

Integrating

# WELL-BEING CONCEPTS

into Learning Environments



# INTRODUCTION

Positive well-being is a key predictor for learning and student success. Studies indicate that mental health and well-being are connected to a student's ability to learn (Eisenberg and Speer, 2013; Keyes et al., 2012; Martin, 2010). Positive mental health and well-being enhances a student's ability to learn, with evidence showing that different teaching practices also affect student learning outcomes in different ways.

Faculty (including TA's, instructors) play a role in creating and fostering positive learning environments that impact on the student experience. Integrating well-being concepts into classroom/learning environments results in healthy classroom practices that ultimately lead to student/academic success, a healthy culture and positive environment, student retention, and achievement of learning outcomes.

## How to Use This Guide:

This document suggests strategies to incorporate and integrate health and well-being concepts into your classrooms and student activities. Support your students' success by implementing one or more of these practices in your courses. If you have other ideas or use other methods in your teaching, we want to hear from you! What other practices could we recommend? What has worked for you? Let us know at [healthycampus@ucr.edu](mailto:healthycampus@ucr.edu).

This guide was created by various partners as part of the University of California's Healthy Campus Network (HCN). The HCN is a network of coalitions across all ten campuses working together to promote individual campus and systemwide changes to advance a culture of health and well-being across the University of California. The goal is "to make UC the healthiest place to work, learn, and live." HCN is all-inclusive of campus stakeholders – students, faculty, and staff—who conceive, launch, and study innovations that infuse health into everyday operations, business practices, and academic and work/life.

SUGGESTION

#1

## Be Mindful about Deadlines & Workload

Being mindful about the workload and the deadlines set for assignments in the classroom is one way to ensure that students are not extremely overwhelmed, which can ultimately offer more time dedicated for their well-being (Boucher, 2016). For example, you could consider doing one or more of the following:

- Adjust deadlines for assignments to discourage all-nighters (i.e., don't make assignments due at 8am)
- Consider the timing of exams and assignments to alleviate undue stress and anxiety (be aware of major religious holidays throughout the quarter)
- Set deadlines that offer work/life balance for yourself and your students
- Ensure the workload is reasonable and communicate grading and deadlines clearly





## SUGGESTION #2

### Be Flexible and Offer Options

Offering alternative options for assignment completion will help generate success in the classroom by allowing learners to complete coursework according to their learning style preferences. Providing students with some flexibility and control over their learning experiences helps them to feel empowered and supported, contributing to their well-being. Please consider taking one or more of the following actions:

- Give students options for their grade. For example, perhaps students can choose to count two out of three assignments towards their grade, dropping the lowest score
- Offer choices in assignments so that students can pick what works best for their learning
- Provide staggered due dates (e.g. perhaps 3 short papers are due but there are 6 opportunities throughout the quarter to submit work so students can choose the topic and time that works best for them)

SUGGESTION  
**#3**

## Encourage Breaks, Standing, Stretching, & Reflection

Encouraging physical activity breaks in the classroom has shown to have a positive impact on students' academic performance by increasing their cognitive function and desire to learn. Implementing this standard in classrooms can overall stimulate physical activity levels and increase engagement (Ferrer and Laughlin, 2017). For example, you could consider doing one or more of the following:

- Provide opportunities for students to choose to stand during class, taking care not to set any physical expectations that would cause students with differing abilities to be unable to participate or forced to self-disclose.
- Offer short breaks during class for students to stretch, do a mindfulness activity or do get-to-know-each other activities
- Welcome students to stand in long lectures or seminars or conduct a portion of your discussion group standing
- Incorporate brief meditation or self-reflection activities into classes lasting more than an hour



**SUGGESTION**  
**#4**

## Share Resources & Wellness Info with Students

College can be an extremely stressful environment for students, and this has the ability to negatively affect their health and well-being. The importance of sharing resources and wellness information with students is to ensure that students feel supported by their campus community and have the opportunity and resources to succeed. Feeling supported can start in the classroom. Please consider taking one or more of the following actions:

- Include sample health and well-being messages and resources on syllabi or go over it during lecture
- Share general information about mental health and well-being with students
- In your syllabus acknowledge that the university can be stressful; offer a variety of ways that your students may contact you with questions or concerns
- Familiarize yourself with the student resources on campus and refer students to mental health resources or disability services for accommodations when necessary
- Familiarize yourself with various student support services and co-curricular learning supports across campus
- Be aware of the signs that a student is in distress and take timely and appropriate action (monitor academic indicators like missing class or other behavioral, emotional, or physical indicators). Learn more in the [UC Promoting Student Mental Health Guide](#)



SUGGESTION  
**#5**

## Help Students Connect with You

Connecting with students on a personal level will help create a more productive environment that allows for students to feel comfortable and supported, which can be beneficial for improving their ability to learn (Rimm-Kaufman and Sandilos, 2018). For example, you could consider doing one or more of the following:

- Share your teaching philosophy with students
- Make yourself available in different forms: email, Zoom, etc.
- Seek feedback from students throughout the course (this could be done through web-survey or an anonymous in-class comment card)
- Encourage students to attend office hours
- If you feel comfortable and safe to do so, talk about yourself and your experiences and provide students the opportunity to do the same

**SUGGESTION**  
**#6**

## Be Welcoming, Enthusiastic & Caring

Setting a welcoming tone is one of the many ways that can cultivate a more friendly and positive learning and working space for students. Creating a safe space in the class environment is also important for students (Holley and Steiner, 2005). Please consider taking one or more of the following actions:

- Show enthusiasm for the subject, including your own professional path
- Be positive, supportive and personable, and let students know that you are invested in their success
- Let students know you care about them and their success
- Take care of your own well-being so that you can be present and encouraging your students
- Use inclusive language and gender-neutral pronouns
- Create class guidelines together to respect differences and acknowledge privilege and power
- Consider taking the [Implicit Association Test](#) and actively work on overcoming your own biases
- Encourage students to speak to you about any accessibility concerns







## Help Students Connect with the Community

Getting students connected with their local and individual communities gives them the opportunity to make a difference and can be beneficial for their overall well-being (Bandy, 2011). For example, you could consider doing one or more of the following:

- Bring in other subject matter experts as guest speakers
- 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
- Recognize that universities play a role in developing the leaders of tomorrow and encourage students to explore their own values and goals
- Lead discussions or activities that help students develop a sense of civic responsibility
- Encourage students to seek out extracurricular volunteer opportunities
- Offer extra credit for students to attend course-related community events
- Connect course concepts to the “real world” and give students the opportunity to do the same
- Offer site visits, trips or other informal learning environments

**SUGGESTION**  
**# 8**

## Provide Timely Feedback & Helpful Advice

Providing timely feedback and helpful advice allows for students to discover their challenges early on, and work to improve themselves throughout the course (Wiggins, 2012). Please consider taking one or more of the following actions:

- Provide specific feedback and outline ways that students can improve
- Ask students to identify concepts they want to learn more about and what was challenging and address at the beginning of the next class
- Identify the larger course objectives and how this assignment fits into larger course goals. Make it clear how this work can further course and professional goals
- Allow students to discuss their grade with you if they are not satisfied with their grade and provide ways to help students improve



SUGGESTION  
**#9**

## Provide Opportunities that Promote Professional and Personal Skills

Providing students opportunities for engaging with the real world will help promote their professional and personal skills that are necessary after having graduated college (Dallas and McCrindle, 2018). For example, you could consider doing one or more of the following:

- Provide opportunities for personal development
- Incorporate mindfulness, journaling, and other forms of personal development into class activities and assignments
- Incorporate skill-building activities in class and find ways to build this throughout the course



# SUGGESTION #10

## Help Students Connect with Each Other

Across the nation, faculty and staff have noticed that university students seem lonelier than ever before. The American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment revealed that 65.6% of graduate and undergraduate respondents reported that they had "felt very lonely" within the past 12 months (ACHA, 2019). Some ways of alleviating this might include the following:

- Encourage connection in your classes by having students introduce themselves to one another and work together in teams
- Include teamwork as a component of grading for group projects
- Encourage students to participate in study groups and in social activities outside of class
- Provide opportunities during class time and breaks for students to work together and get to know one another
- Work with your teaching assistants to create opportunities for social connection and teamwork among students in labs and discussion sections
- Suggest opportunities for students to interact outside of class time and join them if possible
- Start class by asking students to turn to someone next to them and ask any of the following: how they are doing, what they are grateful for, what made them smile today, etc.



