San Francisco State University

WELLNESS IN THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM TOOLKIT

By taking small actions to support students' wellbeing and personal development, faculty can have a profound impact on students' ability to learn and succeed academically. Taking the time to build your skills to promote wellness will make you a more effective educator. We strongly encourage you to use this tool kit as a starting point in your learning and visit Health Promotion & Wellness (HPW) Faculty Resources webpage to access training and additional tools to expand your skills.

To get you started integrating wellness into your virtual classroom we have created the following categories of actionable strategies that have been identified as promising practices to support student wellness and learning. While some of these strategies are most easily implemented in synchronous classes, many will work for asynchronous classes as well.

This Tool Kit is an adaption of the Simon Fraser University's Well-Being in Learning Environments program & Sacramento State's Wellness in the Virtual Classroom Toolkit developed by Reva Wittenberg, Associate Director of Campus Wellness. Thank you to Reva for her generosity in sharing her resources and expertise. Additional work & expertise in the development of this tool kit was provided by Karen Boyce (Director of Health Promotion & Wellness, San Francisco State), Jul Custodio (Mental Health Educator, San Francisco State), Stephanie Galia (Director of Well-Being & Health Promotion, San Diego State), Kenya Rampersant (Sr. Coordinator for Health Promotion, CalPoly Pomona), & Megan Rowe (Health Promotion Coordinator, Stanislaus State).

Why is Wellness so Important to the Virtual Classroom?

A growing body of evidence related to worksite wellness and education (both K-12 and higher education) demonstrates the connection between creating environments that enhance wellbeing and enhanced productivity, learning, satisfaction, engagement, and retention. [Simon Fraser University, 2019. Rationale for well-being in learning environments] At SF State, students reported Stress (36%), Anxiety (32%) and Sleep Difficulties (27%) as top three issues that negatively impacted their academics in the 2018 National College Health Assessment.

The switch to virtual instruction was a massive trauma and disruption to student's academic experience, as it was for faculty, staff and administrators. The prolonged and stressful nature of our current reality of global pandemic, economic hardship, and an unknown future affects student's ability to learn and achieve. Integrating wellness into your virtual classroom is more important now that it has ever been. While the virtual classroom brings unique challenges, it also brings new tools and opportunities.

Actionable Strategies

I. Positive Classroom Culture

A welcoming classroom environment can support both student and faculty wellbeing. Inspiration, open-mindedness, and connection can help create a culture of positivity.

Strategies:

- Take time to introduce yourself during your first class and share about your career path or setbacks you've overcome, include information on your challenges and success in the transition to virtual or shelter in place [Get to Know Your Prof]

- Develop a teaching philosophy and share it with your students either on Zoom or your iLearn site [Developing a Teaching Philosophy]

- Create and keep structure in the virtual classroom by working collaboratively with students to create class guidelines. Ask students what they need to feel safe and respected in order to create a healthy learning environment [Creating Class/ Community Agreements]

- Acknowledge the interruption in teaching and share how you are going to be flexible and sensitive to the emotional needs of students and yourself [Teaching Remotely During Disruption]

- Use a class check-in activity to connect with students; for example, ask students to write 1 – 2 words about how they're feeling that day in the chat box

- Provide an inspiring or funny quote on slides to lighten the mood, during the beginning of class or during a break [Sample inspirational slides]

- Offer breaks in class where students can take a breather, or facilitate a quick stretch break [Deskercise]

- Use active learning techniques to create an engaging and dynamic online learning environment [Ohio State University] [Northwestern University]

- Ask questions to assess students understanding. Encourage Zoom participation with audio or virtual meeting tools (small breakout groups, chat box, polls, nonverbal reactions "thumbs up") [CEETL Keep Teaching with Zoom] [SFSU AT Zoom Basics]

- Allow students to decide whether to turn on or off their video as it's a privacy, safety, equity and personal issue. Students might be uncomfortable showing their living space, may not want their image captured/recorded/shared, might have unreliable internet and they might feel shy or anxious about being on camera

II. Self-Care & Community Care

Taking care of your own well-being will allow you to be present. [Article: Why taking care of your own wellbeing benefits others] Especially during this stressful and constantly changing environment practicing effective self-care is essential. Sharing these skills with students will also bolster their academic success and competence in coping with the challenges of the virtual classroom.

