Faculty Toolkit

Supporting Student Learning and Success Through Improved Well-being

Brought to you by Curry Health Center Wellness at the University of Montana

Based on the well-documented concept that student well-being is critical to learning, success, and persistence, this toolkit provides a foundation on how instructors can integrate vital conditions for well-being in the learning environment. Creating a classroom culture that supports student well-being has the potential to powerfully impact our students. According to UM student data, stress and anxiety are the top challenges to academic success with sixty-three percent of UM students reporting “more than average” to “tremendous” levels of stress. Extending the reach of health and wellness efforts into the academic setting is an innovative approach to ensuring UM students have the support they need to thrive both personally and academically. Thank you for your commitment to providing a classroom environment that both inspires and supports your students. The work you do makes a difference.

The concept and content of this toolkit is strongly based on groundbreaking work by Simon Fraser University and their healthy campus community initiative. Many thanks to the SFU health promotion department for sharing this and many other resources. Please refer to the references page for more background information and related research.

# PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Instructors who provide opportunities for their students’ personal and professional growth increase students’ skills, resiliency, and preparedness for the future.

## SUGGESTIONS

### Course Design

* Bring in guest speakers or alumni to help students connect in-class learning to

real life issues, work skills and their career development

* Incorporate examples from the real world in class (news clips, career advice, guest speakers from the workforce)
* Use journaling or other reflective activities to encourage personal growth
* Create assignments that allow students to explore the ways academic content relates to their lives, families, and current or future careers.
* Explore fixed versus growth mindsets and the importance of grit
* Use activities and practices in class to help build you and your students’ intercultural competence
* Consider what skills students will need to succeed in life and in their careers and try to find ways to foster these in class (for example teamwork, communication, problem solving, empathy, initiative)

### Be a Resource

* Offer mindfulness or other skill building activities during class breaks or as part of the course
* Link students to resources that support their personal resilience and well-being
* Encourage students to seek co-curricular and volunteer opportunities
* Provide opportunities for mentor matching

#### RESOURCES

* Curry Health Center Wellness 243-2809
* Curry Health Center Counseling 243-4711
* Academic Enrichment 243-2815
* American Indian Student Services 243-6306
* Career Services 243-2022
* Academic Enrichment 243-2815
* ASUM Student Groups 243-2451

# FLEXIBILITY

Flexible instructors provide students with multiple avenues for engaging with the course in order to offer students control over their learning experiences; personal agency helps students feel empowered and supported, which contributes their well-being and overall success.

## SUGGESTIONS

### Course Design

* Offer students the option to choose their “best two out of three” for assignments or quizzes
* Offer opportunities for students to receive feedback on writing assignments before the deadline; or allow for revisions of graded writing.
* Offer students choice in assignments and opportunities to set their own deadlines or percentage of final grade for assignments
* Seek feedback from students throughout the semester. This could be done through web-survey or an anonymous in class comment card
* Use interactive tools like iClicker to promote class input and participation
* Reward students for demonstrating consistent investment in the course (asking questions, being timely, and a positive, productive member of the class.)

### Accessibility

* In your syllabus, offer a variety of ways for students to contact you with questions or concerns
* Consider providing students with lecture notes or power point slides ahead of class, and providing lecture recordings (particularly helpful for EASL students whereby they have more opportunities to work through the rate of speech during lectures)
* Upload course such as slides and lecture notes to Moodle to allow easier access to the material
* Consider alternative forms of office hours (for example skype, webconferencing, group office hours)
* Incorporate principles of Universal Design for Learning to help accommodate diverse learners
* Consider using Open Educational Resources (online texts that are free, adaptable and a flexible alternative to traditional text books)

#### RESOURCES

* [OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES](HTTP://LIBGUIDES.LIB.UMT.EDU/OER/RESOURCES)
* [UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING](http://WWW.UDLCENTER.ORG)
* UMOnline 243-4999

# SOCIAL CONNECTION

Instructors who facilitate interaction help students build social networks which foster resilience and are an asset to well-being. Interaction in the class can help create a sense of belonging, community and positive classroom culture.

