

**From:** Faculty Development <[FacultyDev@salisbury.edu](mailto:FacultyDev@salisbury.edu)>

**Date:** Monday, August 1, 2022 at 12:39 PM

**To:** Faculty Development <[FacultyDev@salisbury.edu](mailto:FacultyDev@salisbury.edu)>

**Subject:** Recommended strategies for supporting student success in Academic Year 2022-2023

Greetings!

As we plan for the new academic year, we are proud that our “classrooms” can be places of hope and positive change for our students. That said, we recognize that our students may: 1) have high levels of stress and anxiety; 2) be less prepared for the social and academic expectations of college and graduate school; 3) not have academics as their highest priority; and 4) miss class due to COVID or other illness. With this in mind, we’ve worked with our colleagues in Student Affairs and others to curate a list of suggestions and resources to support student success and to compliment the tremendous work you are already doing. We recognize that many of you already engage in these practices. Indeed, these recommendations are not novel but are even more important given the challenges students face and the extent to which they may have been underserved in their previous educational experiences.

### **1. Acknowledge the difficult times we live in and connect students with support networks.**

Recognize that students have priorities and challenges beyond their studies, and that it is critical to “[Maslow](#)” before students can “[Bloom](#).” Regularly emphasize the connections among mental health, healthy behaviors, and academic performance.<sup>1</sup> Students should be encouraged to put their basic needs first by prioritizing sleep, exercise, eating healthy, and participating in social activities.

- Time management is crucial for academic success, but a skill that is difficult to master. Refer your students to the [Time Management Strategies & Skills](#) resources at the Center for Academic Achievement.
- In the classroom, small changes can make big differences: Assignment deadlines of 5:00 p.m. instead of midnight may discourage late night work (see [Seven ways professors can prioritize student wellness](#)).
- Recognize that students have priorities and challenges beyond the classroom and consider the different demands placed on transfer students, international students, first-generation students, non-traditional students, etc.
- When possible, provide flexibility in how students may complete assignments when illness/unusual circumstances arise (see [How to Give Our Students the Grace We All Need](#)).
- Use multiple channels to communicate resources and opportunities (email, [MyClasses](#), [Navigate](#)).
- Chronic stress impairs memory and ultimately can alter the neural processes responsible for learning.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, many students are emotionally detaching to cope with the overwhelming circumstances in the current climate.<sup>3,4</sup> To counter this [disengagement](#), recognize the value of a trauma-informed approach in supporting students.
  - **Opportunities to learn more:** [What Does Trauma Informed Teaching Look Like?](#)

- Be vigilant of signs of mental health issues in your students (online training is available through [Kognito](#)). Recognize your responsibility to be well-versed in the availability of resources and directing students to those resources when appropriate. Maintain healthy boundaries and know your limits; the vast majority of faculty are not professionally trained to respond directly to students' trauma.
  - **SU resources:** [Student Wellness Program](#), [Counseling Center](#), [Student Health Services](#), [Disability Resource Center](#), [SU Cares](#), [Life Crisis Center](#)

## **2. Help students build “relationship webs” with peers, faculty, and staff.**

Loneliness and isolation are well established deterrents to student success and persistence and both have been magnified in the current climate.<sup>5</sup> Creating a relationship-rich environment that provides in-person or virtual opportunities to establish and grow these relationships requires a culture of “relentless welcoming” from faculty, staff and administration. This continued commitment to our students should be apparent from the moment that they first step on our campus, reestablished every semester, and continue post-graduation.<sup>6</sup>

- **At SU:** [Living Learning Communities](#), [SU Clubs and Organizations](#), [S.O.A.P.](#), [Student Government Association](#), [Greek Life](#), [Volunteer Center](#), [Athletics](#), [Campus Recreation](#)
- **Locally:** [3rd Friday](#), [Salisbury Arts & Entertainment District](#), [National Folk Festival](#)

Incoming students are introduced to the “[Big 6](#)” which describes key college experiences that are strongly related to long-term life and career outcomes. Three of the Big 6 are directly related to engagement with faculty and the others relate to instructional and extracurricular experiences. With this in mind, leverage your teaching to help students foster relationships with you and with their peers. Collaborative learning opportunities such as [group learning](#) and [peer instruction/discussion](#) have been shown to increase student success and retention.<sup>7</sup>

## **3. Recognize the power that the classroom holds to provide stability, safety and hope for our students.**

Establish a culture of transparency and communication

### **On the first day of the semester**

- Introduce yourself both as a person and as a scholar. Why do you love teaching this course? What do you hope they will gain over the course of the semester? Walk through the syllabus explaining how your planned assignments, discussions, readings, etc., will help your students master the critical aspects of your course over the course of the semester.
  - **Opportunities to learn more:**
    - [Creating an engaging syllabus](#)
    - [Engaging your students from the start](#)
- Communicate the skills that will be needed for success in your course, and how to find resources to support growth of those skills:
  - Explain WHAT office hours are, not just when. Underscore the importance of these opportunities for students to create faculty relationships during these times and [Why Students Need to Show Up](#).
  - Be familiar with deadlines for drop/add, late drop, and associated impacts on financial aid and academic progress.