Strategies:

- Visit the Greater Good Science Center's website for ideas on how to incorporate well-being practices into your daily life [Greater Good Science Center]

- Make space for you and your students to **Move. Nourish. Connect. Reduce stress.**
  - **Move:** Our bodies need activity, it's not just about "staying in shape", movement benefits our immunity and mental health. Incorporate at least 10-minute bouts of exercise or movement in your daily routines [Try a Campus Rec Group X Class at home]
  - **Nourish:** Nourishment is not banning small treats that bring you joy, but rather, setting up a daily structure that fills you with nourishing, healthy foods [HPW Nutrition Resources]
  - **Connect:** We are social beings. We need to feel connected, seen, heard and understood by other humans. Even though we can't physically go to coffee or lunch with a friend right now, there's plenty of ways to connect to others. Reach out – call a friend or family member that you haven't spoken with in a while. They're probably craving connection, too [Social Wellness PDF]
  - **Reduce stress:** During the pandemic, we've been busy preparing, protecting, adjusting, coping, responding, etc. We need more time to simply BE. This is about pausing long enough to let your nervous system come back to baseline after prolonged activation [Stress management for Educators] [Well-being during Covid 19]

- If struggling with negative self-talk, try a little self-compassion. With self-compassion, we give ourselves the same kindness and care we'd give to a good friend experiencing the same situation/stressor. Visit www.self-compassion.org for a variety of guided meditations and exercises

- Attend to your own health, meet with your doctors or mental health providers. Increased opportunities for Telehealth appointments now makes taking care of your own health often easier and faster [SFSU Employee Assistance Program]

- Create check in questions within your classes where you and your students share your self-care activity for the week and then check in the following week on how it went

- Adjust iLearn assignments submission time to 11:00 pm instead of the automatic 11:59 pm deadline to promote sleep and sleeping early [iLearn Basics]

- Incorporate topics and content related to health, wellness and mindfulness into your core discipline content

- Offer mindfulness or other skill building activities during class breaks or as part of the course [UCLA's Mindful Awareness Research Center]
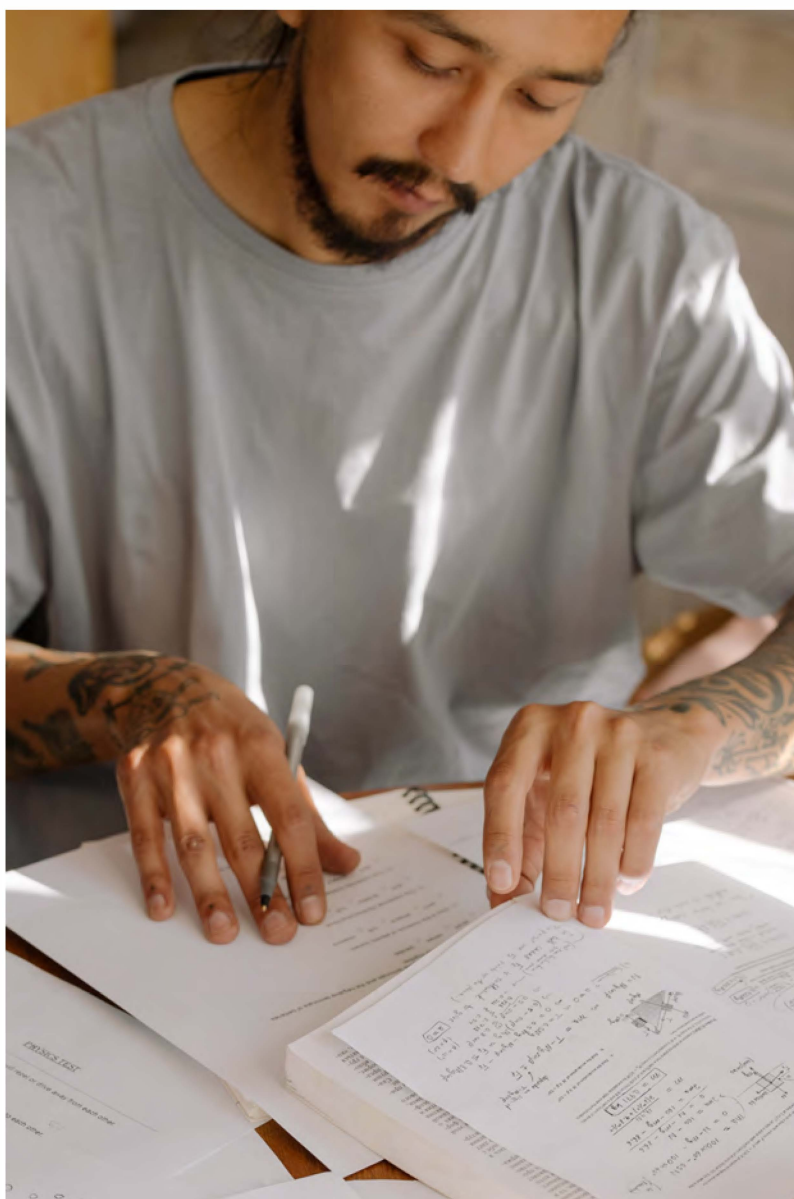
III. Personal Development & Social Emotional Learning

