



Student Well-being Academic Toolkit

Start Here



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Student Affairs

Student Well-being Academic Toolkit

Summary of the need

The Well-Being Task Force completed an assessment of current student well-being and well-being resources at the University of Arkansas from 2023-2024. One of the deliverables resulting from this report was the need for a faculty resource to support pedagogical practices that support well-being for students. Thus, a faculty committee was convened by Students Affairs to create a Student Well-being Academic toolkit.

How this toolkit should be used

This toolkit is not prescriptive and does not tell faculty and instructors how they SHOULD teach their class. It is a collection of research evidence and reflective questions for faculty and instructors to consider how their decisions impact student well-being, and suggestions and examples of how they may better support student well-being. It serves as a touchpoint for faculty and instructors when designing their courses, updating a syllabus, or planning class activities. It is the committee's hope that this will foster a conversation amongst faculty and instructors on how we can support well-being across the University of Arkansas campus.

It is created as a "How to", with common questions faculty might have when supporting student well-being.

1 How can I help a struggling student?

2 How can I reduce stress on assignments and exams?

3 How can I have a healthy classroom climate?

4 How do I effectively consider student financial concerns when teaching?

Background on the development of the Toolkit

Student Well-Being Academic Toolkit Committee Charge

The purpose of this committee is to develop a comprehensive, accessible, and evidence-based Student Well-being Toolkit to support the mental, physical and emotional, well-being of students. The toolkit will provide resources, strategies, and practical tools for faculty to enhance the overall well-being of students, promote self-care, and address challenges students may face during their academic journey.

Objectives

- 1.** Review existing student well-being resources, programs, and toolkits at peer and aspirant institutions to identify best practices, evidence-based strategies, and successful interventions.
- 2.** Design the structure and content of the toolkit, ensuring it is clear, user-friendly, and addresses a broad range of student needs. Consider diverse student populations, including underrepresented and marginalized groups, when developing resources.
- 3.** Develop practical tools, exercises, and resources that students can use in various settings (e.g., campus, online). The toolkit should include, but not be limited to, resources related to:
 - Mental health and stress management
 - Time management and academic balance
 - Building resilience and coping skills
 - Fostering community and social support
 - Promoting physical health and self-care practices
- 4.** Establish a process for evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the toolkit. This could include mechanisms for gathering student feedback, tracking usage, and identifying areas for improvement.

Background on the development of the toolkit

Faculty Input on the Process

The Student Well-Being Academic Toolkit Committee hosted workshop sessions at Teaching Camp and the Baum Teaching Workshop in August 2025 to brainstorm the direction of the toolkit with attending faculty and instructors.

The Student Well-Being Academic Toolkit Committee conducted a survey in early 2026 of a convenience sample of 90 faculty and instructors. This is what we learned.

Well-being is on faculty's mind

85% of respondents consider how their teaching influences student well-being at least once a week.

75% of respondents consider how their own well-being influences their teaching at least once a week.

Student Struggles

Faculty and Instructors mostly see students struggling with **Occupational, Emotional, and Intellectual** well-being. Faculty and Instructors also see students struggling with **Financial, Social, Physical, and Environmental** well-being, but not as often.

Faculty Confidence

Faculty and Instructors are most confident in responding to Intellectual and Occupational concerns. Faculty and Instructors are least confident in responding to Emotional, Environmental, Physical, Social and Financial concerns.

Barriers

The most common barriers to supporting student well-being are limited time (58%), unclear role boundaries (58%), large class sizes (44%), lack of training (39%), and fear of "saying the wrong thing" (39%).

Several faculty have considered approaches to support student well-being and are overly supportive of student well-being in their classes:

"I feel confident. I teach a small section on Friday mornings, and I always clean the room, including vacuuming, I always bring fresh fruit and healthy snacks, and I always check in and welcome each student. I don't make them pay for any materials for the class and I pay for all their software by sending them a Venmo."

"I view the task of supporting student well-being from 2 angles. One is a proactive angle, which for me means building into my class opportunities to address issues related to student well-being. The other angle is reactive, responding to students' expressed concerns or needs. Lots of factors can limit students' expressions of those needs, but I don't feel very limited in my capacity to respond to students."

