

EMORY CARES: CREATING A SUPPORTIVE CAMPUS COMMUNITY TOGETHER

Faculty Toolkit - Supporting Student Well-being

By now, students, staff, faculty, and administrators are aware of how taxing the unique demands of a pandemic are on our work in higher education. While we may not have anticipated all the consequences, we have learned a great deal about this loss of in-person learning, social distancing, and other steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. One thing is clear: Student mental health is as much an academic matter as it is a wellness issue, and it is more important than ever to help our students integrate these priorities.

Some obvious but noteworthy observations

- Diminished learning environment due to high reliance on Zoom and online platforms, characterized by:
 - Compromised capacity for students to absorb subject matter due to mental fatigue.
 - High concentration of subject matter delivered in a condensed semester timeline, which has contributed to students feeling overwhelmed and stressed.

A snapshot of student experiences to consider

- Many students are merely listening to lectures while lying in bed with eyes closed, without even taking notes.
- Students who are falling behind find that they lack their usual energy to rebound, and they become “stuck” in spiraling procrastination craters.
- After a lifetime of grades that earned scholarships, students are surrendering efforts to maintain their grades and related confidence.
- Students are questioning how “any of this matters.”

While faculty members can contribute to campus mental health and wellbeing simply through their roles as teachers, advisors, and mentors, they should also remind students of the many professional resources available to them in support of their academic endeavors.

CRISIS RESPONSE RESOURCES

ON CAMPUS

Emory Police Department (EPD)

911 or 404.727.6111

Office of Respect

sexual assault, interpersonal violence
404.270.5360

ATLANTA CAMPUS

Student Intervention Services

24/7 assistance
success.emory.edu
404.430.1120

Counseling & Psychological Services

counseling.emory.edu

NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY

Crisis Text Line

Text HOME to 741741
Students of Color may text STEVE to 741741

Georgia Crisis + Access Line

1.800.715.4225

National Suicide Hotline

1.800.784.2433 OR 1.800.273.8255

OXFORD CAMPUS

Counseling & Career Services

inside.oxford.emory.edu/life/counseling_services

Residence Life Coordinator On-Call

770.784.8377 (ask for RLC on call)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Anytime Student Health

emory.edu/anytimehealth

Campus Life Crisis Support Resources (Atlanta)

campuslife.emory.edu/support/crisis.html

Oxford Support Resources (Oxford)

inside.oxford.emory.edu/life/counseling_career_services/oxfordsupport.html

Mental Health Task Force in Higher Education - American Council on Education (ACE)

www.acenet.edu/Documents/Mental-Health-Task-Forces-in-Higher-Education.pdf

Below are some tips to keep in mind as we navigate another semester of this difficult but necessary adjustment to our work, with particular attention to the stress of having only three break days spread across the semester instead of a full spring break.

TIPS FOR FACULTY

Acknowledge the parallel impact of this difficult time on faculty

- Students consistently express their appreciation of faculty who reveal their vulnerability and acknowledgement of the challenges of the pandemic.

Acknowledge the difficulty of incorporating rest

- Share with students that we all live in a world that pits self-care and achievement against each other, and this impacts faculty, too.
- Invite students to question such mentalities and join a mindset that locates wellbeing as an act of resistance against toxic norms of society or highly competitive settings.
- Re-narrate self-care as an instrument in service of academic success.

Promote rest as an academic and pedagogical strategy by reminding students of the following

- Learning, not simply the completion of academic tasks, relies on sufficient energy, time, and space to absorb what is being taught.
- You need your cognitive functioning to optimally handle the rigors of this class, so protect your academic standing by ensuring rest.
- Don't buy into the myth that you have to surrender getting rest in order to do well. Getting rest will help you do well if you are able to manage your focus and energy prudently.

Introduce specific elements of rest

- Identify assignments that may incorporate reflection and review.
- Incorporate a diversity of modalities in teaching and in assignments provided.
- Create assignments that require students to complete tasks outside the spaces they usually occupy (e.g., studying outdoors).
- Attend to the energy level of students and **acknowledge** the fatigue of Zoom and the loss of in-person social energy.

Attend to timing

- Avoid, as much as possible, assigning due dates on the day after scheduled break days.
- Consider how the need to prepare for exams or projects you schedule may compromise students resting on break days.
- Avoid assignment deadlines that fall late at night in order to promote good sleep hygiene.
- Remind students about their role in managing their workload to ensure they do not have to rely on break days to catch up on procrastinated tasks.

Strategies with Zoom

- Prompt students to participate with video cameras turned on at times.
- Invite students to respond using the "Chat" function.
- Create class activities in which students can respond via *Zoom* reactions or polls:
 - Two weeks into the semester, use a poll to ask for student input on the relationship between their mental functioning and academic experience.
 - Several times a semester, create a class poll and ask students to complete the stem, "I feel lost about..." (Use platforms such as *Polleverywhere* or *Kahoot*.)
 - Ask students to describe how severe procrastination has been for them this week (mild, moderate, severe).

Restore some of the spontaneity and social engagement inherent in the class environment

- Prompt students to share something about themselves with randomly selected peers in the class at the beginning of a class or as a break.
- Use breakout rooms (two to four students maximum) to encourage in-class dialogue and peer connections.
- Consider the size of groups when assigning group projects. (Reduce groups to two to three students to allow for deeper levels of interaction and ease of scheduling.)
- Invite students to create or identify virtual backgrounds that express who they are, and randomly ask students if any of them can identify "favorite backgrounds" from the class.
- Encourage the creation of peer group chats for class support.