Chapter 3 Support and Resources

Mary Shier

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Student Success
An Invaluable Resource for
College and University Students

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Note that page numbers reflect the page numbers in the full textbook.

The full text can be found at **opentextbc.ca/studentsuccess**, where it can be read online, downloaded, printed, or ordered.

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Introduction

Let's face it: being a student can be stressful! However, there are numerous supports available to students to aid along the way. Some are personal supporters who have been part of your network all along, and some are built in systems at colleges and universities. All too often, students don't realize the number of supports available to them until things reach crisis conditions. In this chapter, you will identify supports that you may need so that you can utilize them throughout your educational journey.

Learning Objectives

In this chapter on "Support and Resources," students will:

- Identify and access personal support systems to address barriers to education.
- Familiarize themselves with post-secondary student support services.
- Familiarize themselves with course supports available within post-secondary institutions.

3.1 Personal Support Systems

Personal Support Network

No one can do it alone. We aren't meant to. We are designed to be in relationships, and it is these relationships which will give us the courage and strength to forge ahead in our lives. Support can come in many ways. Personal supports come in the personal relationships in our lives through family, friends, and connections.

Spending quality time with good friends contributes to personal wellness.

As well as personal supports, your support network should also include your community. *Community* is the group of people you associate with. It could be a group of people in the place you live (your neighbourhood) or at work, or a group of people you associate with through an activity. It could be a sports team, a club, a volunteer group, a church, or a parents' group. It could be an exercise group, or a pottery club, or a music group. We all cherish a sense of belonging. Having a community of support for various aspects of our lives is meaningful. When you make the decision to go to college or university, you may be surprised by those within these communities who step up and show support. Note who they are. They may become invaluable supporters as you go through school.

This team provides physical support on the field and emotional support and encouragement off the field.

Author's Story

This women's soccer team is an incredible group of women. They are competitive and love to work hard on the field. They love the exercise, the outdoors, the travelling, and meeting new players. But above all, this soccer team values the time spent together with each other, people they care about and can relate to. This group of women supports each other and often say they keep playing because of the friendship amongst the team members.

— Mary Shier, author of this textbook

Exercise: Identify Your Personal Support Network

Make a list of the people in your life you can trust and rely on. Add to the list any groups that have become important to you. This forms your personal support network. It is important to identify and remind yourself of your support network at times when you need it most.

Community Resources

Besides natural communities, there are organized formal support groups which can target issues in our lives. Alcohol and drug counselling, addictions support groups, weight control groups, cancer support groups, or mental health groups all bring together people with similar issues. Some support resources that exist in many communities include: crisis hot lines, counselling, women's centres, employment centres, food banks, and many more.

Community

Exercise: Community Supports

Research the community supports in your own community and note any resources that might be useful to you. Add these community resources as potential supports to your personal support network list above.

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3.2 Student Support Services

Going to college or university can be an adjustment and a time of transition. Hopefully you have people in your personal life who support you in various ways. Did you know that colleges and universities also support students in many different ways?

Most institutions have student support services that can help with your transition to school and throughout your time there. Each student may require different types of support, depending on their personal situation. The supports are there to help learners succeed. It is important to inquire and ask for support when you need it, and preferably long before it reaches crisis status.

Education Advising Services

Education advisors are available as a free service to meet with students or potential students privately to discuss any issues which could impact learning. This can include: course planning, career planning, learning issues, academic issues, financial issues, study skills, grade appeals, navigating the post-secondary system, transferring between institutions, personal issues with instructors or fellow students, as well as referrals to other support services.

Education advisors help students with educational planning and student issues.

Counselling Services

Counselling services provide a safe, confidential, and supportive environment to discuss personal and educational concerns impacting your life. Counseling services help provide tools to manage your stressors and challenges so that you can become successful and work toward wellness.