Background on the development of the toolkit

The Student Well-Being Academic Toolkit Members

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1 *How can I help a struggling student?*

If a student comes to you struggling with their well-being here are some immediate actions:

- 1** If it's a life threatening emergency, call 911. University Police can be called at 479-575-2222. Follow up by submitting a Cares report.
- 2** For situations that seem serious, but don't require the police, use the **CAPS emergency number at 479-575-5276**. Follow up by submitting a Cares report.
- 3** If you are concerned about a student, and it's not an emergency, submit a **Cares report**.
- 4** If you have time, call CAPS or walk with them to CAPS for a walk-in appointment.
- 5** Send them a link to the **well-being website**!
- 6** If the student wants to talk (and you feel safe), provide a private location where other students can't hear. Here are some useful **tips to be an active listener**.
- 7** Listen with empathy; ask open-ended questions and try not to give opinions or advice. Ask the student what resources they think would be helpful to them.

2 How can I reduce stress on assignments and exams?

Q1 | When should I set due dates for assignments?

Q2 Why this Matters for Well-being and Learning

Flexibility in due dates have been shown to offer several benefits for students and instructors alike.

Research also indicates that such flexibility can lower students' perceived stress levels (Kumar and Wideman, 2014; Schroeder et al., 2019) and may even increase achievement and participation in courses (Miller et al., 2019). For example, setting two dates—a "due date" and an "accepted by" date—can encourage earlier submissions and reduce last-minute rush (Aldrich, 2018).

However, not all evidence is uniformly positive; Conner (2024) found that students often do not

use flexible deadlines to extend meaningful work time but instead continue to delay work until just before the final cutoff.

Still, broader studies suggest that flexible deadlines can increase course pass rates and positively influence university-wide retention (Withington and Schroeder, 2017).

Similarly, in a programming course, Chiu (2024) reported that "suggested" deadlines improved pass rates compared to no deadlines or punitive deadlines, and that adding a midterm hard deadline further increased success and reduced incomplete grades.

Reflections for Faculty and Instructors

If you have a strict due date policy, do you help students learn the skills to adhere to it? (e.g. scaffolding time management)

Do I know when major campus-wide exams, events, or other common deadlines occur, and am I unintentionally stacking stress points?

How could I build flexibility to acknowledge students' competing responsibilities (jobs, caregiving, commuting, etc.)?

Why have I chosen this specific due date and time, does it serve learning, or simply convenience?

Does the assignment require the cognitive effort I expect at the specific time I've set (e.g., is a midnight deadline reasonable)?

Would an alternative deadline (e.g., 5 p.m. instead of 11:59 p.m.) support healthier habits or reduce last-minute work?

Actions to Practice

- ☒ Map major course assessments on a single calendar to check for clustering
- ☒ Set deadlines during business hours (e.g., 5 p.m.) rather than midnight to encourage healthier sleep habits.
- ☒ Provide a sample timeline for how students might spread the work across days/weeks.

- ☒ Consider flexibility in policies such as a standard grace period, no questions asked late passes, or multiple deadline options.
- ☒ Announce assignments at least one week in advance so students can plan. Consider using the same day of the week, e.g., Wednesday, for all assignments so students can build a consistent work pattern.

References

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2 How can I reduce stress on assignments and exams?

Q2 | How can I use low-stakes assignments?

Q3 Why this Matters for Well-being and Learning

Compared to fewer high-stakes assessments, more frequent low-stakes assessments tend to offer several benefits, including increased engagement and attendance in courses (Schrack 2017), and reduced negative attitudes in subjects like statistics (Herman and Kerby-Helm, 2022).

In engineering education, low-stakes testing has been linked to improved performance on high-stakes midterms and stronger conceptual understanding (Vitali, 2025).

However, some studies note that students may be less motivated on low-stakes exams, which can result in lower performance compared to high-stakes testing situations (Attali, 2012).

Importantly, research shows that the effectiveness of low-stakes assignments can vary based on individual factors such as personality, achievement goals, and ability (Barry, 2011).

