

**OFFICE OF THE DEAN OF STUDENTS
THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA**

**Critical Mentoring and Support for Students
Program Overview**

Students found responsible for a violation of the Code of Student Life may be placed on Disciplinary Probation for a specified period of time. Anecdotal experience is that students without a good support system will often will have additional Code violations during the probation period, especially first year students. These “second strikes” could lead to a suspension of a student for at least one semester. To assist students, the Critical Mentoring and Support for Students program (Critical MASS) has been established with UI faculty and staff serving in the mentor role.

Critical MASS advisors will provide support and a faculty/staff connection for referred students. The goals of the Critical MASS program are:

- To provide a connection between referred students and a knowledgeable, caring faculty or staff member on campus.
- To create a “check-in” system meant to increase accountability for personal behavior on the student’s part.
- To implement an early intervention system that will facilitate referrals for needed academic and other support services.

The primary assessment of this program is a reduction in second violations of the Code of Student Life.

Meeting with the student: A Critical MASS advisor will be asked to meet or check-in regularly with an assigned student(s). This check-in should be in person at least once per month, but email or phone check-ins at other times can be used. The purpose of the check-in is to see how the student is doing, monitor their progress toward their substance use goals (e.g., not using alcohol at all, or using moderately, depending on the student and the situation), and provide them with information about additional resources on campus, if needed.

Referrals: As an advisor meets with a student, the advisor will certainly find that they may benefit from connection with other services on campus, such as the University Counseling Service, Student Health Service, or academic support services, such as a writing center, a tutor, or academic advising. A list of common resources will be provided to advisors. If an advisor becomes concerned about a student’s safety or well-being, please contact the Dean of Students.

What’s expected of Critical MASS Advisors: All Critical MASS advisors will be asked to attend an annual training session and to provide regular updates to the Office of the Dean of Students. These updates can be brief (a template follows) with the main focus on anything requiring action by the Dean of Students.

Update Template

Student Name: Jane Doe

Latest steps: (a brief description of latest meeting)

Next steps: (date or timeframe for next meeting, note regarding any pending referrals or actions)

Action required by Dean of Students: (e.g., do you need the Dean to initiate a referral, to notify the student of noncompliance, etc.)

A note about boundaries: Faculty and staff are volunteering to take on this role because they care about students and their success. The advisor’s role as a Critical MASS advisor is to provide support and connect students with appropriate resources. However, it is the student’s responsibility to take action. An advisor is not expected to make calls or accompany students to appointments, etc. While, advisors are certainly welcome to form a more personal relationship with your student(s)—for instance, having your meeting over lunch—it is not required.

The University of Iowa is a large institution, but programs such as this can make it smaller.