Services for Indigenous Students

Often there is a coordinator who specifically serves the unique needs of Indigenous students. This can include: education advising services, applying for funding, scholarships or bursaries, connections with other Indigenous students, learning supports, personal supports, and increasing Indigenous knowledge in the community.

International Student Services

An international coordinator specifically serves the unique needs of international students. Along with the regular needs of students, international students also need support with issues such as: student visas, housing, adapting to and learning about Canadian culture, culture shock, home-sickness, out of country insurance, learning in a language which is not their first language, and unfamiliarity with the Canadian post-secondary system, to name a few. Studying in another country can be a very exciting adventure. International coordinators help to make the transition as smooth and as pleasant as possible.

Accessibility Services

Accessibility coordinators support students with a variety of disabilities including physical, psychological, and learning disabilities. Accessibility services aim to maximize success and reduce barriers so that students have equal opportunities and equal access to information. It can provide exam accommodations, access to funding for equipment, adaptive software, and other services. See Chapter 2 Learning Preferences for more information.

Learning Specialists and Assessment Services

Some students learn differently. It doesn't mean that they are "stupid" or "slow", but it does mean they may need to discover how they learn best. It can be extremely helpful to have an assessment to determine their areas of strength and weakness in order to enhance learning. Learning specialists do individual assessments on people who suspect they have learning disabilities, or who have a history of struggling with academics. The results of these assessments can aid instructors as well as give strategies to students to maximize success.

Financial Aid

Financial aid officers are available to give you the tools to plan and budget your finances while in school, apply for student loans and awards such as bursaries (based on financial need) and scholarships (based on merit). They help students navigate the process and provide viable options to finance students' education.

Student Union

The student union or student association is a group made up of students to enrich campus life. They exist to protect the rights of students and to voice the interest of the student body at large. They promote and represent student issues as well as develop a sense of community among students through communication and events.

Flexible Assessment and Transfer Credit

Flexible assessment is a process to give credit for college level learning through life experience. This experience can be through employment, volunteer work, self-directed study, travel and non-accredited courses. Flexible assessment can give credit for courses required within college programs, so students can be exempt from taking the approved courses.

Transfer credit for courses taken previously can be given through applying for transfer credit for courses from other institutions. Sometimes, courses are already articulated for transfer so the process is very straightforward. See Chapter 13 The BC Transfer Process. For courses that don't have transfer agreements between the applicable institutions, a review of the courses through examination of course outlines can be used to determine eligibility for credit.

Student Employment Services

Student Employment services usually offer workshops on employability skills such as resume writing, cover letter writing, and interview skills. They offer a range of services, including practicum placements, individual consultations, and job prep information. They also post internal on-campus job opportunities and also keep both an online and on-campus job board for external postings from employers who are looking for college students and alumni as potential employees.

Exercise: Student Support Services

Check out the student services at the schools you are interested in attending (or the one you've decided to attend). You can research these services, which are usually listed on the school website, or contact the school to inquire. Make a list of the different services available at the school you've chosen.

Which of these services do you think can help you while in school? Please note the services that you think would be helpful to you personally. You will be including this information in your assignment at the end of this chapter.

Many kinds of help are available at most educational institutions.

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3.3 Course Supports

In the same way that post-secondary institutions provide student support services, they also have many course and academic supports available. These can include:

Writing Labs

Writing labs are often available at regular specified times. Here students can get assistance with written assignments, reports, and essays. Students can get feedback on draft copies receiving suggestions on formatting, structure, backing up and supporting ideas, and citations of sources. Watch for these labs as they are an invaluable tool for increasing the quality of written assignments and subsequently increasing grades. Getting good at writing papers will serve you well throughout your program.

Learning Centres

Often post-secondary institutions have learning centres where students can go to work on their courses. They have access to computers and printers. They often have tutors available who can help with basic assignment queries and essay writing. It can also be a place where students can gather for group work on assignments and projects. As well, it can be a place to make connections with other students.

