

UNT WISE ENGAGE Program Parent/Guardian Guide

Parent/Guardian Guide

Welcome to ENGAGE!

Hello ENGAGE parent! We are so glad your student has decided to be a part of our program. College is a significant step for both your student and you. We understand that this change comes with a lot of questions and can be difficult to navigate. As the newest members of your student's support team, ENGAGE developed this guide to answer some, if not all, of your questions about our role and processes.

Institutional Alignment

ENGAGE's mission is to help improve your student's quality of life by supporting their social, vocational, and academic success at UNT and their future endeavors. This mission guides our policies, expectations of our students, and how ENGAGE staff will support you during this time of transition. We recognize that you are a major part of your student's support and advocacy team, but these practices ensure that your student stays at the center of our work. As you read through the guide, we will provide our reasoning for our policies and processes so you can understand how they benefit your student.

Privacy Policies

At ENGAGE, we want to ensure your students' safety and promote our values of independence and self-advocacy. To accomplish this, we abide by FERPA policies and ENGAGE-specific policies on protecting private information.

UNT Policy – FERPA

As a state-funded institution, UNT must comply with a federal law called Family Educational Right and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA is intended to protect students by limiting other people's access to their educational records, which will include things like their grades and courses. On top of this protection, the law allows students to build their independence and self-advocacy by putting them in control of who has access to their records.

For more information on FERPA and student records, visit the UNT Office of Registrar's webpage: <https://registrar.unt.edu/faculty/ferpa-and-student-records>. This site includes links for additional information about the law, how it is implemented at UNT, and how your students can give written consent to have their information released.

ENGAGE Confidentiality Policy

In addition to FERPA, ENGAGE has its own confidentiality or privacy policy concerning the release of information. At the beginning of each semester, students are provided an Information Disclosure Form by ENGAGE that details the students internal and external contacts (internal: UNT contacts, external: non-UNT contacts such as parents, guardians, additional service providers). The paperwork includes an explanation of our policy and a section for students to list individuals such as parents/guardians, resident assistants, etc. for which they give permission for us to release their information. This list allows us to work collaboratively with members of the student's community in supporting the student's success toward their academic, professional, and personal goals.

Second, the ENGAGE paperwork does not require us to release the student's information, such as their involvement with ENGAGE, individualized goals, email, etc. It only means ENGAGE

may release or share information with those listed if necessary (such as: sharing a student's academic goal with a professor to support them in maintaining and meeting their academic goal). Before any information is shared, ENGAGE staff will always ask the student first, regardless of signed release, unless through professional judgement it is determined that releasing information is necessary (such as the student is a harm to themselves or others). This policy allows the student the opportunity to assert their independence and practice self-advocacy by telling ENGAGE staff if they have changed their minds or would like certain information kept private. You should also expect that students will be CC'd on all communication to third parties, including parents/ guardians.

Communication with ENGAGE Parents/ Guardians

Our mission is grounded in supporting the student's independence including all communication that is related to them. This practice is in alignment with our person-centered value "nothing about us without us." Gaining practice and experience with professional email communication during their time in college to use beyond their college experience in their work. This also guides how we include your students in all our communication about them and interact with you.

What happens when a parent reaches out to ENGAGE staff directly?

To better understand how we handle direct communication from you, there are two things to keep in mind:

1. The ENGAGE program is student led. This means the students take the lead in how they want to receive services from us.
2. As the ENGAGE program's main goal is to boost students' independence, we require students to direct all communication to, from, and about them.

When parent/ guardians email ENGAGE staff directly, we will first forward the email to the student and ask them how they would like ENGAGE to proceed. Second, we will respond to the parent or guardian according to the student's preferences. Your student will always be CC'd on our responses, so they are aware that we followed their request.

ENGAGE staff requests that parents and guardians do not email us as your student. While we understand this may seem helpful to your student, this can disrupt services and undermine the student's capabilities, self-advocacy, and independence. Instead, we ask that you work with your student to advocate for themselves either during our meetings or via email communication.

What happens when a student needs to communicate with UNT departments, faculty, or staff?

