Regalado, Chief Student Affairs Officer

Dr. Carlos Cervantes, Associate Dean, Academic Support & Retention Services

Ruben Ibarra, Director, University Safety Operations

Additionally, the information used in the development of this guide was adapted from materials from The University of British Columbia & The University of Central Florida.

## Introduction

The University of La Verne is committed to the health, safety and well-being of all students. To support this commitment, the SOS Behavior and Wellness Referral Report and the Early Alert were developed to share concerning information with the appropriate offices so students can receive the academic support and supportive resources they need.

This resource defines the reporting systems, offers suggestions for best practices, and identifies frequently used resources on campus. **Hyperlinks accompany resources throughout the guide to quickly connect faculty with additional information.** It is our hope in developing this guide that faculty will 1) feel better prepared to work with students experiencing difficult circumstances and 2) be aware of the systems in place that can support them as they support students.

**As faculty become aware of these reporting systems, it is important to note two things.** First, SOS and the Office of Academic Advising have a “no wrong door policy”. Should faculty submit an SOS report that is academically focused, or submit an Early Alert that is well-being focused, the offices will coordinate to connect the student with the appropriate resource/office. Second, SOS reports and Early Alerts become a part of a student’s academic record. With this in mind, it is important to be mindful about *what* and *how* information is documented when submitting these reports.

# **PART ONE**

## **SOS Behavior and Wellness Referral Report**



## **SOS is a collaboration of student support departments working together to ensure the well-being of students.**

When there is a concern for a student's well-being, faculty are encouraged to share these concerns using the [SOS Behavior & Wellness Referral Report](#). Once a report is received, SOS can begin the process of supporting the student with resources and guidance.

### **HOW TO MAKE A REFERRAL**

The [SOS Behavior & Wellness Referral Report](#) is a public form listed on the [SOS webpage](#). Faculty, staff, students and community members can utilize the form to advise SOS of a concern regarding a student's well-being.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY CONSIDERATIONS**

[FERPA](#) does not prohibit the disclosure of personal or classroom behavioral observations of students. Additionally, anything expressed verbally by a student is not part of the "educational record" and can be shared. Should the student disclose concerning information in writing, it can be shared with someone with an "educational need to know" as described by FERPA regulations, which would include SOS. For more information regarding FERPA, faculty are encouraged to contact the [Office of the Registrar](#).

### **YOUR ROLE**

Faculty are often the first to become aware of a student who is in need of additional support. As life becomes overwhelming and unmanageable, students turn to faculty for help, sharing personal information about their lives and struggles. Your expression of interest and concern may be a critical factor in helping a student connect with the appropriate resources. SOS asks that you listen to and empathize with students that reach out to you, referring them to SOS as needed.

### **WHEN TO REFER**

- ⇒ A student admits there is a problem, but they do not want to share it with faculty.
- ⇒ Faculty has helped as much as they can and further assistance is needed.
- ⇒ Problem is more serious than faculty is comfortable or qualified to handle.
- ⇒ Faculty's personal feelings about the student will interfere with objectivity.

### **WHAT TO EXPECT**

- ⇒ SOS makes multiple attempts to contact students.
- ⇒ SOS identifies & provides available resources to students.
- ⇒ SOS develops action plans with student and determines appropriate interventions to ensure safety.
- ⇒ SOS provides faculty with appropriate updates when possible.
- ⇒ SOS provides guidance & consultation to faculty.

### **LIMITATIONS**

- ⇒ Students will not be mandated to meet with SOS.
- ⇒ SOS may not be able to solve all issues a student is experiencing.
- ⇒ SOS cannot force a student to receive help.
- ⇒ SOS may not be able to provide faculty with detailed updates regarding the action plan that is developed.

## Transparency is key for an effective referral.

Though it is not preferred, SOS reports may be submitted anonymously. SOS understands there will be instances when faculty are concerned for a student, but do not feel comfortable with the student knowing they submitted a report. When this is the case, SOS will respect the faculty's decision; however, it is important to note that based on the information shared, it may be obvious who the reporter is.

Because transparency is key for referrals to be effective, SOS recommends faculty discuss the need for a referral with the student.