Creating opportunities for personal growth in course design can help increase students' skills, resilience, and career-readiness.

Strategies:

- Use journaling or other reflective activities to encourage personal growth [Journaling Through Your Struggles]

- Encourage students to connect with campus departments or student organizations that are offering online connection/learning opportunities, including Health Promotion & Wellness, Campus Recreation, Student Health Services, Counseling & Psychological Services, Division of Equity and Community Inclusion, Division of Student Life and Associated Students

- Find opportunities for students to explore their life and career goals and connect it to how the class will help them accomplish it. Also introduce and bridge student to CSLD services and offerings [Career Services & Leadership Development]

- 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) [Social and Emotional Learning Strategies]
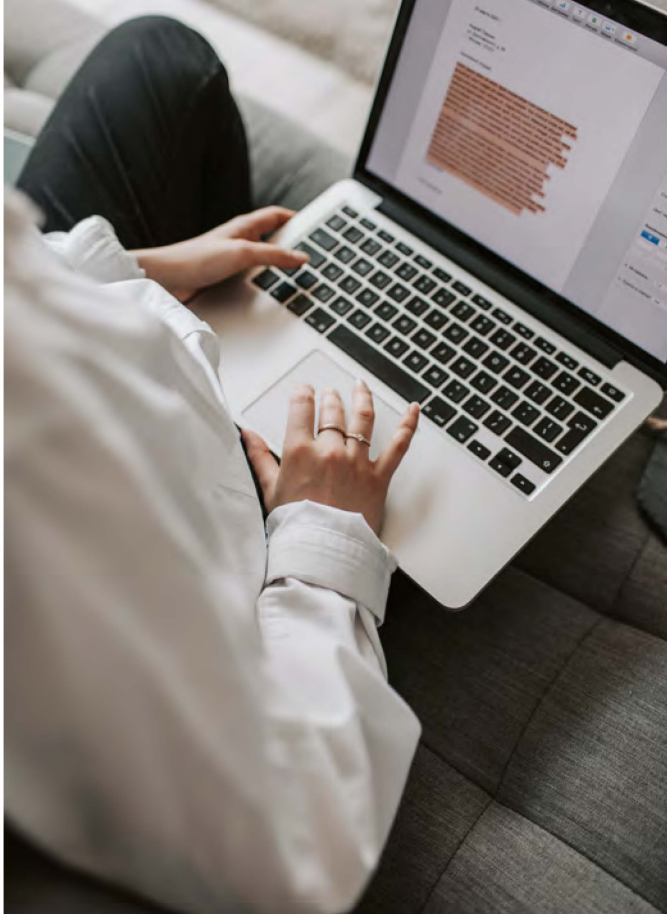
- Encourage students to be more self-aware. If students are aware of their own emotions and the behaviors they trigger, they can begin to manage these emotions and behaviors
    - Activity: Recognize emotions and name them
        - *What are you feeling right now?*
        - *In a stressful situation, what emotions typically arise?*
        - *How would you like to respond to stressful situations in the future?*
        - *In the future, when a stressful situation arises, can you stop to pause, and reconsider your response?*

