Teaching and Advising Resources for Inauguration and Beyond

The information below offers resources for creating a positive learning environment for all students and addressing challenges that might arise at the beginning of this semester.

Checking in with Ourselves and Our Students

You (and your students) might be experiencing anxiety or increased stress due to the current moment of uncertainty. Consider the following steps:

- Consider the degree of tolerance you may have for handling stress and how well your students may be able to adapt to new stress in the learning environment.
- Conduct a brief assessment via poll or anonymous survey to gauge the well-being of your class with a prompt as simple as "How are you doing today?" Or consider giving them an opportunity to write privately about what they are experiencing to express themselves with the goal of engaging more fully in class. You can also direct students to the PSU Manage Stress Workbook.
- Check in with your students and acknowledge that experiencing stress or anxiety is OK.
- Proactively provide resources to students, such as Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and other wellness resources, on your Canvas course page and/or syllabus.
- When considering how to follow-up with students, utilize the Penn State Red Folder for guidance on how to connect students with available campus resources.

Setting the Tone for a Positive Classroom/Advising Environment

Engaging in Dialogue with Students

If you address current events in your class in the days and weeks ahead, consider ways to model civil discourse.

- Facilitate a student discussion about behaviors that encourage or discourage learning and participation and remind students of expectations for classroom conduct.
- Early in the course, invite students to co-create class norms, such as ground rules for discussion or a participation rubric. Revisit and or revise these norms as needed throughout the semester.
- Make diversity and the free exchange of ideas for the purpose of learning an early discussion topic. Assist students to identify similarities and differences in their contributions or viewpoints.

Course Disruptions

Disruptions may occur in any classroom setting – synchronous or asynchronous. Consider your options for preparing, responding, and following up on a disruptive incident.

Prepare for potential disruptions:

- Anticipate the possibility of hot moments or difficult dialogues.
- Prepare to address microaggressions with inquiry, not accusations.
- Familiarize yourself with Zoom settings and your options for addressing disruptions.
- Be aware of strategies such as sea-lioning, i.e., a confrontational practice in which people, with a pretense of civility, persistently repeat seemingly sincere questions.

Respond to disruptions:

- PSU Keep Teaching Resource on Handling Students who are Disruptive in a Remote Teaching Environment.
- Classroom Disruptions Protocol from Penn State's Office of Educational Equity and Managing Disruptions in Asynchronous Courses.
- A Penn State Guide to Managing Zoom Disruptions
- Follow-up after an incident to reinforce expectations and to ensure all learners feel safe.

Additional Considerations

- Even if you choose not to engage the topic, keep in mind that students may bring the discussion of current events into your classroom.
- **You do not need to have all the answers.** Reach out to your colleagues, the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence, or others to discuss specific concerns (see Resources).

Academic Policies

Knowledge of university policies can help you address challenging situations in your courses and are intended to guide practice. Of relevance now are policies that maintain student and faculty rights while enabling learning and discussion about topics that matter, but about which individuals may strongly disagree. We can have strong disagreements about issues that matter, but acts of intolerance (AD 29) and harassment (AD 91) are unacceptable.

Additional Resources for Instructors and Advisors

- Curated research and other resources on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion from the Office of Educational Equity.
- Longer resource about student identity and identity-threatening incidents from the Student Experience Group (sponsored by Association of Public Land grant Universities): Identity Safety and sample scenarios from the Student Experience Project.
- Penn State webinar on teaching students in times of high stress, Trauma Informed Pedagogy.
- Empathic Teaching, brief PowerPoint with questions and resources about empathy, J. J. Pionke University of Illinois.
- The American Historical Association has assembled a list of resources on current events.
- Resources on self-care for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, Harvard University.
- Campuses in Politically Fraught Times, in-depth document with resources on teaching after traumatic events, racism, and politics inside the classroom from the professional society of faculty developers, POD Network.
- Teaching in Turbulent Times Toolkit, University of Oregon.
- Teaching During the Post-Election Season, Center for Educational Innovation, University of Minnesota.
- Teaching in Times of Strife and Trauma, curated resources about from the Graduate School of Education, Harvard University.
- The Post-Election Classroom: practical on-the-ground tips and links to resources from Scholars Strategy Network, an organization of university scholars using research to improve policy and strengthen democracy.
- Faculty and Staff Resources for self-care and well-being: Penn State Health & Well-Being Resources.
- Employee Assistance Program: Penn State Health Matters
- Inclusive Teaching Strategies (pdf), Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence, Penn State.
- For more instruction on responding to students who are exhibiting symptoms of distress or trauma, consider enrolling in OL 1200: Supporting World Campus Students in Distress. Register on the World Campus Online Faculty Development site.
- For information for advising under-resourced students, consider enrolling in OL 3825: Excellence in Academic Advising: Under-Resourced Students OL 3850: Excellence in Academic Advising: Under-resourced students II. Register on the World Campus Online Faculty Development site.

> Penn State's Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence offers individual consultations and other support for instructors and teaching assistants. Find the faculty consultant who serves as the liaison for your academic unit or email site@psu.edu.