

Ten Ways to Keep Your Students Supported and Engaged During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Much research has shown that when students are going through transitions and adversity, their interactions with their college instructors and staff have the biggest impact on their well-being and academic engagement, and outcomes.

Here are ten teaching strategies to support students and help them continue to learn during this time.

- 1. Keep the connection with your students.**

Email your students to remind them that you are still there for them.

- 2. Establish comradery.**

Tell them how you are shifting your schedule to deal with the new situation and that change is part of life. Humanize yourself and make it casual and lighthearted. For example, you might talk about how, in between reading their discussion posts, you decided to start your spring cleaning, which you've been putting off forever.

- 3. Continue to challenge *and* support your students.**

As instructors, we often must balance rigor and support, and this situation might be one where students will need more support than rigor. Establishing continuity doesn't mean you increase the amount of work required of them. I say this because some of us might be fixated on the rigor and quantity of the materials presented. Let's face it -- the rigor and quantity may suffer, and that's OK considering the situation.

- 4. Reference the lessons you taught in class.**

Especially for those students who are missing the classroom environment, this will probably help activate their memory of being part of a community and remind them that they are still part of one. For example, in your email you can say something like, "Remember when we talked about this and ..."

- 5. Use hopeful and optimistic language.**

Phrases such as “When you come back this fall ...” will help students look forward to coming back to the campus.

6. Encourage students to keep connected to each other.

Offer students an opportunity to exchange phone numbers with each other. It can sometimes be difficult for a student to ask for a classmate’s phone number.

7. Don’t ignore the elephant in the room.

If possible, talk about COVID-19 and fear. This is an opportunity for you to remind your students to consider the sources of their news and to beware of the large amount of misinformation.

8. Remember that students have left behind more than just their classes and academics.

On both residential and commuter campuses, there are important spaces where students meet and talk about their nonacademic lives -- sports, upcoming concerts, recently discovered shows and so on. Consider creating a community discussion board for them to share what is happening in their lives, especially given the stress, fear and strains in these uncertain times.

9. Be open about mental wellness.

Let your students know that you are there for them and that if they need help to reach out to you. Let them know that you are in touch with counselors or mental health experts that can help them should they need to speak to someone.

10. Ask for feedback.

Most important, ask each of your students how you can help them. In times of uncertainty, we can create a space where our students’ voice and insights can illuminate the path we are carving out for them -- and us.

Adapted from:

“Hope Matters” by Mays Imad: https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/03/17/10-strategies-support-students-and-help-them-learn-during-coronavirus-crisis?fbclid=IwAR03eJYAsNiwjPxN7q4A_CLTXCcJbdfHPusc-aX3_KM6h0cE8WxJJwsdM20

“COVID-19 Response: Supporting Students in Times of Uncertainty” by the College Transition

Collaborative: [http://collegetransitioncollaborative.org/resources/covid-19-response-](http://collegetransitioncollaborative.org/resources/covid-19-response-supporting-students-in-times-of-uncertainty/?fbclid=IwAR0kZRPSODrI76DN45OoP5dWsC18oUBOvD91TF92ZCOYizNGhqPd0CkWB/)

[supporting-students-in-times-of-](http://collegetransitioncollaborative.org/resources/covid-19-response-supporting-students-in-times-of-uncertainty/?fbclid=IwAR0kZRPSODrI76DN45OoP5dWsC18oUBOvD91TF92ZCOYizNGhqPd0CkWB/)

[uncertainty/?fbclid=IwAR0kZRPSODrI76DN45OoP5dWsC18oUBOvD91TF92ZCOYizNGhqPd0CkW](http://collegetransitioncollaborative.org/resources/covid-19-response-supporting-students-in-times-of-uncertainty/?fbclid=IwAR0kZRPSODrI76DN45OoP5dWsC18oUBOvD91TF92ZCOYizNGhqPd0CkWB/)

[B/](http://collegetransitioncollaborative.org/resources/covid-19-response-supporting-students-in-times-of-uncertainty/?fbclid=IwAR0kZRPSODrI76DN45OoP5dWsC18oUBOvD91TF92ZCOYizNGhqPd0CkWB/)