

SMALL MOMENTS, MEANINGFUL IMPACT: FINN'S ROLE IN STUDENT SUPPORT

On any given day in the Iowa Memorial Union or walking across campus, you might notice students pausing—smiling, kneeling down, or simply taking a breath. Often, the reason is Finn, the therapy dog with the Division of Student Life's Student Care and Assistance team.

Finn is more than a friendly face. As a trained therapy animal, his role is to provide comfort and support, particularly for students navigating stress, uncertainty, or mental health challenges. Therapy animals like Finn are specifically trained to offer affection and connection, helping improve emotional and social well-being through simple, meaningful interactions.

Over the 2025–2026 academic year, those small moments of connection added up in big ways:

- 2,949 student and staff interactions through planned programming
- 127.25 hours of outreach and engagement
- 260+ one-on-one visits with students seeking direct support

These numbers reflect more than attendance—they represent moments of pause in busy days, opportunities to decompress, and connections that can make it easier for students to take the next step toward support.

For some, that interaction is brief: a quick hello while passing by, a few moments of petting Finn during a program, or an unexpected smile on a difficult day. For others, it is more intentional. Finn plays a role in one-on-one support meetings, working alongside his handler, Anna Holbrook, associate director of Student Care and Assistance, to help students feel more comfortable opening up and navigating complex situations. His presence can serve as a bridge—making it easier for students to engage in conversations that might otherwise feel overwhelming.

What makes Finn's impact unique is not just the number of interactions, but the nature of them. Therapy animals provide a form of nonjudgmental support—meeting students where they are, without expectations. In environments where stress, isolation, or uncertainty can be common, that kind of presence matters.

The 2,949 interactions captured through programming tell part of the story. The 260+ individual visits reflect moments when students chose to seek deeper support. And beyond those numbers are countless informal interactions—spontaneous encounters on campus that, while harder to measure, are just as meaningful.

Together, these experiences highlight a simple but powerful idea: support can take many forms. Sometimes it looks like a conversation in an office. Sometimes it starts with a wagging tail.

As the Division of Student Life continues to prioritize student well-being, Finn's work demonstrates how connection—whether through people, programs, or even a quick moment with a therapy dog—can play a meaningful role in helping students navigate their Iowa experience.