- Ask students to highlight a recent positive experience. They can share via Zoom chat, breakout rooms or on a discussion board on iLearn. Some ideas include:
    - Next time students have a positive experience, encourage them to take the time to really enjoy it
    - Create a "bliss list" of all things that make them happy. Encourage students to experience as many of them as possible in the near future
      Write down three good things that happen every daye this will help students rewire their brain to pay more attention to the good things in life

IV. Flexibility

The ability to have some flexibility and control in their learning experiences helps students to feel empowered and supported, thus enhancing their wellbeing.

Strategies:

- Embrace flexibility and giving that options to students [Flux Pedagogy]

- Revisit how and why you grade and decide how you will grade [How To Ungrade]

- Make your synchronous session optional, record yourself and make it available to all students via iLearn

- Offer students choice in assignments and opportunities to set their own deadlines or percentage of final grade for assignments [Deadline/Grade Worksheet]

- Offer students the option to choose their "best two out of three" for assignments, quizzes or tests. Allow students to retake tests

- Offer course content in a variety of methods as people learn differently (lecture, web, text, audio, recordings, etc)

- Update lectures to include more engagement with students through discussion, reflections, presentations, activities, etc.

- Seek feedback from students throughout the semester. This could be done through Zoom polls or set up in Qualtrics [Comment Card Example]

- Use interactive tools like Zoom polls, Kahoot, or Padlet to promote class input and participation [Kahoot] [Padlet]

- In your syllabus and on iLearn, 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 ESL students whereby they have more opportunities to work through the rate of speech during lectures)

- Consider using free or low-cost education resources [Affordable Learning at SFSU]

V. Social Connection

Social connection fosters student resilience. Facilitating interaction in and out of class can help create a sense of community and help students build social networks.

Strategies:

- Have students introduce themselves during the first class or use a social connectedness start-up activity [Zoom Icebreakers]

- Facilitate a check in activity that allows them to get to know each other. Use digital tools like Zoom Emoji, Live word clouds, Zoom polls

- Do brief Zoom breakout rooms at beginning or end of class where they get to socialize based on a check in question or prompt

- Leave the Zoom on for 5-10 minutes at the end of class to allow them to just socialize, as they would in a real classroom or hallway

- Encourage students to study with classmates virtually or assign small study groups

- Encourage classmates to check in with each other if they miss a study session or lecture

- Make it clear that the quality of teamwork in group assignments is important by including marks for the group process in grading rubrics

- Design lecture assignments that require students to collectively work on study questions and participate in small group discussions

VI. Promoting Resilience

Resilience is the ability to recover from a crisis or difficult time. It is about finding choices and developing skills in coming back from traumatic events. Providing strength based activities in class is a way of building and sharing these skills.

Strategies:

- Do sharing prompts or check ins where students name their favorite comfort food when they are stressed, or favorite healthy activity they do when they are stressed, anxious, or sad, what's their favorite song they listen to when they feel stuck or having a hard time

- Have them share or reflect on a positive friend they have and what they appreciate about them

- Provide strength based activities where they have to list all the things they are good at or resources they have for support when things get tough

- Ask students about how they have overcome a difficult situation in the past

VII. Celebrate Diversity & Support Inclusivity

An inclusive learning environment demonstrates an intentional consideration for all students and can enhance wellbeing.