## SUGGESTIONS

### Course Design

* Have students introduce themselves during the first class or use icebreaker activities as part of curriculum
* Make it clear that the quality of teamwork in group assignments is important by including marks for the group process in grading rubrics
* Offer personality assessment or a Team Style Inventory in forming groups and to help groups function smoothly
* Design lecture assignments that require students to collectively work on study questions and participate in small group discussions
* Work with your teaching assistants to create opportunities for social connection and teamwork in tutorials or labs

### Facilitate Connection

* Ask students to keep phones off and put away during class time
* Create class guidelines as a group to respect others and create a safe place for interaction and discussion (ie. Appreciate all perspectives,” “listen for understanding,” “be empathetic.”
* Encourage students to participate in study groups
* Ask students to take down the name and number of at least one of their peers so that they can connect should they miss a lecture or want to form a study group
* Suggest opportunities for students to interact outside of class time (if you have time to join them that is even better)
* Offer mini breaks in class and encourage students to take this time to get to know one another
* If possible, move tables and chairs into small groups to facilitate discussion (just be sure to return them after class)

#### RESOURCES

* [TEAM STYLE INVENTORY](http://www.mhhe.com/ps/hrelations/general/teaminventory.html)
* [FIRST DAY OF CLASS ACTIVITIES](https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/first-day-of-class-activities-that-create-a-climate-for-learning/)

# OPTIMAL CHALLENGE

Students perform and feel their best when they are challenged, but have adequate resources to meet the challenge.

## SUGGESTIONS

### Course Design

* Set clear course goals, and ensure assignments and expectations are clear from the start
* Consider the timing of exams and assignments to alleviate undue stress
* Publish grading rubrics in advance
* Recognize that more tasks do not always equate to more learning
* Avoid very heavily weighted components, such as an exam worth 50% of the final grade
* Provide activities where students design mock test/study questions

### Meet Student Where They Are

* Acknowledge that students have lives outside their academic pursuits and support them to find balance
* Provide opportunities for feedback on each stage of assignments and help students progress to the next stage of larger projects
* Give specific targeted and timely feedback about strengths and weaknesses
* Incorporate principles of Universal Design for Learning to help accommodate diverse learners. (UM professor Morgan Alwell is a good local resource)
* Remind students about the resources available to them through the Office for Student Success, Disability Services or Curry Health Center.
* Pause and summarize or ask students to summarize (“Please summarize my example and add another” or “Take a minute to prepare a question about this.”)
* Participate in early warning systems (e.g., Starfish, Moodle, your own)

#### RESOURCES

* [UNIVERSAL DESIGN LEARNING](http://www.udlcenter.org)
* OFFICE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS 243-2800
* STARFISH 243-2297
* CURRY HEALTH CENTER 243-4330
* DISABILITY SERVICES 243-2243

# POSITIVE CLASSROOM CULTURE

Instructors who create an enjoyable and welcoming classroom culture can enhance positive well-being for students and instructors. This can be accomplished through humor, inspiration, open-mindedness, connecting with students and deeply engaging them in their learning.

## SUGGESTIONS

### Set the Stage

* Create class guidelines as a group to respect differences and create a safe place for discussion (ie. “appreciate perspectives and differences” or “remember that people are talking from personal experiences — be empathetic”)
* Be intentional about setting a welcoming tone throughout the semester
* Offer breaks in class where students can take a breather or connect to one another
* Consider limiting student use of phones/devices during class
* Use active learning techniques to create an engaging and dynamic learning environment
* Allow students space to be wrong and gently encourage alternate viewpoints
* When possible, ensure a pleasant and inviting space through use of color, art, music and well maintained facilities
* Incorporate inspirational quotes or laughter to lighten the mood
* Take care of your own well-being so that you can be present and encouraging for your students – see self-care page for more resources

