

Student Affairs

Suggested Student Wellness Language for Course Syllabi

Introduction to Faculty:

The suggested syllabus language below was developed in 2020 by members of the Enhancing Student Wellness Community of Practice. The Enhancing Student Wellness Community of Practice is a project established and managed by Mark Winey, Dean of the College of Biological Sciences, and Cory Vu, Associate Vice Chancellor for Health, Wellness, and Divisional Resources. The Community of Practice includes over 50 campus leaders – staff, students and faculty – representing a comprehensive array of student-support programs. Through a series of structured monthly meetings, the Community of Practice has worked since November 2019 to determine and prioritize strategic investments or practices that can improve student outcomes and eliminate gaps in the four-year graduation rates that currently exist among underrepresented, first generation and low-income students.

In January 2021 the seven teams that comprise the Community of Practice will present their findings and recommendations to the Chancellor, Provost and a broad cross section of university leadership. In the meantime, responding to the challenges of COVID-19, members of the Community of Practice have mobilized to identify some simple immediate steps that can be implemented by individual faculty and campus departments, including the ***suggested syllabus statement*** that follows.

The language below is a suggested resource for instructors who want to prioritize student wellness on their syllabi. It was developed by a team of Wellness Community of Practice members with input from the full group, specifically in response to the heightened student stressors and sense of uncertainty resulting from life during the COVID-19 pandemic. The impetus is to utilize a common point of contact for most students – the course syllabus – as a means to encourage and guide students to care for their own wellbeing and that of their peers.

The language is intended to support faculty in creating a trauma-informed (sometimes called healing-centered) classroom by building a culture of consent and affirming student health and well-being. Please feel free to modify to best suit your classroom's needs, whether remote or in-person.

It will be especially helpful to remind students of this syllabus statement if your course content includes emotionally challenging topics such as violence, oppression or self-harm. You may also consider including parts of this statement in classroom "ground rules" to set an inclusive and welcoming tone at the beginning of your course.

Proposed Syllabus Statement:

You deserve respect, and are encouraged to [practice self-care](#) so that you can remain focused and engaged; that might mean getting a drink of water, leaving to use the restroom, taking a moment to stretch, or doing something else you need to do to take care of yourself. Please be respectful of others by minimizing distractions when practicing self-care – especially in lab, field or studio settings where safety is imperative.

College life can be overwhelming at times, but know that you are not alone if you're feeling stressed. For many of us, systems of oppression such as racism, sexism, heterosexism or cissexism may cause additional stress. Please remember to practice self-care and reach out for support if and when you need it.