When a student needs to communicate with UNT departments, faculty, or staff, ENGAGE will direct students to contact them directly. This will allow them to strengthen their independence and self-advocacy, which will help them in their future endeavors.

If the student wants additional support in sending an email, we will provide support in the drafting process to ensure the student is independently sending the email. We will only provide guidance to ensure they are asking for everything they need and include all components for professional communication.

If a student wants to go in person, ENGAGE staff will help students find locations and business/office hours. If an appointment is required, we direct the student to request the appointment themselves either through Navigate or via email communications.

If a student has continuous issues with getting in contact with a UNT department, faculty member, or staff member, ENGAGE staff will ask the student if they would like us to reach out on their behalf. An example of this might include emailing the other party, setting up a meeting, etc. to support the student with meeting their need.

ENGAGE Do's and Don'ts

ENGAGE staff understands that your student will likely use a variety of resources across campus, such as CAN and the Office of Disability Access (ODA). While ENGAGE can support in the coordination with these other resources, it is important to note that we are not an overseeing entity. While we might work collaboratively with other departments here at UNT, we cannot guarantee certain processes and procedures in other departments. (For more differences between HS and College, please see the one-pager attached in the appendix). As we are providing support to your student while in college, please see the following list of tasks the ENGAGE program does and does not do.

ENGAGE Do:

- Check student's course schedules and appointments they've set up through Navigate. (Navigate is UNT's online scheduling system where students can schedule meetings with their advisors, career center staff members, and other professionals supporting their success).
- Coordinate with CAN if a student is in both ENGAGE and CAN – This will help both programs understand and support the student throughout the semester.
- Support a student in scheduling their appointments they wish to make (I.e. tutoring, advising, etc.)
- Sit in on or help facilitate important meetings with other campus professionals, if requested by the student, to help convey information or explanations should the student need assistance communicating clearly.

ENGAGE Don't:

- Check your student's CANVAS for missing assignments and their grades – Per the Expectations Contract that your student signs, they are expected to communicate honestly with ENGAGE staff. This will include honest reports on how classes are going. This is why meeting attendance is important in supporting your student. We can not provide support if we do not know they are not doing well in their academics. (Canvas is the online portal where professors will upload their course syllabus, class grades, etc.).
- Go inside of your student's residence hall room – To stay in accordance with privacy, respect, and maintaining the safety of the student, we will not be visiting the student's living area or resident room.

- Attend classes with your student to ensure their attendance. We can work with the student to determine ways to support their class attendance. However, we will not be attending class with the student. If it is determined that the student needs additional support, this will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

ENGAGE staff <u>WILL...</u>	ENGAGE staff <u>WILL NOT...</u>
1. Encourage ENGAGE students to share their progress & struggles with their loved ones.	Provide parents/guardians of ENGAGE participants with updates regarding their student.
2. Support ENGAGE students to set reminders for themselves for appointments, classes, assignments, etc.	Text or call ENGAGE participants with reminders of their appointments, classes, assignments, etc.
3. Support ENGAGE students to design ways to remind themselves to address important topics during ENGAGE meetings and other meetings and encourage self-determination.	Allow anyone (including parents/guardians) to join or “listen in” on ENGAGE meetings without prior permission from ENGAGE participants and staff.
4. Read and respond to emails from parents/guardians about important events, progress, and challenges related to ENGAGE students within 24-48 hours.	Hold individual meetings and/or calls with parents/guardians without the permission of the student other than in case of emergencies.
5. Consider the information and context of ENGAGE students’ history when identifying and pursuing their personal, academic, and professional goals.	Allow the selection of ENGAGE goals by anyone other than ENGAGE participants.
6. Encourage ENGAGE students to reach out to instructors, tutoring, SI sessions, etc. as needed, and help them to schedule their own appointments.	Complete any academic work on behalf of ENGAGE participants.
7. Model and teach professional communication and etiquette.	Compose emails or communication on behalf of ENGAGE participants.
8. Support ENGAGE students in finding the required information to independently complete forms/paperwork.	Complete required paperwork or forms for ENGAGE participants.