# Resources

[Promoting Student Mental Health - A UC Guide for Faculty and Staff](#)

[Simon Fraser University “Well-Being in Learning Environments”](#)

[Simon Fraser University “Creating Conditions for Well-Being in Learning Environments” guide](#)

[How Teaching Practices Influence Student Health and Well-Being](#)

[Teaching Practices That Promote Student Well-Being: Tool for Educators](#)

[UBC video](#)

[From the Center for Innovations in Teaching and Learning at UCSC:](#)

["Inclusive Teaching" Resources](#)

[From Vanderbilt University: "Increasing Inclusivity in the Classroom"](#)

# Suggested Syllabus Blurbs

Looking for ways to fill space on your course syllabi? Consider promoting health and well-being resources to support student health and learning. Healthy Campus partners would like to encourage those who teach to include or adapt one or more of the following suggested examples, create your own and share with us. Thank you for your involvement in creating a culture of health in your classrooms.

## Healthy Campus Network information:

The Healthy Campus Network (HCN) invests in improving the health and quality of life for our UC campus community. Participation in the HCN has several advantages, which include options for course credit, research hours, and internships. For more information on your options to participate, visit [healthycampus.ucr.edu](https://healthycampus.ucr.edu).

UC Healthy Campus invests in improving the health and quality of life for our UC campus community. Take part in the health revolution and do something healthy for yourself and the campus.

## Tobacco Free Policy

Smoking, use of smokeless tobacco products, use of nicotine products not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to help individuals who use tobacco to quit, use of electronic smoking devices (e.g., electronic cigarettes), and smoking or vaping of cannabis/marijuana are prohibited on UC property including parking lots. For more information about the policy or cessation resources, please visit the website [here](#).

## Mental Health:

As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, alcohol/drug problems, anxiety, depression, difficulty concentrating and lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities – UCR has resources to help! If you or a friend are in distress or experiencing any of these issues, please contact 951-UCR-TALK 24-hours a day to speak to a mental health professional, or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK. Please refer to [mentalhealth.ucr.edu](https://mentalhealth.ucr.edu) for additional resources.

## Basic Needs:

If you or someone you know are in need of economic, food or housing support, you can find help at [basicneeds.ucr.edu](https://basicneeds.ucr.edu). You may be eligible for money to buy groceries via [basicneeds.ucr.edu/calfresh](https://basicneeds.ucr.edu/calfresh). If you are in need of immediate assistance, see the Student Affairs Case Manager at [casemanagement.ucr.edu](https://casemanagement.ucr.edu) or visit the R'Pantry at [basicneeds.ucr.edu/rpantry](https://basicneeds.ucr.edu/rpantry). You can find more information by clicking the Student Success Resources tab on your iLearn course menu.

## Take a Break

Take a break and stretch during class or your study break. With exams, papers and project deadlines; you may feel some stress. A 5-minute fit break to stretch out your muscles will help you recharge and refocus. Physical movement optimizes brain functions, relaxes tight muscles and relieves your body of stress. Perform stretches daily to feel good and increase energy. Visit the [UCR Healthy Campus website](https://www.ucr.edu/healthy-campus) for more information and stretches

## Healthy Eating on Campus



For more guidance on making food choices that are “Healthier for You and the Planet” on campus, visit [dining.ucr.edu](http://dining.ucr.edu) and click on Today's Menu. Select the location you will be dining and look for the logo identifying foods that meet the Seeds of Change criteria. Also look for the logo on UCR dining services menu boards.

## Self-Care

As a student, your health should be a priority as much as your academic endeavors. Taking good care of yourself is important and allows you to perform your best. Practice self-care and invest in yourself. In addition to the following resources, your instructor and TA are available to provide support and referrals.