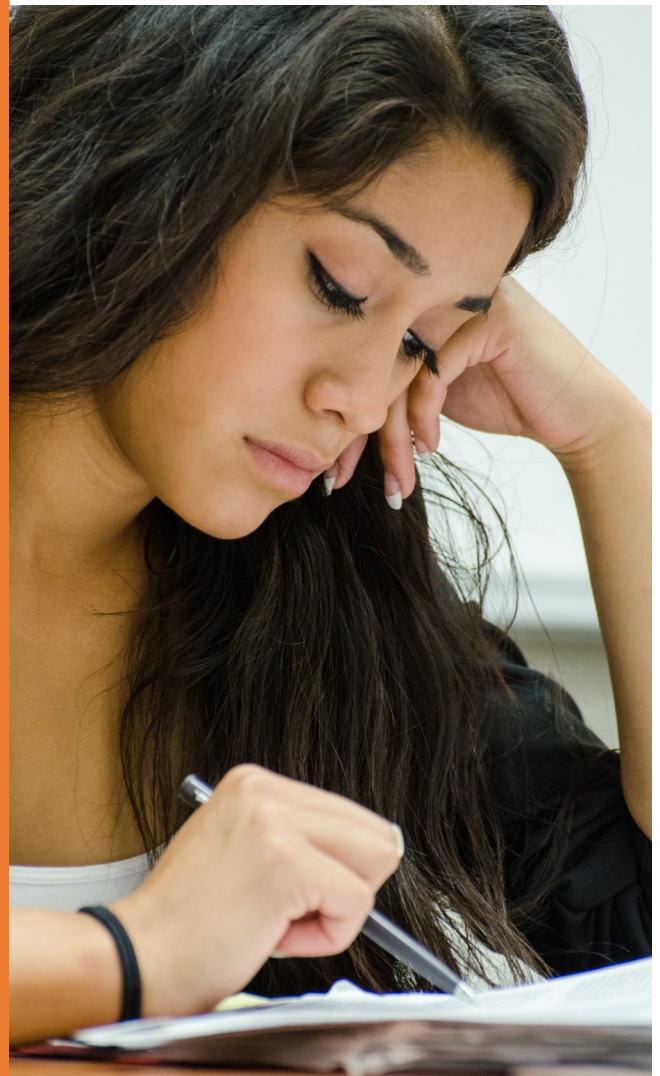
### DISCUSSING REFERRALS

- ⇒ Express concerns directly with students
- ⇒ Normalize seeking additional support
- ⇒ Encourage student to connect with SOS
- ⇒ Be frank about your limits, energy, training and objectivity
- ⇒ For a concern that is less serious, ask permission to submit a report. If student does not want a report submitted, provide them contact information for SOS instead
- ⇒ For a concern that is more serious, tell student you will be submitting a report because you care for them and want them to connect with helpful resources
- ⇒ Coordinate a warm-hand off between SOS and student

If faculty are concerned or unsure of how to inform a student a SOS report has been submitted, they are encouraged to contact SOS to discuss the specific situation with the case manager.

## CHALLENGES STUDENTS FACE

- ⇒ Overwhelming demands
- ⇒ Navigating college as a first generation student
- ⇒ Unhealthy/unsupportive home environment
- ⇒ Financial concerns
- ⇒ Loss of a loved one
- ⇒ Peer pressure
- ⇒ Mental health issues
- ⇒ Impact of global events
- ⇒ Coping with transition to college (course load, homesickness, difficulty making connections)



## Faculty may be the first to see signs that a student needs support.

Based on their relationship with a student, faculty may choose to first work with a student independently. However, when the following indicators are present, faculty should submit an SOS report. The faculty may continue to take lead in working with the student, but it is important for SOS to be aware of the situation as the indicators the faculty witnesses may be only one piece of the puzzle.

### SIGNS OF A DISTRESSED STUDENT

- ⇒ Expresses stressful events have occurred in their lives
- ⇒ Displays decreased quality of work
- ⇒ Has increased absences
- ⇒ Makes repeated requests for special considerations
- ⇒ Displays anxiety
- ⇒ Is unable to provide for their basic living needs

**Take Action:** Talk directly with the student (if you feel comfortable) and inform them about available resources. Submit an SOS Report.