Strategies:

- Create class guidelines as a group to respect difference and create a safe place for discussion. You can develop this by getting student feedback on what would help them to feel safe in the classroom, and/or contributing ideas such as these classroom guidelines

- Accommodate different learning styles by providing a variety of ways students can engage and participate in the lecture and learning, such as discussion boards, written reflections, oral presentations, among others [Inclusive Teaching Support]

- Use activities and practices in class to help build your and your students' intercultural competence [Practice cultural humility]

- Use inclusive language and gender neutral pronouns [My Pronouns]

- Offer a values clarification exercise [Carnegie Mellon University] [Simon Fraser University]

- Encourage students to speak to you about any accessibility concerns; Disability Programs and Resource Center can provide consultation and resources if needed

- Break final paper into a series of smaller assignments

- Make expectations clear and remind students what resources are available to them. Provide visual support (text and/or graphic)

- Pause and summarize or ask students to summarize in the chat ("I want you to summarize my example and add another" or "prepare a question about this")

- Incorporate principles of Universal Design for Learning to help accommodate diverse learners [Universal Design For Learning Website]

VIII. Optimal Challenge

Being challenged, but having sufficient resources to meet that challenge creates an environment where students perform and feel their best.

Strategies:

- Consider the timing of exams and assignments to alleviate undue stress

- Provide feedback on each stage of assignments and help students progress to the next stage of larger projects

- Avoid very heavily weighted components, i.e. exam worth 50% of the final grade

- Recognize that more tasks do not always equate to more learning

- Set clear course goals, ensure assignments and expectations are clear from the start

- Provide activities where students design mock test/study questions

- Give specific, targeted, and timely feedback about strengths and weaknesses

- Publish grading rubrics in advance [Grading Rubric Examples]
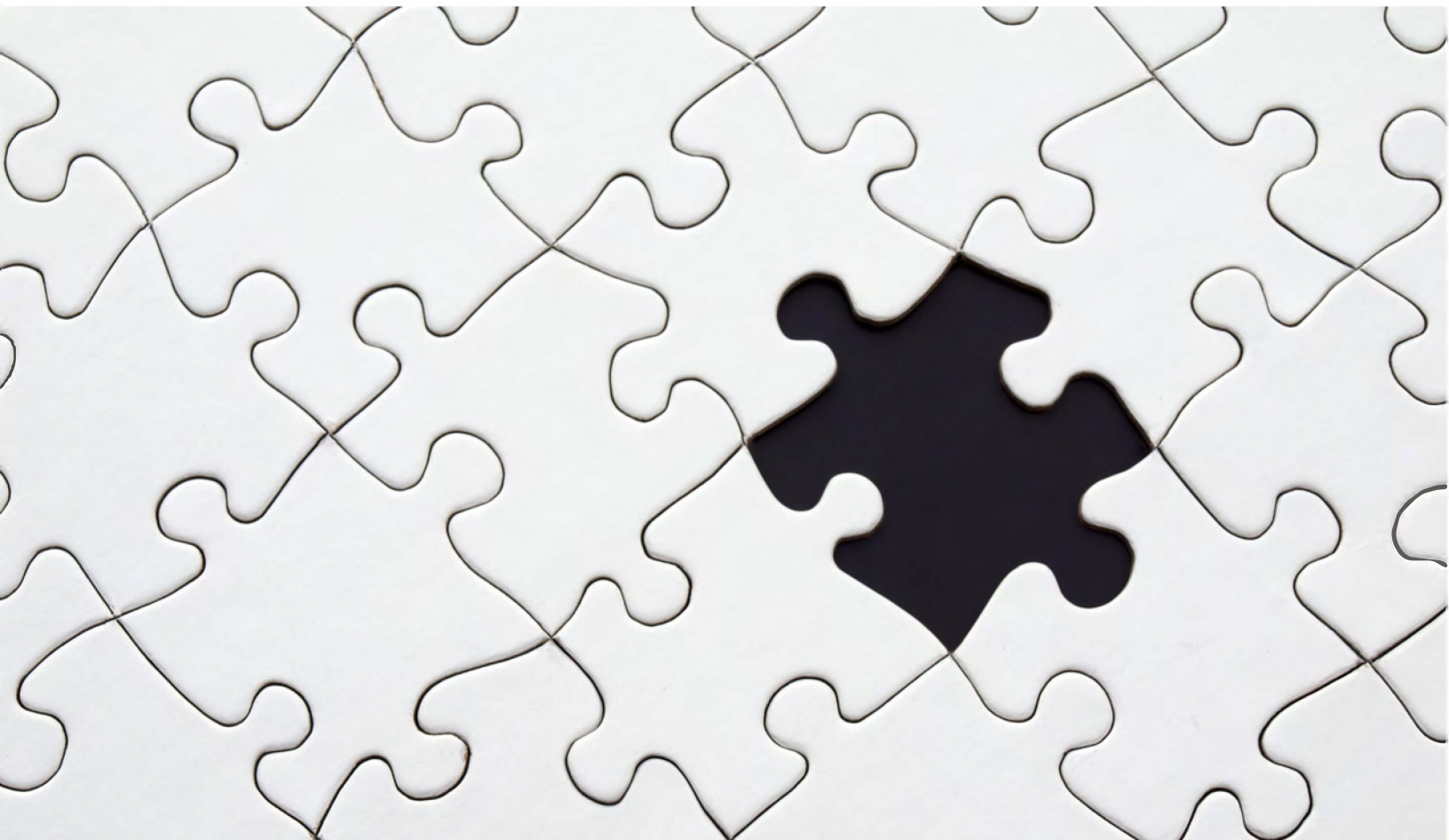
IX. Civic Engagement & Real-Life Learning

