



Dear Faculty and Staff:

By now, many of you know about the recent death—a suicide—of a first-year student in a residence hall last month. Such a death, especially that of a young person, is tragic and can leave us feeling sad, bewildered, and even angry. It also can serve to remind us of the preciousness of life, and help renew our commitment to what most sustains us and those around us.

While not all such deaths can be prevented, many can. Studies suggest that during the coming year, one to two thousand university students will seriously consider taking their own life. Fortunately, very few will make this tragic choice; in fact, attending a college or university reduces the likelihood of suicide. Unfortunately, research also reveals a troubling fact: close to half the students who consider suicide *do not share their thoughts and feelings with anyone*. Caring relationships and a sense of belonging are strongly protective against suicide. Therefore, it is critically important that those around them develop an understanding of when students are struggling emotionally and may need additional support.

For many years, an interdisciplinary group of UO faculty and staff has been educating the campus community on how to recognize and assist those who may be at risk for suicide. In just over the past two years, this group has trained 533 UO faculty, staff, and student employees and 162 students. These dedicated suicide prevention “gatekeepers” are available to train your department or office. They offer a two-hour training that teaches participants how to recognize suicide risk factors and warning signs and how best to intervene with a suicidal student or colleague. A shorter, one-hour workshop is also available, and focuses on suicide risk factors, warning signs, and referral sources. If you would like to arrange a workshop for your office or department or attend one of the upcoming interdepartmental sessions, please contact Michele Leasor at [michele@uoregon.edu](mailto:michele@uoregon.edu).

During fall 2005, the University, along with the other OUS campuses, received a federal grant to raise awareness about suicide on campus; you may have noticed brochures, posters and other activities related to this effort. Since most of our students grew up in an online world, we continue to develop Web-based resources. A virtual brochure and other online resources are available at: [http://counseling.uoregon.edu/OUSPP\\_Handouts.htm](http://counseling.uoregon.edu/OUSPP_Handouts.htm)

Through the care and commitment of the entire campus, we can help at-risk students transform crises into learning experiences and reduce the likelihood of suicide.

Sincerely,

Robin Holmes, Ph.D.,  
Vice President for Student Affairs

Mark Evans, Ph.D.  
UO Coordinator, Oregon University  
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