Q4

Q1



Reflections for Faculty and Instructors

How do my assignments support mastery rather than performance anxiety?

Do I have a mix of higher and low-stakes assignments to encourage learning among different students?

Do I have assignments or chances for students to get feedback where students feel comfortable making mistakes?

Is the frequency of low-stakes assignments manageable for me and students?

Actions to Practice

☒ Map each low-stakes assignment to a learning outcome in your syllabus so students see relevance and value.

☒ Use Blackboard's auto-grading tools for low-stakes quizzes to ensure timely turnaround without overloading yourself.

☒ Frame low-stakes work as "learning labs"—spaces where mistakes are expected and useful or choose other naming that aligns with your purpose.

References

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2 How can I reduce stress on assignments and exams?

Q3 | How do I effectively use group assignments?

Q4 Why this Matters for Well-being and Learning

Group work can pose significant well-being challenges for many students, particularly introverted individuals and those with social anxiety.

Cultural background can also shape experiences. For example, some Asian students report feeling “disheartened and helpless” when required to participate in group tasks (Li and Campbell, 2008; Thanh et al., 2008).

While allowing students to self-select their groups can foster social cohesion and improve group processes (Fittipaldi, 2020), perceptions of group work remain mixed, with students reporting both positive and negative impacts on their social interactions (Francis, 2024).

Poorly designed or poorly managed group projects can lead to “groupchate,” a strong aversion to collaborative work (Sorenson, 1981), and group assignments often heighten anxiety, guilt, uncertainty, and stress (Maiden and Perrey, 2011; Murry and Boyd, 2015).

These problems are compounded by the fact that many instructors lack training in designing effective group-based tasks, adding to the difficulty and unpredictability of group collaboration (Murry

and Boyd, 2015). Additionally, grading practices frequently emphasize the final product rather than the collaborative process, resulting in less effective learning experiences (Riebe et al., 2016).

Evidence on the learning impact of group assignments is mixed. Although group projects are commonly promoted as a way to build professional skills, research evaluating these outcomes is often limited or of poor quality (Thom, 2020). Group work may also encourage social loafing or regression to the mean, where individual effort becomes diluted in a team setting (Fittipaldi, 2020).

At the same time, **well-structured group tasks can enhance critical thinking** by requiring students to engage with multiple viewpoints and articulate and defend their reasoning (Riebe et al., 2017). Group-based assignments are also thought to better prepare students for the workplace, where collaboration and teamwork are considered essential skills in the modern labor market (AAGE, 2022).

Beyond academic and professional benefits, **group work can foster a sense of community within the classroom** by creating a team-based culture that supports collaboration and collective creativity (Riebe et al., 2017).

Reflections for Faculty and Instructors

Are my groups made up of four or fewer students?

What is the duration of the group assignment? Is there strong justification for semester-long group assignments rather than shorter durations?

Do the primary tasks of the assignment lend themselves to group work, e.g., collaboratively solving a problem vs primarily writing one large paper?

Do I provide support to scaffold group skills such as communication, organization and leadership for students within their groups?

Am I including peer evaluation opportunities to assess students' academic performance?

What other courses in the students' major/program require group projects? Does my group project support, conflict, or exhaust student collaborative resources?

Actions to Practice

- ☒ When possible, form groups proactively rather than randomly—balance majors, schedules, and experience levels.
- ☒ Establish clear roles (facilitator, editor, researcher, presenter), let groups rotate roles to share leadership.
- ☒ Help students develop communication skills within their groups by having them set primary communication channels, providing guidelines for respectful communication and allowing all members to contribute.

☒ Publish a clear timeline with tasks so students know what will be expected each week.

☒ Allow partial individual grades based on contributions, not just final output, to decrease anxiety about uneven work. When assigning individual grades through peer evaluation, here are some things to consider:

- Peer evaluations may need to be adjusted because they may not be fair or equitable. Suggestion: Narrative peer feedback in addition to (or opposed to) numerical score may improve group contribution and reduce bias stemming from scores only.
- Try anonymous peer evaluation.
- Explicit instruction and training should be provided to students related to constructive peer evaluation.