9. Allow ENGAGE students to choose their own supports, tailored to their needs.	Force ENGAGE participants to take part in ENGAGE services.
10. Discuss the importance of and prepare for post-graduation employment and independence.	Expect ENGAGE participants to mature or become professionals without guidance and instruction.
11. Support students in navigating and overcoming obstacles that might arise during their educational journey.	Remove obstacles to success for ENGAGE participants.
12. Support ENGAGE students as they embark on new territory in leaving their comfort zone to explore new and difficult things while setting personal boundaries (such as: work experience, independent living, driving, study abroad, etc.)	Hold an ENGAGE participant's spot in ENGAGE if they are unwilling to actively participate.
13. Encourage ENGAGE students to learn from both their successes and failures.	Prevent ENGAGE participants from experiencing the consequences of their actions.
14. Reiterate ENGAGE participants of the opportunities that a college degree provides.	Force ENGAGE participants to attend and/or graduate from college.

Ways to Support your student in gaining more independence during their college experience at UNT:

Parents/Guardians are discouraged from the following:	Parents/Guardians are encouraged to do the following:	Rationale
Ask ENGAGE staff for grades, status updates, or details about their students.	Ask their student to share their progress.	This respects the autonomy and privacy of your student and their wishes while presenting them opportunities to give you updates or ask for help independently.
Remind students of their appointments, classes, assignments, etc.	Help students set reminders for themselves for appointments, classes, assignments, etc.	Helping your student come up with ways to manage their own time helps them learn a necessary skill for independence and employment while respecting their agency. Managing their time for them will lead to reliance on

		reminders and prompts from outside sources.
“Drop in” or “listen-in” on meetings without gaining permission from student and ENGAGE staff.	Help students brainstorm what to address in ENGAGE meetings (prior to meeting).	Students will need to attend all kinds of appointments and meetings independently on campus and in the future. Helping them come up with a way to remember what to bring up during those meetings helps them prepare for future independence.
Request individual meetings with ENGAGE staff.	Email ENGAGE staff about important changes regarding their student (i.e. medication changes, academics, interpersonal concerns, etc.).	The responsibility and right of each student is to manage their own information and supports. We work for the student in the way they say they want help, nobody else.
Choose their students’ PCP goals, degree programs, courses, work experiences.	Help their student identify personal goals, values, and interests.	Although it may be true that a student would greatly benefit from improving certain skills or engaging in certain opportunities, ENGAGE is a student-driven support service and goals are chosen only by the student. If their heart is not in it, it is much less likely to be accomplished.
Complete their students’ academic work.	Encourage their student to reach out to instructors, tutoring, SI sessions, etc.	It can be tough to see a student struggling with certain academic work, but completing the work for them does not help in the long run. The UNT student code of conduct is clear about the rules of academic integrity. (See student code of conduct section on academic dishonesty HERE).
Compose emails on behalf of their student.	Model professional communication etiquette; support the student in the drafting process of email	Modeling and teaching professional communication prepare your student for future employment. Additionally, checking and responding to your students’ emails is considered

	communications by and from the student.	fraud and is not tolerated or supported.
Complete paperwork on behalf of their student.	Help their student find the required information independently (i.e. “What could you search to find that?; That might be in your email; What does it say on your calendar?” etc.)	In supporting your student’s independence, it is important to ensure that they are beginning to manage their own paperwork, etc. as they will do this in their future employment, educational journey, etc.
Force their student to participate in ENGAGE.	Allow their student to choose their supports while attending college.	Students get out what they put into their ENGAGE experience. Should they decide they are not interested in participating, we follow specific procedures that are outlined in the expectations contract that will follow their interests for support while in college.
Assume their student will... -Mature immediately. -Become a professional without learning professionalism. -Not fail. -Be ready for employment/independence without training prior to graduation.	Regularly discuss the importance of post-graduation employment and independence.	As the student is going through their educational journey, they will likely contact many different areas of development. This can include but is not limited to perceived failure, skill development, and maturation. Their learning is a process over the course of their lifetime and is not and can not be limited to their college experience.
Remove all obstacles for your student.	Support their student as they embark on new territory outside of their comfort zone with the encouragement of boundary development.	To remain consistent with a growth mindset, teaching your student how to improve their well-being by setting healthy boundaries in pursuit of their academic, professional, and personal goals will improve their overall success.