### Throughout the semester:

- Consider incorporating transparent teaching methods which have been shown to increase the success of all students , [but especially first generation, low income, and underrepresented students.](#)
  - **Opportunities to learn more:** [Transparency In Learning And Teaching \(TiLT\)](#)
- Balance high expectations with frequent delivery of meaningful feedback so that success is attainable. Leverage technology to simplify your effort.
  - **Register here to learn more:** [Using MyClasses to Provide Meaningful Feedback](#) (September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2:00-3:00pm, AC221).
- When possible, conduct early assessments of skills needed for success in the course, and direct students to strategies and resources available to support them.
  - **SU resources:** [Center for Student Achievement, Academic Advising Center, University Writing Center, SU Library Resources, Math Emporium, Chemistry Support Center, Disability Resource Center](#)
- Sick or heading to a conference? Don't cancel class, bring the resources to the students! Schedule an in-class presentation through:
  - Center for Student Achievement [here](#)
  - University Writing Center [here](#)
  - SU Libraries [here](#)
  - SU Cares [here](#)
  - Counseling Center [here](#)
- Report mid-term grades to initiate intervention support.

### Establish a culture of engagement

- Aim to incorporate at least one [active learning practice](#) in every lesson plan (e.g., think-pair-share, discussions, reporting out, etc.)
  - **Register here to learn more:** [Actively Engage Students in the Classroom with TurningPoint](#) (August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2:00-3:00pm, AC221).
- Use a student response system (clickers, Mentimeter, Poll Anywhere etc.) or index cards for [daily entrance/exit tickets.](#)
- Take 2-3 minutes at the beginning or end of every class to allow students to talk – about the course, their own ideas, or try a conversation starter based on current events or by posing a general question.
  - **Opportunities to learn more:** [Developing a Positive Classroom Climate.](#)

### Support a culture of equity, hope, and agency

- Focus on equitable practices to increase success amongst your students.
  - **Opportunities to learn more:**
    - [Equitable, Accessible, and Inclusive Teaching Practices \(NCFDD webinar\)](#)
    - [Inclusive Pedagogical Practices](#)
- Consider including a classroom [climate statement](#) in your syllabus.
- Consider different ways to incorporate student voices into curricular planning, assignment development, content creation.
- Underscore the importance of students checking their own progress
  - Register here to learn more: [Mastering the MyClasses Canvas Gradebook](#) (August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1:00-3:00pm, AC221).

- Review and assess midsemester: Ask students for constructive feedback mid-semester and, if appropriate, adjust accordingly.
  - Opportunities to learn more: [Three Easy Ways to Solicit Mid-Semester Feedback](#)
- Emphasize the importance in the process of learning (not just the final grade) and how resilience is associated with having a [growth mind-set](#).

#### 4. Be intentional in your own personal wellness and professional development

The above suggests that *who* we are to our students could potentially matter just as much as what we teach them. Even before the pandemic, this is a tremendous (yet meaningful) responsibility. In the current climate this has led to tremendous compassion fatigue, secondary trauma, and professional burnout.

- Practice what you preach by prioritizing sleep, exercise, eating healthy, and participating in social activities. The [University Fitness Club](#) is free to faculty and staff during the month of August.
- The [National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity](#) has great resources/webinars on work-life balance, creating healthy collaborations/relationships, networking, career planning, etc.
  - Recommended webinar: [Rising Above Burnout](#)
- The [Employee Assistance Program](#) has an exhaustive list of resources for all needs including how to find a behavioral health provider, attorney, or financial advisor.
- Join us at **Faculty Development Day** on August 24th from 8:30am-12:00pm. This theme of the event is “Keeping the Balance: Engagement and Self-Care”. The day will start with mindfulness activities (yoga, meditation, or sound therapy), which will be followed by coffee and a light breakfast. The keynote speaker, Dr. Heidi Fritz, Associate Professor in Psychology, will share with us her lecture on “Coming Out of Challenging Times: Reclaiming our Health and Focus Post(?)-Pandemic”. This will be followed by concurrent café-style discussions on faculty reengagement, family care, and community engagement. The 2022 [Faculty Learning Communities](#) and other campus partners will lead these sessions, allowing you to explore possible opportunities to participate this coming year. We will then head to the Commons for lunch as a group—a great opportunity to catchup on what you did over the summer before the semester starts!

[Register for Faculty Development Day](#)

With very best regards,

Jessica Clark  
Assistant Provost for Faculty Success

Karen Olmstead  
Provost & Senior VP for Academic Affairs

#### Suggested Reading:

Gannon, K. M. *Radical hope: a teaching manifesto*. (West Virginia University Press, 2020).

Nagoski, E. & Nagoski, A. *Burnout: the secret to unlocking the stress cycle*. (Ballantine Books, 2019).

Zehnder, C., Alby, C., Kleine, K. & Metzker, J. *Learning That Matters: A Field Guide to Course Design for Transformative Education*. (Myers Education Press, 2021).

**References:**

1. Shankar, N. L. & Park, C. L. Effects of stress on students' physical and mental health and academic success. *Int. J. Sch. Educ. Psychol.* **4**, 5–9 (2016).
2. Vogel, S. & Schwabe, L. Learning and memory under stress: implications for the classroom. *Npj Sci. Learn.* **1**, 1–10 (2016).
3. Sillcox, C. Implication of COVID-19 on Post-Secondary Students' Mental Health: A Review. *McGill J. Med.* **20**, (2022).
4. Wilson, O. W. A., Holland, K. E., Elliott, L. D., Duffey, M. & Bopp, M. The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on US College Students' Physical Activity and Mental Health. *J. Phys. Act. Health* **18**, 272–278 (2021).
5. Horigian, V. E., Schmidt, R. D. & Feaster, D. J. Loneliness, Mental Health, and Substance Use among US Young Adults during COVID-19. *J. Psychoactive Drugs* **53**, 1–9 (2021).
6. Felten, P. & Lambert, L. M. *Relationship-Rich Education: How Human Connections Drive Success in College*. (JHU Press, 2020).
7. Tullis, J. G. & Goldstone, R. L. Why does peer instruction benefit student learning? *Cogn. Res. Princ. Implic.* **5**, 15 (2020).