2 *How can I reduce stress on assignments and exams?*

Q3 | *How do I effectively use group assignments?*

Q4

Q1

Q2



References

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2 How can I reduce stress on assignments and exams?

Q4 | How do I evaluate assignments and provide grades?

Q1 Why this Matters for Well-being and Learning

Grading systems can impact student well-being. Students report that grading systems, such as traditional grading compared to a pass/fail system, can effect learning, motivation, affect, and mental health (Currant 2024, Chamberlin2018).

A study of alternative grading practices such as limited grading, grade-free zones and self-assessments in clinical laboratory classes found that students reported less stress and more focus on learning, despite having to demonstrate core

competencies and have overall grades assigned (Edwardson 2024).

Alternative grading including formative feedback and metacognitive reflection had similar effects on students in biology courses, with reduced stress and increased self-confidence (Adler 2025).

Standards based grading in a mathematics class, a form of alternative grading, showed lower test anxiety (Lewis 2022).

Reflections for Faculty and Instructors

What do I believe grades should represent (e.g., mastery, effort, growth, compliance, comparison)?

How clearly do my grading practices align with my learning objectives?

In what ways might my grading unintentionally prioritize performance over learning?

Whose circumstances are best supported by my current grading policies—and whose are not?

How might my grading practices influence students' intrinsic motivation to learn?

How clear are my expectations for assignments and grading criteria?

Do I distinguish between learning outcomes and administrative compliance when assigning grades?

Would publishing the grading criteria with the assignment decrease student stress or remove student creativity?

Actions to practice

☒ Explicitly define what grades measure in your course. Decide whether grades represent mastery, progress, effort, professional standards, or a combination.

☒ Align grading components directly with learning outcomes and remove points that don't serve those outcomes.

☒ Make feedback actionable, not just evaluative. Balance critique with acknowledgment of strengths.

☒ Use compassionate, consistent flexibility. When possible create flexible structures rather than ad-hoc exceptions.

☒ Develop a rubric for each assignment so that grading is consistent between students and across multiple graders. This also decreases grading time.

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2 *How can I reduce stress on assignments and exams?*



Resources

Q1

Copy-Ready Syllabus Statement: Due Dates

Research suggests that thoughtfully designed flexibility in assignment deadlines can support student learning and well-being by reducing unnecessary stress and encouraging sustained engagement with coursework. In this course, assignments will include two dates: a due date, which is the recommended submission date, and an “accepted by” date, which is the final date submissions will be accepted without penalty.

Q2

The due date is intended to help you pace your work and receive feedback in a timely manner. Submitting by this date is strongly encouraged, as earlier engagement is associated with better learning outcomes and reduced last-minute pressure. The accepted-by date provides built-in flexibility to account for the realities of busy schedules, stress, or unforeseen circumstances, without requiring individual requests or documentation.

Q3**Q4**

While flexibility can support well-being, research also shows that delaying work until the final cutoff does not necessarily improve learning. For this reason, some assignments or course milestones may include firm deadlines to help maintain progress and prevent work from accumulating in ways that can negatively affect learning and completion.

Copy-Ready Syllabus Statement: Group Assignments

This course includes some group-based activities designed to support learning, critical thinking, and collaboration skills that are commonly expected in academic and professional settings. Research shows that well-structured group work can deepen understanding by exposing students to multiple perspectives and by requiring them to articulate and defend their ideas. Group work can also contribute to a sense of community in the classroom.

At the same time, I recognize that group work can be challenging and stressful for many students. Experiences with group assignments vary widely, and factors such as personality, social anxiety, prior experiences, and cultural background can shape how students experience collaboration. Poorly designed or managed group projects can increase anxiety, uncertainty, and frustration rather than support learning.

For this reason, group work in this course is intentionally structured. Expectations for collaboration will be clearly defined, group tasks will be aligned with learning goals, and evaluation will consider not only the final product but also the collaborative process. Where appropriate, you may have some choice in group formation, and supports will be provided to help groups function effectively.