### Be in it Together

* Acknowledge that university can be intimidating and stressful for students; provide resources that can alleviate stress and promote success.
* Share your teaching philosophy with students
* Share a bit about yourself, your career path or setbacks you’ve overcome
* Take time in class to check-in with how your students are doing
* Facilitate respectful, honest discussion as part of curriculum
* Acknowledge that not all students are ready to share in the classroom and encourage them to engage with you during your office hours
* Seek feedback from students throughout the semester (this could be done through web-survey or an anonymous in class comment card)

# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Instructors who provide students with opportunities to make a valued contribution through their coursework can give them a boost to their emotional well-being. Service learning is beneficial in helping students learn about themselves and their interests therefore directing their college and career paths.

## SUGGESTIONS

### Course Design

* Create assignments in which the results can be utilized by a community group or campus initiative
* Where possible incorporate community service or service learning components into your course
* Consider requesting a Service Learning Course Designation for your class
* Lead discussions or activities that help students develop a sense of civic responsibility
* Recognize that universities play a role in developing the leaders of tomorrow and encourage students to explore their own values and goals
* Consider what skills students will need to succeed in life and in their careers and try to find ways to foster these in class (for example teamwork, communication, problem solving, empathy, initiative)

### Spark Engagement

* Encourage students to get involved in extracurricular volunteer work. Consider extra credit points for civic engagement activities outside the classroom curriculum.
* Remind students of UM’s Volunteer Fair held each semester
* Learn about UM’s Service Saturdays program and encourage your students to participate – email service.Saturday@mso.umt.edu
* Learn about UM’s Alternative Breaks- a program for students to engage in service projects during academic breaks

#### RESOURCES:

* UM Academic Enrichment 243-2815
* UM Civic Engagement 243-5531
* UM Service Learning Course Designation 243-5128
* Volunteers in Action Student Association 243-5331
* [Volunteer Missoula](http://www.volunteermissoula.org)
* Montana Campus Compact 243-5117

# INSTRUCTOR SUPPORT

Instructors play an important role in setting a positive and supportive tone that can go a long way in helping students to feel welcome and at ease.

## SUGGESTIONS

### Connect with your students

* Whenever possible, let students know you care about them and their success (e.g., general discussions to entire class, small personal connections with students)
* Show up early to class and engage with students personally
* Ask students about their interests, their workload, their extracurricular activities

### Be accessible

* Demystify your role by sharing an anecdote, joke, or something to reveal you too are human!
* Personally invite small groups of students to your office hours
* Consider alternative forms of interaction (e.g., webchat, group office hours, or Moodle)

### Open lines of communication

* Set clear expectations using syllabi and rubrics
* Provide constructive feedback throughout the semester
* Suggest specific actions students can take to improve
* Seek feedback from students mid-semester (e.g., anonymous paper forms, web survey, class discussion
* Participate in early warning systems (e.g., Starfish, Moodle, your own)
* Use “[one-minute papers](HTTP://PROVOST.TUFTS.EDU/CELT/FILES/MINUTEPAPER.PDF)”

### Be in it Together

* Use engaging pedagogical techniques such as cooperative or problem-based learning
* Acknowledge campus events which may be affecting students
* Encourage students to be involved on campus
* Promote campus resources available to students

#### RESOURCES

See RESPONDING TO A STUDENT IN CRISIS page

See SELF-CARE FOR INSTRUCTORS page

# INCLUSIVITY

Instructors who facilitate an inclusive learning environment demonstrate an intentional consideration for all students and in doing so, can enhance positive well-being.

