

"BACK TO CAMPUS" FACULTY GUIDE ON STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

This list of suggestions was compiled by experts, including Zoe Ragouzeos, PhD, EVP of Wellness and Counseling Services at NYU and President of the Mary Christie Institute. They were also informed by focus groups, conducted by the Institute, with nine students from six different universities, during the summer of 2021.



ACKNOWLEDGE WHAT HAS HAPPENED

Research shows that experiences during the global pandemic have significantly affected student mental health. It is important to acknowledge feelings of anxiety, loneliness and fear as well as the loss and grief many students are still processing.

KNOW HOW TO HELP

Faculty interact with students more frequently than any other adults on campus and are often the most likely to observe if a student is unwell, particularly if there is a pattern of unhealthy behavior. Given this relationship, it is most important that you understand how to refer a student to professional help on campus.



STUDENT VOICES

"Emails about wellness are fine, but it is so much better when professors actually talk about mental health."

CULTIVATE COLLABORATION

Now more than ever, students report being lonely and isolated in college, and classes can be one of the few opportunities to interact with others. Facilitating student-to-student interaction to cultivate cross-class connection can benefit a students' sense of community and increase engagement in the coursework. Consider group projects, meet and greets, icebreakers and other connection exercises.





COMMUNICATE CARE

Faculty can convey they care with simple practices such as learning students' names, checking in with students at the beginning of class and throughout the semester, and monitoring student stress levels and workload. Communicating care for student wellbeing can help cultivate a more compassionate campus community as students often look to faculty for leadership.

STUDENT VOICES

"Poor performance is not the only indicator of a mental health problem. Professors can be concerned about someone before they are so distressed they can't complete their work."

STUDENT VOICES

"Mental health days can be super helpful if you're feeling overwhelmed."

SHOW FLEXIBILITY

Academic stress, in the extreme, can be debilitating for some students. Showing flexibility on assignments and grading, when appropriate, can help alleviate stress, particularly with heavy course loads and dueling priorities. Students also report that pacing assignments and considering other college-wide activities can help keep them on track.



STUDENT VOICES

"If professors were to set clear outlines and break up assignments into smaller chunks, that would be hugely helpful."

STUDENT VOICES

"It's very stressful for us to know that there is no room for flexibility."

STUDENT VOICES

"I wish my professors considered all of the other things that are going on in my life besides just their class."