The goal of group work in this course is not to create unnecessary stress, nor to assume that all students benefit equally from the same type of collaboration. Instead, group assignments are designed to balance individual accountability with shared responsibility, reduce common sources of frustration (such as unequal participation), and provide a meaningful opportunity to practice working with others in a supportive and structured way.

If you have concerns about group work at any point during the semester, I encourage you to communicate early so we can address issues before they interfere with learning or well-being.

2 *How can I reduce stress on assignments and exams?*



Resources

Q1

Copy-Ready Syllabus Statement: Grading

Grades in this course are intended to reflect your learning and progress toward the course objectives and not perfection, speed, or comparison with others. Learning is an iterative process, and mistakes are a normal and valuable part of developing understanding.

To support both academic rigor and student well-being, this course emphasizes clear expectations, timely and constructive feedback, and opportunities to learn from feedback over time. Assignments are designed to help you practice skills, demonstrate understanding, and improve across the semester.

My goal is for grading and feedback in this course to support your growth as a learner, help you understand where you are in relation to course goals, and encourage persistence and confidence in your ability to improve.

Q2**Q3****Q4**

UARK Policies for Consideration

[Final Examination Policy](#)[Learning Management System Policy](#)[Grades and Examinations](#)[Reasonable Accommodations](#)[Class Cancellations](#)[Reasonable Accommodations for Exams](#)[Credit Hour Definition](#)

3 How can I have a healthy classroom climate?

Q1 | Should I have an attendance policy? If so, what should it be?

Q2 Why this Matters for Well-being and Learning

Attendance and academic achievement are positively correlated, but it is difficult to rule out confounding factors for a causal relationship (Schmulian 2011; Doggrell 2020). For example, participation and engagement may be a strong confounder or mediator of the relationship between attendance and academic performance (Kim 2020).

Evidence shows that attendance policies increase attendance and engagement, but there are mixed effects of mandatory attendance policies on academic performance (Snyder et al 2014);

attendance requirements are more effective for Introductory or Freshman classes.

Some of the barriers that students cite for not attending included stress and employment (McHaughey 2019). Specifically, **punitive attendance policies disproportionately impact students living in poverty and those who experience anxiety, depression, or other forms of chronic illness** (Lofgren 2025). On the positive side, having an attendance policy can increase student and staff well-being through a sense of belonging (Delaney and Ashton, 2024).

Reflections for Faculty and Instructors

Will having required attendance influence my students' well-being?

What type of class and student am I teaching and does my attendance policy support my students' current needs?

Is my attendance policy punitive or incentivizing?

Do my attendance policies recognize unequal access to health care, transportation, and time?

Actions to Practice

- ☒ Avoid policies where attendance penalties automatically escalate (e.g., failing after X absences).
- ☒ Allow a limited number of absences that require no explanation.
- ☒ Explicitly include mental health and well-being in the list of excusable absences

- ☒ Prioritize timely communication rather than formal proof for most absences.
- ☒ Clearly explain how students can recover missed learning.
- ☒ If requiring attendance, clearly explain why attendance matters in this specific course.

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3 *How can I have a healthy classroom climate?*

Q2 | *How should I allow students to use technology in the classroom?*

Q3 **Why this Matters for Well-being and Learning**

Q4

Q1

Students are using technology in class a lot and may not realize how much. One study found that students in a communication and arts course accessed their device from 6 to 313 times which was in contrast with student self-reports (Oliveira 2021).

Some of this use may be for class, as another study found that a high percentage of Spanish university students reported using class social networks or group social networking for class purposes (Figueras-Maz 2021) as well as information seeking, access to e-class materials, communication with peers. (Nikolopoulou 2022). Half of the students in one study reported that using mobile devices improved their learning level a lot (Oliveira 2021).

However, regardless of the purpose of use, **students report that technology use is distracting, both their own use and others' use** (Al-Furaih 2021; Perez-Juarez, 2023)

and may reduce the amount of knowledge absorbed (Fernandez 2018; Froese et al. 2012; Jesse 2016; Wei et al. 2012). Rao (2018) suggests that the use of technology by students during lectures shortened their attention span from 12 min to 5 min.