### Self-Care Resources

University resources that may help you include:

- Counseling Center: (951) 827-5531 | (<http://counseling.ucr.edu/Pages/default.aspx>)
- Wellness Center: (<http://well.ucr.edu/Pages/default.aspx>)
- Campus Health Center: (951) 827-3031 | <http://campushealth.ucr.edu/Pages/default.aspx>)
- Student Special Services (for students with disabilities): (<http://specialservices.ucr.edu/Pages/default.aspx>)
- Ethnic and gender program offices: ([http://www.ucr.edu/students/ethnic\\_gender.html](http://www.ucr.edu/students/ethnic_gender.html))
- Healing Highlanders Collegiate Recovery Program: (<http://healinghighlanders.weebly.com>)
- UCR Student Conduct: (951) 827-4208
- UCR Student Affairs Case Manager: (951) 827-9354
- Office of the Ombuds: (951) 827-3213



## Sexual & Relationship Violence Support

The University of California is committed to fostering a safe and healthy learning environment. Title IX and university policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex – including sexual harassment, relationship violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We know that sexual violence can undermine students' academic success, and we encourage students who have experienced sexual/relationship violence to connect with someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need.

### Confidential Resources:

- Campus, Advocacy Resources & Education (CARE) for any academic, healing or advocacy support: (951) 827- 6225; [advocate@ucr.edu](mailto:advocate@ucr.edu) or visit [care.ucr.edu/](http://care.ucr.edu/)
- Riverside Area Rape Crisis Center (24/7): (951) 686-7273 or visit [rarcc.org/](http://rarcc.org/) (OFF Campus)
- Alternatives to Domestic Violence: (800) 339-7233 or visit [alternativestodv.org/](http://alternativestodv.org/) (OFF Campus)

### Non-Confidential Resources & Reporting:

- UCR Title IX Office: (951) 827-7070, [titleix@ucr.edu](mailto:titleix@ucr.edu) or visit [titleix.ucr.edu/](http://titleix.ucr.edu/)
- University of California Police Department (UCPD): (951) 827-5222 or visit [police.ucr.edu/](http://police.ucr.edu/)

**Some courses, due to their sensitive content, are particularly likely to upset students. In those cases, a syllabus blurb might be useful. Consider the following example, which was prepared for a course on relationship violence:**

Relationship violence is a sensitive subject. Many of us have personal experience with it. As a result, this course may spark an emotional reaction in you. Such a reaction is normal. However, to ensure your wellness, it is recommended that you have yourself a plan for self-care in the event that emotions arise. Categories of self-care include bio-behavioral (e.g., get plenty of sleep), affective-cognitive (e.g., watching a favorite, comforting movie), relational (e.g., talking with a friend), and spiritual (e.g., connecting with a faith community or the natural environment). In addition to the following resources, your instructor and TA are available to provide support and referrals.

## Helpful University Resources:

- Counseling Center: (951) 827-5531 (counseling.ucr.edu)
- The Well: (well.ucr.edu)
- Campus Health Center: (951) 827-3031 | (campushealth.ucr.edu)
- Student Special Services (for students with disabilities and veterans): (specialservices.ucr.edu)
- Ethnic and gender program offices: (deanofstudents.ucr.edu/diversity)
- Healing Highlanders Collegiate Recovery Program: (healinghighlanders.weebly.com)
- Campus Safety Escort Service: (951) 827-3772
- UCR Ombudsperson: (951) 827-3213,
- UCR Student Conduct: (951) 827-4208
- UCR Student Affairs Case Manager: (951) 827-9354
- UCR Title IX/Sexual Harassment Office: (951) 827-5670

## Off-Campus Resources:

- Alternatives to Domestic Violence: (800) 339-7233
- Riverside Area Rape Crisis Center (24/7): (866) 686-7273
- Riverside County Regional Medical Center: (951) 486-4000
- National Dating Abuse Hotline: (866) 331-9474
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: (800) 799-7233
- Family Justice Center: (951) 955-6100

## UCR Policies

Students are responsible for reviewing and complying with all UCR policies. Please be advised that the selling of class notes without the written permission of the professor and the online posting of notes for sale are violations of University policy.

[conduct.ucr.edu](https://conduct.ucr.edu)

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