### SIGNS OF A DISTURBING/DISRUPTIVE STUDENT

- ⇒ Has incongruent emotional responses
- ⇒ Displays bizarre behavior
- ⇒ Describes suspicious thoughts
- ⇒ Demonstrated irritable behavior
- ⇒ Reports sexual or physical assault
- ⇒ Has emotional or anger outbursts
- ⇒ Disrupts class

**Take Action:** Inform student you believe an SOS report is needed for their well-being. Submit an SOS report. If conduct related, please contact the Director of Residence Life and Student Conduct

## SIGNS OF A DANGEROUS STUDENT

- ⇒ Expressed suicidal/homicidal thoughts or gestures
- ⇒ Makes threats to others
- ⇒ Displays self-mutilating behavior
- ⇒ Demonstrates intimidating behaviors

**Take Action:** For immediate threats, contact Campus Safety (909-448-4950). In life or death situations, call 911. For consultations, contact CAPS (909-448-4105). After safety is established, submit an SOS report.

## IF A STUDENT DOES NOT WANT HELP

There are times when faculty have a valid reason to be concerned for a student; however, regardless of the avenue in which support is offered, students do not accept it. When this is the case, we must respect their decision. Accepting or refusing assistance must be left up to the student (**EXCEPT IN EMERGENCIES**). **Do not** force the issue or trick a student into going to a referred resource; however, **do** leave room for reconsideration in the future should the student change their mind.

If a student is not accepting help and continues to be disruptive, faculty are encouraged to consult with their program chair, Academic Dean, and the Director of Residence Life and Student Conduct.



## The most common way people mismanage a crisis situation is to respond in a reactive or emotional manner.

Being comfortable responding to a student in distress comes with practice. Following these interactions, faculty may feel overwhelmed, confused, or simply frustrated. SOS and CAPS are available to consult with faculty to discuss how to approach each unique situation, as well as process an incident with faculty after it occurs.

### DO

- ⇒ **Stay calm.** You are the professional, do not lose control of yourself.
- ⇒ **Be objective.**
- ⇒ **Express empathy.** Enter into a conversation with students on an empathetic level.
- ⇒ **Know the limits of your role/expertise.** If you feel unequipped to assist a student, be transparent with them and refer them to SOS.
- ⇒ **Ignore challenge questions.** When a student challenges your position, training, policy, etc. redirect them to the issues at hand. Answering these questions often fuels a power struggle.

### DO NOT

- ⇒ **Promise secrecy.** When it comes to safety concerns (suicidal/homicidal thoughts) and Title IX related issues, faculty have an obligation to share this information with the appropriate parties.
- ⇒ **Get pulled into an argument or shouting match.**
- ⇒ **Minimize a student's feelings, even if you do not agree with them.**
- ⇒ **Judge a student for the decisions they are making.** Judgement will isolate the student and discourage them from receiving help in the future.
- ⇒ **Overreact.** Some students report not seeking help because doing so in the past led to excessive reactions that were embarrassing for the student.

## TALKING TO A STUDENT IN DISTRESS

### ACKNOWLEDGE

- ⇒ Be specific about the behavior that you noticed, express your concern
- \* *"I've noticed you've been absent from class lately. I'm concerned about you"*

### INQUIRE AND LISTEN

- ⇒ Ask open-ended questions, be patient, give your full attention
- \* *"How is everything going? Are you okay?"*

### PROVIDE INFORMATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

- ⇒ Provide the student with information about resources, encourage them to connect with at least one of them
- \* *"I'm concerned about you and I want to support you. I'd like to share a few resources with you that might help."*
- \* *"I'm concerned for you and would recommend you meet with the SOS case manager. Can I submit a referral for you?"*
- \* *"Because I am concerned for you and want to make sure you get support, I will be referring you to the SOS case manager. I hope you take some time to meet with them."*

### FOLLOW UP

- ⇒ Submit an SOS report, follow up with the student, but do not insist on knowing what the student has done
- \* *"How are things since our talk last week?"*

# **PART TWO**

## **Early Alerts**

## The Early Alert process is necessary to identify students who are struggling academically.

The Office of Academic Advising has partnered with the Dean of Student to utilize an electronic report form to track student cases. Using the electronic report form will help faculty and staff from various functional areas work together to assist students who show "at-risk" behaviors.

The Early Alert Reports primary function is to alert university community members when a student falls off track. This section will include an overview of the Early Alert process, step by step instructions on how to submit an early alert and provide valuable information to understand how the Office of Academic Advising and corresponding departments address each Early Alert.