Having the opportunity to contribute to real-life settings through their coursework helps students build their personal skills and confidence, supporting their intellectual and emotional wellness.

Strategies:

- Lead discussions or activities that help students develop a sense of civic responsibility [SFSU Institute for Civic and Community Engagement]

- Recognize that universities play a role in developing the leaders of tomorrow and encourage students to explore their own values and goals

- Utilize examples from the real world in class (for example news clips, career advice, guest speakers from the workforce students hope to enter)

- Bring in guest speakers or program alumni via Zoom who can help relate the course material to career development, real life issues, and work skills

- Create assignments in which the results can be utilized by a community group or campus initiative

- Explore online experiential learning opportunities connecting to your learning outcomes whenever possible. Engage students in real world application of course topics by getting students to think about how the course material applies to issues in the news

X. Being Supportive

SF State students say faculty play a key role in their experience of being supported by the University. Setting a caring tone can go a long way toward helping students feel they belong.

Strategies:

- Check in with students regularly (email, Zoom office hours, iLearn, etc.)

- Ask students to use one word to summarize how they're feeling via Zoom chat

- Whenever possible, let students know you care about them and their success

- Demystify your role by sharing an anecdote, joke, or sharing something about yourself [Comedy in Classroom]

- Be learner centered: "be interested in learners instead of trying to be an interesting teacher" [Student Centered Learning in Higher Education]

- Encourage students to select a work station/study spot with natural light, good air circulation, comfortable furniture and exposure to natural elements (all of these have been linked to a positive mood)

- Provide constructive feedback and outline specific actions students can take to improve [Provide Effective Feedback]

- Consider the "whole student" and the pressures and challenges the students may face outside your class [Healing Centered Engagement]

- Provide students with multiple ways to get in touch with you

- If possible, check in with students individually even through email will suffice

XI. Promote Services & Supports

The classroom provides an important venue for faculty to connect students with resources that can support their wellbeing, resilience, and effective learning.

Strategies:

- Provide health tips or health resources in class or during breaks by adding a slide into your class lecture that provides information during breaks. Can also be uploaded onto iLearn. Possible information could include:
    - Slide promoting the importance of sleep [HPW Sleep]
    - Stress management tips [HPW Stress]
    - Tips for healthy eating [HPW Nutrition]
    - Importance of taking physical activity breaks
    - Slide with campus health resources

- Use mindfulness or relaxation recordings for a break [UCLA's Mindful Awareness Research Center]

- Link students to on campus resources by inviting speakers from campus wellness and success from this departments such as Health Promotion & Wellness, Basic Needs Initiatives, Campus Recreation, Student Health Services, Counseling & Psychological Services, Division of Equity and Community Inclusion, Tutoring and Academic Support Center and Advising

- Provide extra credit or make up points to student who attend a virtual health promotion, wellness, or recreation events.

