Using Mental Health and Wellness as a Framework for Teaching and Learning

Framework and Questions developed by Dyjur, Lindstrom, Arguera, and Bair (2017)

Strategies compiled by the Teaching and Learning Subcommittee of the Campus Mental Health Strategy

### Policies and Values

#### Questions to Consider during Course Design

- What policies can be implemented at the course level to support students’ mental health and wellness?
- How might academic integrity be approached if using a mental health and wellness perspective?
- What policies can you implement to address diversity of learners in your course?

#### Potential Strategies to Support Student Wellness

- Create clear options for how to request extensions/deferrals
- Discuss academic integrity with your class using applied scenarios from the Student Academic Integrity Handbook
- Work with your class to establish norms within the learning community
- Build Universal Design for Learning into your course
- Discuss accommodation letters with students who are registered with Student Accessibility Services to determine how best to implement their accommodations

### Academic Expectations

#### Questions to Consider during Course Design

- How can you maintain reasonable expectations for student learning within the constraints of a course?
- Within the restraints of an online environment?
- How can you help students understand what is expected of them?
- How might you promote student goals for their own learning?

#### Potential Strategies to Support Student Wellness

- Consider linked assignments that build on one another and include feedback
- Provide time estimates for students for assigned tasks
- Create a weekly D2L checklist for students
- Provide explicit criteria for assessments
- Provide flexibility in the format of assessment
- Provide opportunities for students to give feedback and seek clarity
- Review your course learning outcomes with your class
Learning Environment and Experiences

Questions to Consider during Course Design

- How can you encourage students to identify/recognize their wellness techniques?
- How might you structure the learning environment to promote wellness?
- How can teaching and learning activities be structured to foster wellness?
- In what ways can social connectedness be incorporated into the learning environment and experiences?
- What learning experiences might be included in your course to foster student engagement?

Potential Strategies to Support Student Wellness

- Set up a safe and positive learning environment in Zoom
- Direct students to self-help resources for online learning
- Be flexible regarding how students engage (e.g., cameras optional, ability to post in the chat during class discussions, etc.)
- Make time for social moments in class (e.g., pet parade, ice breakers, etc.) while giving students the option to choose whether they wish to partake
- Obtain anonymous mid-course positive and constructive feedback on learning experiences; share results and relevant resources with class
- Build active learning activities into your course (e.g., via Zoom or the D2L discussion board)
- Build skills development into your course through opportunities for reflection

Student Assessment

Questions to Consider during Course Design

- How can student assessment practices contribute to wellness?
- What assessment policies can you build into your course to support wellness?
- How can you build flexibility and choice into assessments?
- What role might students play in providing one another with feedback?

Potential Strategies to Support Student Wellness

- Align your assessments with your course learning outcomes
- Align weight of assessments with estimated time it will take students to prepare for and complete them
- Balance multiple ways of expressing learning into assessments
- Coordinate timing of assessments across required courses in a program
- Build student choice into assessments (e.g., complete 3 out of 5 quizzes)
- Provide practice tests that use same format as your exams
- Provide a late bank option (e.g., three days that can be used for extensions)
- Build in supports to facilitate positive team dynamics if assigning group work

Reflection and Resilience

Questions to Consider during Course Design

- How can you embed opportunities for student and instructor reflection?
- Bearing in mind your role as an instructor, how might you promote or support student resilience?

Potential Strategies to Support Student Wellness

- Build classroom assessment techniques into your course
- Include guided self-evaluation opportunities
- Introduce empirically supported coping strategies at the beginning of class (e.g., guiding a mindfulness or breathing exercise)
- Visit the Taylor Institute’s Mental Health and Wellness page for more ideas!