### FACULTY ROLE

All faculty are encouraged to utilize the electronic report form as a resource to send an Early Alert for any student who is not performing well in class, per instructor syllabus and expectations. Faculty are also encouraged to add Early Alert language in their syllabus (see page 16), making students aware of what may happen if they are not performing well in class.

### USING EARLY ALERTS AS A RESOURCE

Early Alert is available for faculty during the fall, spring, and summer semesters to identify academic concern areas for undergraduate students. The system is designed to provide faculty with a way to connect with campus units to best support students. The Early Alert should be used with a combination of faculty outreach and support.

## WHEN TO REPORT

Faculty members should submit an Early Alert through the electronic report form, only after attempts have been made to assist the student through direct contact and feedback. The Office of Academic Advising will intervene if your outreach or feedback to the student does not improve the student's behavior.

## TYPES OF EARLY ALERTS

- ⇒ Missing or incomplete assignments
- ⇒ Attending classes, but not on roster
- ⇒ Attendance issues or punctuality problems
- ⇒ Disruptive behavior; difficult in the class
- ⇒ Classroom participation issues
- ⇒ Class preparation problems
- ⇒ Low exam scores
- ⇒ Substandard homework grades
- ⇒ Study skills
- ⇒ Lack of books
- ⇒ Other areas you see as concerning

### Other areas of concern may include:

- ⇒ Educational planning
- ⇒ Job/career issues
- ⇒ Financial aid
- ⇒ Career planning
- ⇒ Learning disability consultation
- ⇒ Referral to psychological services
- ⇒ Withdrawing from class

## Faculty are encouraged to submit Early Alerts as soon as "at-risk" behaviors arise.

There are many reasons a student may struggle academically. The Early Alert process plays a vital role in our retention outreach to help guide our "at-risk" students to the appropriate resources.

### CONCERNS TO REPORT

- ⇒ **Non-attendance:** If a student does not attend class within 72 hours of the class start date, it is recommended that faculty contact the student via phone and email. If the student is unresponsive or explains they will not be attending class, the faculty member should submit an [Early Alert report](#).
- ⇒ **Low participation:** If a student is not meeting their participation requirements, even after receiving feedback on this area., the faculty member should submit an [Early Alert report](#).
- ⇒ **Low Quality/Late/No assignment submissions:** If a student is having issues with assignments, it is recommended that faculty contact their student to discuss assignment due dates and tutoring services. The faculty member should review syllabus requirements with their student, including their late assignment policy. If the student is unresponsive or explains they need further assistance, the faculty member should submit an [Early Alert Report](#).

### SUPPORTING THE STUDENT

The Early Alert system process will consist of several steps, which will include key stakeholders on campus working together to support the student (i.e., Academic Advisor, ASC, Counseling, etc.).

- ⇒ The [Office of Academic Advising](#) will acknowledge your submission within 48 hours.
- ⇒ Next, we activate the report, which will trigger an email to the student and academic advisor. The email will include initial steps the student can take to improve their academic performance (i.e., counseling, tutoring, meet with an advisor, etc.).

- ⇒ The student will be prompted to make an appointment with the Office of Academic Advising to create a success plan, which will include SMART Goals (see below).
- ⇒ Lastly, an Academic Advisor from our office will update faculty once each case is closed.

### SMART GOALS

- ⇒ Is the goal **SPECIFIC**? What will it do? Who will carry it out?
- ⇒ Is the goal **MEASURABLE**? How will the team know it has been achieved?
- ⇒ Is the goal **RELEVANT** to performance expectations?
- ⇒ Is the goal **TIME** bound? How often will this task be done? By when will this goal be accomplished?

### IF A STUDENT DOES NOT RESPOND

The Office of Academic Advising will attempt to make several contacts with the student via phone, email, and utilizing natural connections through various campus units. Under [FERPA Guidelines](#), if the student has provided documented Third-Party Authorization, our office will submit a letter to the listed individual. Each Early Alert is handled on a case by case basis, and outreach will vary depending on the Early Alert reason.



# **PART THREE**

## **Additional Resources**

## Supporting students is a collaborative effort.

Although faculty are usually the first to notice a student is struggling, they are not alone when it comes to supporting these students.

The following is not an exhaustive list of services, though they are the resources used most often by SOS and the Office of Academic Advising.