Campus Library

Educational libraries not only have invaluable research material for assignments, but they have helpful librarians who can assist you in many ways. They can help you learn how to access academic journals, discern whether a source is suitable for a research paper, find online journals, assist with research, assist with inter-library loans, do effective online searches, and cite sources correctly using appropriate style guides. Often they even have laptops to borrow. As well, libraries are an effective place to use as a study area. Often, they even have study rooms you can book to use for group work.

Late-night studying.

Peer Tutors

Peer tutors are students in your class who have been identified as strong students who are willing to help other students in the class. They are paid through the college and provide classmates with relevant support. The peer tutor program matches students who have identified a need for extra help in specific subjects with students who have a good background in the subject area and an interest in tutoring. It is not only good for the one receiving tutoring, the tutors find that by explaining concepts to others, they solidify their own learning. The tutors make a little bit of extra income while reviewing their own class material.

Study Skills Workshops

Watch for scheduled study skills workshops to help with specific tools on test-taking, answering multiple-choice questions, essay writing, note-taking, reading strategies, time management, and memory skills. They are usually short workshops offered over lunch or between classes.

Online Tutorials

Look on the college or university's web site for relevant tutorials. There are often video tutorials on things that students often have questions about. These can be very useful on those late night work sessions.

Student Help Desk

Information Technology (I.T.) support services are available for students who are experiencing technical difficulties. This is especially important for online students who may be struggling to upload an assignment, or access the online course portal. They can help with connection problems, college email accounts, accessing course software, or other annoying computer issues related to your courses.

Exercise: Course Supports

Consider the above list and make note of which course supports would be useful for you on your educational journey. Take a tour (on site or online) around the institutions you are considering attending, or the one you have decided to attend, and see where the student supports and course supports are located.

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3.4 Chapter Review and Activities

As exciting and exhilarating as education is, it also comes with its stress and anxiety. There are numerous supports available to help you. Supports and resources include your own personal network, student support services, and academic course supports. Be sure to access these supports throughout the semester to make sure you keep on track. All too often, people wait until they are overwhelmed before seeking support. At that point, stress and anxiety are harder to deal with, so try to reach out early on. There is nothing wrong with needing a little help. In fact, it's perfectly normal.

Exercise: Support Systems

Use the information from the lists you created throughout this chapter and make a chart of support contacts for different needs. You identified barriers to education in the previous chapter (e.g. addictions, poverty, abuse, depression, slow reader, test-anxiety, physical limitations). Match these barriers with supports for an easy reference during your school year. The chart should have three columns, the barrier or need, the supporter(s) you can turn to, and the contact information for that support. Remember to draw your supports from your personal network, your community network, community support services, student services, and course support resources.

Here is an example:

Sample Support Contacts

Barrier/Need	Support	Contact Info
When I get discouraged	My friend, Sarah	(Phone number)
When my anxiety flares up	My counsellor, Bob Yoga class	(Text or email) Community Centre
When I have temptations re: alcohol issues	My Celebrate Recovery (CR) group	(Sponsor's phone number)
When I have financial struggles	Financial aid officer, Lois	(Email address)
When I have trouble with essay writing	College writing lab	M W F 9am-2 pm
When I have learning issues	Education advisor, John	Student Services (Karen) ext 3243

| When I get overwhelmed | Meet up with my walking buddy, Janine, to take a break, get exercise and fresh air, and clear my head. | (Text) |

Make the list as long as it needs to be. Fill in all the expected issues (big or small) that come to mind.

Key Takeaways

Accessing supports and resources is a wise thing to do while in post-secondary.

Personal supports include:

- Friends and family
- Support groups
- Teams, clubs, or committees
- Special interest groups

Student support services include:

- Education advising (or academic advising)
- Financial aid
- International support
- Indigenous support or aboriginal gathering place
- Accessibility services
- Counselling
- Assessment services
- Employment services

Course supports include:

- Writing labs
- Learning centres
- College and local libraries
- Peer tutors
- Study skills workshops
- Tutorials
- I.T. support