THE STUDENT WHO IS ACADEMICALLY UNDERACHIEVING

While it is easy to conclude that the academically underachieving student is simply unmotivated, the real situation is often more complicated. Students may be preoccupied with situational and family problems, or have emotional problems that are distracting and disabling. They may have learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, or substance abuse problems. Previous failures for any reason can engender a hopeless outlook and a defensive attitude of “I don’t care.”

**WHAT TO DO:**

* Inquire compassionately as to what the problems are.
* Provide enough time for the student to open up. His or her initial defensiveness might be off-putting to an instructor who values involvement and dedication in their students.
* Help the student assess the source of underachievement, e.g., distractions, preoccupations, emotional problems, depression, difficulties with underlying academic and study skills.
* Sensitively address the difficulty of dealing with a “failure mentality.”
* Provide information on college resources: Math Center, Writing Center, and Learning and Tutoring Centers

**WHAT NOT TO DO:**

* Don’t take the student’s problem personally or be insulted that they do not find the class engaging.
* Don’t presume too quickly the problem is mere laziness.
* Don’t punish the student for lack of involvement.
* Don’t dismiss the student and problem as unworkable in one meeting.

\*\**When in doubt, if any personal information the student tells you raises red flags, consult with* the Student Advocacy and Accountability team. <https://webapps.mccneb.edu/bcat/>