## SUGGESTIONS

### Course Design

* Use activities and practices in class to help build intercultural competence
* Encourage participation in events designed to celebrate diversity (Kyi-Yo Powwow, DIVERSEU, Black Solidarity Summit, Pride Week)
* Offer a values clarification exercise
* Break large projects into a series of smaller assignments and offer opportunities for feedback throughout the process

### Meet Student Where They Are

* Incorporate principles of Universal Design for Learning to help accommodate diverse learners (UM professor Morgan Alwell is a good local resource)
* Pause and summarize or ask students to summarize (“I want you to summarize my example and add another” or “take a minute to prepare a question about this”)
* Provide visual support (text and/or graphic)
* Consider providing students with lecture notes or power point slides ahead of class and provide lecture recordings on Moodle (particularly helpful for EASL students whereby they have more opportunities to work through the rate of speech during lectures)

### Open Communication

* Create class guidelines as a group to respect differences and create a safe place for discussion (ie. “appreciate perspectives and differences” or “remember that people are talking from personal experiences — be empathetic”)
* Encourage students to speak to you about any accessibility concerns they may have

### Be a Resource

* Familiarize yourself with the intercultural awareness resources available at UM and share these with students
* Use inclusive language and gender neutral pronouns
* Take an indigenous cultural competency course
* Learn to identify “micro-aggressions” and work to mitigate them in your classroom
* Remind students what resources are available to them

#### RESOURCES:

* American Indian Student Services 243-6303
* Disability Services 243-2243
* DIVERSE U 243-5622
* UM Accessibility 243-EITA
* UM Allies 243-5638
* [UM Diversity Advisory Council](http://www.umt.edu/diversity/)
* [Universal Design for Learning](http://www.udlcenter.org/)

# RESPONDING TO A STUDENT IN CRISIS

Instructors who respond to the needs of struggling students and connect them with campus resources help support their personal well-being, resilience and readiness to learn.

## SUGGESTIONS

### Be Prepared

* Identify your personal philosophy and boundaries about responding to students in need – what are you willing to do, give or sacrifice?
* Consult with Curry Counseling and your colleagues for guidance and support
* Understand that you do not need to have all the answers, students often already know what they need. Just listening is a powerful helping tool.

### Create a Student-Centered Plan

* Acknowledge that it can be hard to ask for help, affirm the student for meeting with you.
* Ask open-ended questions – what, how, when?
* Listen for understanding and with empathy.
* Reflect back what you hear to ensure clear understanding “What I hear you saying is…”
* Help the student identify his/her/their strengths and instill hope
* Engage your student in devising his/her/their own path forward.
* Have faith that your student can overcome any challenge with the proper help.

### Be a Resource

* Familiarize yourself with the various student support services and co-curricular learning supports across campus.
* Invite guest speakers from various campus services to present on their services during class.
* Create a list of referrals with names and contact information to have ready when needed - help make necessary appointments if this fits within your personal boundaries.

### Responding to Serious Concerns

* Contact UM’s Behavioral Intervention Team about students who engage in worrisome behaviors.
* Walk your student to Curry Health Center Counseling immediately if he/she/they are suicidal.
* Contact UM Police and 911 for immediate emergencies.

#### RESOURCES:

Academic Enrichment 243-2815

* American Indian Student Services 243-6306
* Career Services 243-2022
* Curry Health Center 243-4330
* Curry Health Center Wellness Coaching 243-2809
* Disability Services 243-5530
* Financial Aid Office 243-5373
* International Students & Scholars 243-2288
* Office for Student Success 243-2800
* Starfish 243-2297
* VETS Office 243-2744

#### CRISIS RESOURCES

* Curry Health Center Counseling 243-4711
* Student Advocacy Resource Center 243-4429
* UM Police 243-4000
* Behavioral Intervention Team 243-2081

243-2611

* Suicide Crisis Line 800-273-8255

# SELF-CARE FOR INSTRUCTORS

Responding to the dynamic needs of students is difficult when you are feeling depleted. Prioritizing self-care will boost your overall wellbeing allowing you to be present for your students. The journey to better wellbeing is a personal one. One way to get started on your individual path is to identify which areas of your life are currently bringing you fulfillment or frustration. Which areas in your life might need some additional focus?