## RESOURCES FOR FACULTY

### ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER

Located within the Learning Commons, the ASC provides academic support across all majors and disciplines with the goal of preparing consultants, faculty, and staff to facilitate students becoming engaged, self-sufficient learners who are confident in their abilities to reach their academic goals. Please encourage students to utilize the ASC for individual or group consulting brainstorming, etc. The ASC is also available to design course-specific workshops and to provide Student Learning Assistants to offer support during and/or after class sessions. If you are interested in arranging for a Student Learning Assistant for your class, please fill out this form.

Contact: [asc@laverne.edu](mailto:asc@laverne.edu) 909-448-4342

### ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

The Accessibility Services Department has been designated to ensure access for all students with disabilities to all academic programs and university resources. The goal of Accessibility Services is to support and encourage all La Verne students who have disabilities to participate fully in campus life, its programs, and activities. They emphasize growth and individual achievement and address this goal through the provision of academic accommodations, support services, self-advocacy, skill training, and disability-related education programming for the university community.

Contact: [accessibilityservices@laverne.edu](mailto:accessibilityservices@laverne.edu) 909-448-4938

## BEHAVIOR AND INTERVENTION TEAM

### CHAIR

BIT is one of three tiers of support SOS offers. BIT can work with faculty to identify individuals who demonstrate behaviors that may be early warning signs of possible disruptive/violent behavior. BIT members determine appropriate resources and implement a coordinated response with the goal of providing assistance to the individual while mitigating risk in an effort to keep the La Verne community healthy and safe. Faculty are encouraged to consult with BIT whenever necessary.

Contact: **Juan Regalado, Chief Student Affairs Officer**

[jregalado@laverne.edu](mailto:jregalado@laverne.edu) 909-448-4448

### CAMPUS SAFETY

Campus Safety is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including holidays should faculty have concerns for safety. Campus Safety can assist in managing and accessing a student in crisis.

*In emergency, life or death situations, please call 911.*

Contact: 909-448-4950

### COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL

CAPS works to educate and to promote personal growth and psychological well-being for students at the University of La Verne. CAPS offers individual counseling via telepsychology, utilizing video sessions and phone sessions. Services are available free of charge to ALL currently enrolled ULV students (undergraduate, graduate, CAPS, Law and ROC). There are currently no session limits for services. Faculty are encouraged to consult with CAPS whenever necessary.

Contact: [CAPS@laverne.edu](mailto:CAPS@laverne.edu) 909-448-4105

## LEO FOOD PANTRY

The Leo Food Pantry works to address food insecurity and alleviate student hunger on campus. The pantry provides a monthly box of food for University of La Verne students in need of food assistance.

Contact: [leofoodpantry@laverne.edu](mailto:leofoodpantry@laverne.edu)

## OFFICE OF ACADEMIC ADVISING

The Office of Academic Advising's Advisors help students plan their academic careers through the creation of a partnership. This includes preparing for registration, resolving academic problems, and offering academic/educational advice. Academic advisors should also be able to assist students with planning for internships and employment opportunities within their disciplines as well as advising about graduate and professional school applications.

Contact: [advising@laverne.edu](mailto:advising@laverne.edu) 909-448-4510

## OFFICE OF FINANCIAL AID

The Office of Financial Aid supports all students to ensure an affordable University of La Verne education. If students have questions regarding their financial aid package, encourage them to connect with a counselor in this office.

Contact: [finaid@laverne.edu](mailto:finaid@laverne.edu) 800-649-0160

## OFFICE OF STUDENT ACCOUNTS

The Office of Student Accounts is responsible for billing and collecting tuition and fees, posting payments and disbursements, processing refunds and providing general assistance to student regarding their account with the university. If a student is having financial difficulty and needs assistance with a payment plan for tuition and fees, encourage them to connect with this office.

Contact: [stuacct@laverne.edu](mailto:stuacct@laverne.edu) 909-448-4060

## RANDALL LEWIS CENTER FOR WELL-BEING AND RESEARCH

The Lewis Center provides resources for physical, emotional and mental well-being for students, faculty and staff at the University of La Verne and its surrounding region. Acknowledging the deep connections between well-being and higher education, the Lewis Center provides :

- ⇒ Wellness programming for students, faculty, and staff in areas including mindfulness, managing stress, sleep, hygiene, nutrition and sexual health.
- ⇒ A fitness center, including indoor and outdoor fitness areas, studios for movement classes and locker rooms with showers.
- ⇒ Spaces for students, faculty, and staff to gather and collaborate on issues of well-being.
- ⇒ Online resources for the ULV community, including regional and online campuses.
- ⇒ Teaching and collaborative research opportunities for students and faculty to advance knowledge about the field of well-being.