- Store information on campus resources with iLearn so students can access them when they need it.

- Students can't concentrate if they're hungry, and close to half of SF State students experience some level of food insecurity. Link students to campus resources for food, housing, and financial assistance at the Basic Needs Website

- Familiarize yourself with the various student support services and co-curricular learning supports across campus

- Familiarize yourself with the Red Folder for information on supporting students in distress (installed on your desktop, available online, and available for mobile devices on Google Play or App Store)

- Request or attend training on red flag signs for a student in distress and how to make effective campus referrals. [ICANHELP2]

- Include information about campus support services in your syllabus that encourages help-seeking for students who are struggling. Sample language might include:

  "College students often experience a range of challenges that interfere with learning, such as stress, life events, juggling responsibilities, economic challenges, relationship concerns, alcohol misuse, or feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, or depression. Several SF State resources are still available virtually during the pandemic, including Counseling & Psychological Services and Student Health Services."

Becoming a Wellness Advocate

The final stage of mastering a health skill is to become an advocate in your community. You can do this at SF State in many ways with small or large commitment. If you are ready to take the next step to promote health outside of your classroom here are some ideas:

- Share this tool kit and strategies that have worked for you with your peers, department, or college
- Practice the strategies in the tool kit in department or college virtual meetings.
- Create opportunities for faculty within your department to share their research or work with a health or wellness theme or application
- Do an assessment of department/college practices or policies to see how they can be improved to promote wellness or health
- Get involved in campus groups or committees that promote health and wellness e.g. join campus committees (like the Basic Needs Committee, Sustainability Committee, Sexual Violence Prevention Collaborative, or the Student Health Advisory Committee), become an advisor to a wellness related student organization, or start a virtual running or walking group with students and faculty

Document Links

Well-Being in Learning Environments
http://www.sfu.ca/healthycampuscommunity/learningenvironments.html

Wellness in the Virtual Classroom Toolkit
https://www.csus.edu/student-life/health-counseling/_internal/_documents/classroom-wellness-toolkit.pdf

Rationale for Well-being in Learning Environments
http://www.sfu.ca/healthycampuscommunity/learningenvironments/rationale.html

Get to Know Your Prof
https://wellness.sfsu.edu/file/get-know-your-prof

Developing a Teaching Philosophy
https://ucat.osu.edu/professional- development/teaching-portfolio/philosophy/

Creating Class/Community Agreements
https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/groupagree.pdf

Teaching Remotely During Disruption
https://instructionalcontinuity.sfsu.edu/sites/default/files-documents/Teaching%20Remotely%20-%20Quick%20Reference.pdf

Sample inspirational slides
http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/healthycampuscommunity/teachingpractices/Inspi rational%20Quotes.pptx

Deskercise
https://www.healthline.com/health/deskercise

Ohio State University
https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/course-design-and-pedagogy/active-learning-online-course

Northwestern University
https://dl.sps.northwestern.edu/blog/2017/02/active- learning-strategies-online-classroom/

CEETL Keep Teaching with Zoom
https://ceetl.sfsu.edu/content/online-quickstart

SFSU AT Zoom Basics
https://athelp.sfsu.edu/hc/en-us/categories/202613058-Zoom

Article: Why taking care of your own wellbeing benefits others
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_taking_care_of_your_own_well_being_helps_others

Try a Campus Rec Group X Class at Home
https://member.campusrec.sfsu.edu/Program/GetProducts?classification=00000000-0000-0000-0000-000000026002

HPW Nutrition Resources
https://wellness.sfsu.edu/nutrition-resources

Stress Management for Educators
https://ggie.berkeley.edu/collection/stress-management-for-educators/