Attempt to override ENGAGE Policies and Procedures.	Encourage their student to learn from the outcomes of both their successes and failures.	As your student is working through their educational experience and beyond, they will be required to adhere to various policies and procedures within various organizational contexts. This allows for students to contact experience with following procedures and policies.
Force their student to attend and graduate from college.	Support their student's decision when/if they are ready for post-secondary education.	Your student is more likely to succeed at their goals and interests if their experience is aligned with their interests and goals. Therefore, supporting your student's autonomy and increasing their buy-in for their future goals.

Please see the following resources of additional services provided by University of North Texas to support their transition to college and their educational journey.

*Please note that ENGAGE *can* help students get connected with these resources, help them set up their own appointments, and help them to convey the necessary information, but ENGAGE *cannot* provide or coordinate the services below for the student. That can only be done by each respective office or department.

If your student needs assistance with HOUSING, they need to contact housing:

- Please visit <https://housing.unt.edu/> for more information on general housing
- *If you are interested in the residential CAN program, please email housingcan@unt.edu for more information*

If your student needs assistance with CLASS REGISTRATION, they need to contact the advising office for their college:

- Please visit <https://vpaa.unt.edu/advising/advising-offices> for more information on academic advising
- Incoming freshman must attend orientation to register for classes
- Returning students can schedule an appointment with their advisor on Navigate <http://unt.navigate.eab.com/>

If your student needs CLASS ACCOMMODATIONS, they need to contact the Office of Disability Access:

- Please visit <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access> for more information on class accommodations and registering for services with the Office of Disability Access (ODA)

If your student needs TUTORING, they need to sign up for an appointment on Navigate or attend drop-in sessions at the learning center:

- Please sign up for tutoring sessions via the Navigate app or website <http://unt.navigate.eab.com/>
- If you need further information, please visit <https://learningcenter.unt.edu/>

If your student needs assistance with JOB PLACEMENT, they need to contact their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor at Texas Workforce:

- Please contact your Texas Workforce Services Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for more information on job placement and other job-related services

Appendix

High School	College
High school is governed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) .	Postsecondary education is governed by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) .
"Entitlement" law: Students with disabilities (ages 3-21) are guaranteed access to a free and appropriate education (FAPE) .	"Non-discrimination" law: Colleges and universities may not discriminate in recruitment, in admission, or after admission based on a disability. However, these are not entitlement laws, meaning they do not guarantee successful learning or mandate the creation of special programs for persons with disabilities.
School attendance is mandatory.	You should attend lectures to maintain grades, but class attendance is not always mandatory.
Schools must provide services designed specifically to meet students' needs (e.g., instruction, modifications, accommodations) based on their individualized education program (IEP).	Reasonable accommodations may be made to provide equal access and participation for students with disabilities; however, formal special education services comparable to those in high school are not available.
Counties are required to identify students with disabilities through free assessment and the IEP process.	Students are responsible for coordinating with staff and faculty in order to receive accommodations. This does not mean students are required to name a disability when discussing accommodations with their individual professors.
School officials monitor students' progress towards their IEP goals, and communicate openly with parents and the student.	There are no formal IEPs, so students are responsible for monitoring their own progress and communicating with their professors, academic advisors, and guardians themselves.
Depending on the transition needs laid out in the IEP, schools often help connect students to community support services.	Students are responsible for making their own connections with school-provided or external support services. Services for adults on the spectrum are often limited.

Bottom line, college is a depersonalized setting compared to high school. There is a greater expectation for you to communicate your needs and interests for yourself.

Did you know? Self-advocacy can be defined as a person's ability to understand, communicate, and negotiate his or her own interests, desires, needs, and rights. In other words, it means having the ability to understand and communicate who you are, knowing what you want and need, and knowing how to get them for yourself. As someone with autism, you have the right to make day-to-day decisions that impact your own quality of life.

How well do you advocate for yourself?

This has been taken directly from The Organization for Autism Research's text "Finding Your Way: A College Guide for Students on the Spectrum."