Contact: [lewiscenter@laverne.edu](mailto:lewiscenter@laverne.edu) 909-448-4646



## SOS CASE MANAGER/CO-CHAIR OF THE CARE NETWORK

Case Management Support and the CARE Network are the other two tiers of support SOS offers. The case manager meets with students to discuss current life stressors, need for support and available resources. Once connected with the student, an action plan will be developed to determine what long-term support should consist of. Faculty are encouraged to consult with the case manager whenever necessary.

The CARE Network supports students in achieving emotional, physical, and social well-being, as well as their academic goals. The CARE Network and SOS case manager work together in responding to SOS Behavior & Wellness Referral Reports that are submitted.

**Contact: Adrienne Montero-Camacho, SOS Coordinator & Case Manager**

sos@laverne.edu      909-448-4520

## STUDENT CONDUCT

The Student Conduct program within the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs is committed to an educational and developmental process that balances the interests of individual students with the interests of the University of La Verne community. The student conduct process is not intended to punish students; rather, it exists to protect the interests of the community and to challenge those whose behavior is not in accordance with our policies. Sanctions are intended to challenge students' moral and ethical decision-making and to help them bring their behavior into accord with our community expectations.

**Contact: Eugene Shang, Director of Residence Life and Student Conduct**

eshang@laverne.edu      909-448-4963

## STUDENT HEALTH CENTER

Health and wellness is important for academic success at the University of La Verne. At the Student Health Center, all appointments are free of charge for students with our school insurance plan. The Student Health Center is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm during the traditional academic school year.

**Contact: 909-448-4619**

## TITLE IX

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in education. Sex discrimination includes sexual harassment and sexual assault. Always remember as a faculty (and/or staff) member of the university, you have a duty to report (mandated reporter) to the Title IX Coordinator if/when a student discloses to you a Title IX related incident. The Title IX Coordinator can discuss in greater detail with the student the differing options for someone raising a concern including where they can receive confidential services and how much privacy they will have in an investigation, including options for anonymity, or choosing not to participate in an investigation.

*Should the student wish to speak with a confidential source (not a mandated reporter) they can be referred to CAPS and/or the University Chaplain (while they are serving in that role).*

**Contact: Alison Vicroy, Assistant General Counsel, Director of Student Civil Rights & Title IX**

avicroy@laverne.edu      909-448-4012

## UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN

Rev. Zandra Wagoner is available to provide confidential pastoral care and support to students, faculty and staff.

**Contact: Rev. Zandra Wagoner, University Chaplain**

zwagoner@laverne.edu      909-448-4446



## WILSON LIBRARY

Wilson Library offers a variety of research resources for both undergraduate and graduate students. With a mix of group and individual study spaces available, the library is a great place to do homework, work on projects, and prepare for exams. Students also have access to the library's makerspace to utilize the 3-D printer, laser cutter, Raspberry Pi, and Arduino kits. Many workshops and events are also held at Wilson Library throughout the year. Our librarians are always available to help students find what they need. Students can contact a librarian through the 24/7 chat, email, text, phone or schedule an appointment with a tutor from the ASC.

## SYLLABUS LANGUAGE

**Early Alerts:** As faculty, we care about your success! The university encourages all faculty to raise awareness when a student is showing "at-risk" behaviors. Our Early Alert system will direct students to free resources such as subject tutoring, academic coaching, counseling referrals, or a meeting with your college/school dean's office. The referral from faculty is designed to help students identify strategies to achieve their academic goals. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the many opportunities offered by La Verne to promote academic success.

**SOS Hardship Statement:** See link below.

## HELPFUL DOCUMENTS/WEBSITES

- ⇒ [Addressing Disruptive and Dangerous Behavior in the Classroom and Around Campus– The NaBITA 2017 Whitepaper](#)
- ⇒ [Student Support Services Statement for Syllabus](#)
- ⇒ [Staff to Know List](#)
- ⇒ [How to Submit a SOS Report Video](#)
- ⇒ [Early Alert Explanation and Instructions Video](#)

