

RED FOLDER SPRING 2020

GUIDANCE FOR FACULTY & STAFF SUPPORTING STUDENT WELL-BEING IN A VIRTUAL CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT

Please review the sections below to get a sense of what the student community is experiencing, and how we can best support them. If you have questions or want to consult, contact Well-Being at Stanford at yourwellbeing@stanford.edu.

STUDENT CHALLENGES

Many may be struggling with academic-related infrastructure deficits at home. They may not have access to reliable WiFi, their workspaces may be challenging, and privacy may be impossible to procure. The presence and magnitude of these challenges will not be equitable amongst students.

They may find themselves living in environments that are not supportive of all their identities. Environments and relational dynamics ranging from invalidating to abusive can negatively impact their well-being, as well as their ability to be fully present in learning spaces.

They are grieving, sad, disappointed. Remember that students have left behind more than just their classes and academics. A tremendous sense of loss and disappointment is now pervasive throughout our community.

Uncertainty is everywhere. Students are grieving what's already being lost, while the inability to make plans and work towards one's goals represent potential future loss, compounding stress.

Financial impacts are significant. Students and their families may have been dependent on income from campus jobs. Existing resource inequities are only exacerbated by this pandemic.

HOW DO I SHOW I CARE?

Tell them right from the start. Take time during your first interaction with students to acknowledge this strange and difficult time we are in, and that you know they are struggling with all these new challenges. Tell them you care about their well-being, and that you want them to get the support they need.

HOW CAN I RESPOND?

TALK ABOUT THE CHALLENGES

1

Don't ignore the elephant in the room. Talk about COVID-19 and what we're all feeling in response. This is a chance for you to establish norms of open communication and psychological safety.

Humanize the situation: Your professionalism and status will not suffer from showing students that you have a life outside the classroom, and students may feel more connected to you because of it.

Be flexible. Be patient with students, and yourselves, as we figure out what we all need during this challenging quarter.

MAKE SPACE FOR WELL-BEING

2

Be Proactive. Have conversations about well-being with students early and often.

Create space/time for emotional expression. Uncertainty is uncomfortable and can cause significant distress.

Practice self-care (and talk about it!). When students see you practicing self-care it helps them realize that their community supports and prioritizes self-care.

Instill hope. You're in a powerful position and your words greatly impacts students. Levity and hope can bolster our spirits during difficult times.

FACILITATE CONVERSATION

3

Connect them to other support resources. Connect students to these resources to supplement the support you're already providing.

If possible, connect with students individually: Connect to students one-on-one through Zoom office hours and other modes of private conversation.

Connect students to each other: If feasible, offer students an opportunity to connect with each other outside of class. Currently, classroom interactions account for more of their social opportunities than they would in a regular quarter.

When in doubt about a student's well-being, consider these options:

RD on-call

(undergraduates)
(650) 504-8022

GLO Dean on-call

(graduate and professional students)
(650) 723-7288, pager ID 25085

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

(postdoc trainees)
(650) 725-5075

IS EVERYONE DISTRESSED?

Yes. In response to this new, temporary norm, we all could benefit from creating a culture where we check-in with each other, acknowledging and making space for our whole, complex selves.

Operate under the assumption that anyone you're interacting with is in significant distress. Err on the side of checking in with students frequently and warmly.

Indicators of Distress*

- Comments about distress, family problems, etc.
- Signs of hopelessness, worthlessness, or shame
- Expressions of concern by peers
- Implied or direct threats of harm to self/others
- Talking about self-injurious, destructive, or reckless behavior
- Essays or creative work that include disturbing content and/or themes of despair, hopelessness, suicide, violence, death, or aggression
- Repeatedly arriving late to class
- Obvious change in mental state and/or apparent intoxication
- Any behavior that doesn't match the context/setting

**students are likely to present with more distress indicators during this virtual spring quarter than during typical in-person academic quarters*

KNOW YOUR ROLE

Consult. Call the RD, GLO Dean on-call, or CAPS for further consultation whenever you need. Help them keep account of our students' well-being.

Set clear boundaries. You're a critical source of support for them, but you're not their therapist. Set boundaries to preserve your own mental well-being.

Set expectations about resources. No resource can meet all needs and it may take patience to access a resource and/or to experience the benefits.

If the severity of situation is unclear. It's possible the severity of the situation won't be obvious, and you won't know which resource is the best fit. In that case always consult (see above).

HOW DO I CHECK IN?

1

SAY WHAT YOU SEE/HEAR

Be direct. Let them know that you've noticed a change and you want to talk. Start this conversation where the student will feel safe to be open and honest with you. If this is during Zoom office hours, make sure you can prevent others from dropping in to the meeting to insure the student's privacy.

2

SHOW/SAY YOU CARE

Be warm. We all need to know others care about us, now more than ever. Showing you care about a student's well-being has a positive impact on their well-being, and increases the likelihood that they seek help when they need it.

Build trust. Ask what they need. The kind of support a student needs will change based on their context, and the only way to know is to ask.

3

HEAR THEM OUT

Be there to listen. They need you to be warm, compassionate and fully present, even virtually. Listen patiently as you try to understand where they're coming from and take time to affirm their feelings.

Be curious. Ask follow-up and open-ended questions that help you understand the student, ensure they feel heard, and facilitates their openness. Listen and let them speak.

4

CONNECT TO HELP

Determine need. By this point you've just had a warm conversation with a student. Now you probably have a better idea of what they're going through and what would be most helpful. Almost certainly there is a relevant Stanford resource for them.

Help them connect to resources. Students in distress may need help connecting with a resource. Showing them how to access these resources increases the likelihood that they actually do.