On scale of 1 to 10, rate how satisfied or how well you feel you are doing in each area of your life.

(1= not at all satisfied, 10= completely satisfied)

## Career/Profession

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## Personal Relationships

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## Fun, Relaxation, Creativity

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## Sense of Community

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## Finances

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## Physical Health and Wellbeing

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## Sense of Purpose

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## Emotional Health and Wellbeing

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## Screen Use (TV, Phone, Computer, Tablet, iPad, etc)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What areas of your life have received the benefit of your attention and natural strengths, and which might need some additional care?

### Consider these questions to help define the first steps on your path to improved well-being.

* Which areas of my life are the most satisfying and fulfilling? Why is that? What is happening in this area to cause me to feel this way?
* In which area of my life am I feeling dissatisfied or unfulfilled? What is not working? What is causing me to feel this way? What is feeling out of my control? What is in my control that I can influence or change?
* Which areas of my life could be even better? Where do I want to focus my time and energy? Where would I receive the most benefit for investing time and energy? Where am I feeling the biggest “nudge?”

## SUGGESTIONS

### Creating Space for What Matters to You

* Communicate your in-person availability to students – set defined office hours
* Clearly define your digital availability to students - consider adding an expected response time in email signature
* Limit distractions by turning off phone notifications and logging into email at set times during the day
* Set realistic expectations for yourself – recognize what you are sacrificing when you say “yes” to something
* Schedule times during the day to take care of yourself – time to eat, reminders for water, daily breaks, meditation
* Consider scheduling blocks of time during the day – email block, prep block, grading block, personal time block

### Physical Health and Wellbeing

* Incorporate daily movement – find exercise you enjoy, park farther away, take the stairs, walk across campus
* Prioritize sleep – limit caffeine and alcohol, turn off screens early and keep them out of the bedroom
* Eat more vegetables – the act of simply adding more vegetables each day can greatly impact your overall health

### Emotional Health and Wellbeing

* Lower stress with breathing exercises – pair breathing exercises with things you do frequently each day
* Create a support system – quality connection with others boosts mental wellbeing and happiness
* Arrange a meeting instead of corresponding via email
* Let go of perfectionism
* Find the good – consider keeping a daily gratitude journal
* Take time to find the present moment – tune into your breath, surroundings, or body sensations
* Identify what grounds you to a greater purpose
* Recognize what gives you energy and the things that deplete you

#### RESOURCES

* [MUS Wellness Program](http://wellness.mus.edu/)
* [UM Campus Recreation](http://www.umt.edu/crec/)
* [UM Mind and Body Lab](https://coehs.umt.edu/departments/hhp/labs_and_centers/mindbodylab/default.php)
* [Faculty Development Office](http://www.umt.edu/provost/faculty/faculty-development-office/default.php)

# BUILD THE STUDENT WELLNESS ADVOCATE NETWORK

The following are ideas for how you might support student success through wellbeing within your own

department:

* Invite Curry Health Center Wellness to share resources at a faculty meeting
* Try an idea from this toolkit in your class and let us know how it goes
* Meet with someone from Curry Health Center Wellness to discuss ideas for supporting student success
* through wellbeing within a class you teach, or refer a colleague to connect with us
* Become your department’s resource for the Student Wellness Advocate program
* Start a teaching circle related to concepts presented in this toolkit in your department
* Connect with your department’s chair or dean to explore how the toolkit can be embedded in existing departmental activities
* Share with us what you are currently doing that you find works well in enhancing student well-being.
* Share feedback with us about the project and associated resources
* Learn more about the research that supports the Student Wellness Advocate project

To connect further with Curry Health Center Wellness regarding

these ideas email [julee.stearns@umontana.edu](mailto:julee.stearns@umontana.edu)

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