Well-being During Covid 19
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/
greater_good_guide_to_well_being_during_coronavirus#stress

www.self-compassion.org

SFSU Employee Assistance Program
https://hr.sfsu.edu/employee-assistance-program-eap

iLearn Basics
https://athelp.sfsu.edu/hc/en-us/categories/200355657-iLearn

UCLA's Mindful Awareness Research Center
http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations

Journaling Through Your Struggles
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_journal_through_your_struggles

Health Promotion & Wellness
https://wellness.sfsu.edu/

Campus Recreation
https://member.campusrec.sfsu.edu/

Student Health Services
https://health.sfsu.edu/

Counseling & Psychological Services
https://caps.sfsu.edu/

Division of Equity and Community Inclusion
https://equity.sfsu.edu/

Division of Student Life
https://dos.sfsu.edu/

Associated Students
http://asi.sfsu.edu/

Career Services & Leadership Development
https://careerservices.sfsu.edu/

Social and Emotional Learning Strategies
https://ggie.berkeley.edu/practices/?level=15

Flux Pedagogy
https://www.gse.upenn.edu/news/educators-playbook/where-we-are-now-flux-pedagogy

How To Ungrade
https://www.jessestommel.com/how-to-ungrade/

Deadline/Grade Worksheet
http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/healthycampuscommunity/teaching-practices/Dr.%20Didicher%27s%20Sample%20Evaluation%20Agreement.pdf

Qualtrics
https://sfsu.co1.qualtrics.com/Q/MyProjectsSection

Comment Card Example
https://www.sfu.ca/healthycampuscommunity/learningenvironments/resource-library/resources/comment-card.html

Kahoot
https://kahoot.com/

Padlet
https://padlet.com/

Affordable Learning at SFSU
https://affordablelearning.sfsu.edu/

Zoom Icebreakers
https://www.summitteambuilding.com/icebreakers-10-activities-to-energize-your-zoom-meetings/

Classroom Guidelines
https://learninginnovation.duke.edu/blog/2018/01/guidelines- interaction-better-class-discussions/

Inclusive Teaching Support
https://ceetl.sfsu.edu/content/inclusive-teaching-support-2

My Pronouns
https://www.mypronouns.org/what-and-why

Carnegie Mellon University
https://www.cmu.edu/career/documents/my-career-path-activities/values-exercise.pdf

Simon Fraser University
https://www.sfu.ca/healthycampuscommunity/learningenvironments/resource- library/resources/reality-check.html

Disability Programs and Resource Center
https://access.sfsu.edu/

Universal Design for Learning
http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/whatisudl

Grading Rubric Examples
http://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty_staff/faculty/center-for-faculty-development/Documents/Tutorials/Rubrics/5_resources/index.htm

SFSU Institute for Civic and Community Engagement
https://icce.sfsu.edu/

Comedy in Classroom
https://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/features/comedy-in-the-classroom-50-ways-to-bring-laughter-into-any-lesson/

Student Centered Learning in Higher Education
https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ938583.pdf

Provide Effective Feedback
https://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/20-ways-to-provide-effective-feedback-for-learning/

Healing Centered Engagement
https://medium.com/@ginwright/the-future-of-healing-shifting-from-trauma-informed-care-to-healing-centered-engagement-634f557ce69c

HPW Sleep
https://wellness.sfsu.edu/sleep

HPW Stress
https://wellness.sfsu.edu/stress

HPW Nutrition
https://wellness.sfsu.edu/nutrition-resources

Basic Needs Initiatives
https://basicneeds.sfsu.edu/

Tutoring and Academic Support Center
https://ueap.sfsu.edu/tutoring

Advising
https://advising.sfsu.edu/

Red Folder
https://dos.sfsu.edu/content/red-folder

Practice Cultural Humility
https://www.culturallyconnected.ca/#why-it-works

ICANHELP Training Request
https://sfsu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_e2GL0GrMkMdKucl

HEALTH PROMOTION & WELLNESS
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