When access to personal devices is restricted, students also have a fear of missing out (FOMO) when not using (Kessel 2020). Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is high among university students in Kuwait, and strongly correlated with attention distraction and learning engagement, similar in science and humanities students (Al-Furaih 2021).

Strict policies may even increase use and distractions when compared to more permissive regulation (Beerli and Horowitz). Overall, mobile use can have benefits while also being distracting, thus recommendations need to be clear and appropriate use should be scaffolded (Calderon-Garrido 2022)

Reflections for Faculty and Instructors

Do I have a clear technology policy in my syllabus?

Do I discuss technology use with students, including the justification for my decision?

Do I role model responsible technology use in my classroom?

Does using technology in my classroom reduce stress or add to it?

Does my technology policy support student autonomy, competence and connection?

Actions to Practice

☒ Consider using technology to provide multiple ways to access course content.

☒ Use technology to lower the barrier to asking for help. Students are more likely to seek support when communication feels safe, asynchronous, and non-judgmental.

☒ Avoid or minimize technologies that emphasize monitoring over learning. Surveillance tools (e.g., invasive proctoring software) are linked to anxiety, distrust, and inequitable impacts, especially for marginalized students.

☒ Integrate technology for practice and feedback, not just grading. Low-stakes assessment reduces performance anxiety and supports learning through iteration.

☒ If using learning analytics, use them to support, not discipline, students. Early, supportive outreach improves retention; punitive responses increase withdrawal and stress.

3 *How can I have a healthy classroom climate?*

Q2 | *How should I allow students to use tech in the classroom?*

Q3

Q4

Q1

References

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3 *How can I have a healthy classroom climate?*

Q3 | *How can I provide feedback to students?*

Q4 **Why this Matters for Well-being and Learning**

Q1

Q2

Providing students with feedback, whether in traditional or alternative forms such as peer feedback or AI-generated feedback, can improve learning. Meaningful feedback can lead to consistent reductions in assessment-related anxiety, greater student motivation and improved self-regulation (McGuire 2025). One study found that attendance at feedback classes was positively correlated with students' grades, and feedback may have helped to reduce the negative impact of math anxiety on students' academic achievement (Nunez-Pena 2015).

However, providing feedback alone may not lead to learning (Crisp 2007). Predictable, non-punitive feedback creates emotional safety (McGuire 2025). A systematic review found that immediate and specific feedback enhances academic performance and promotes self-regulation in graduate students (Solis Trujillo 2025). How feedback is delivered can influence student feedback anxiety and self-efficacy for learning (Hadden and Frisby 2019). Adapted verbal feedback in landscape architecture improved student experience (Smith 2015). Different personalities process feedback differently, for example, anxious individuals seem to favor negative as opposed to positive feedback (Jones 2021).

Two alternative options for providing feedback are through peer feedback and AI-generated feedback. Participation in a peer feedback system is an effective method to enhance academic self-concept in the context of higher education (Simonsmeier 2020) through enhanced confidence and reduced anxiety about future assessments (Dickson et al. 2019; Talib et al. (2015).

When compared to using AI for feedback (Smith and Boyer 2015), well-trained human evaluators still provided higher quality feedback, but generative AI may still be useful in some contexts, particularly in formative early drafts or instances where a well-trained educator is unavailable (Steiss 2024). Students also perceive human feedback to be better than AI feedback (Er 2025), with better performance (Er 2025; Wang 2024) and reduction in writing anxiety (Wang 2024).

Different AI tools and learning analytics have different effectiveness with one study suggesting that Improved Fully Connected Network (I-FCN) may be best for providing AI feedback (Hooda 2022), though models are improving all the time.

Reflections for Faculty and Instructors

What is the primary learning goal of this assignment and does my feedback clearly connect to that goal or am I commenting on things that matter less?

Does my wording sound supportive, neutral, or judgmental? How might a stressed, anxious, or discouraged student interpret this comment?

Have I explained how to improve, not just what is wrong?

Am I giving too much feedback for this stage of learning?

Have I given students a way to ask questions or respond?

Will the student receive this feedback in time to use it?

Does this feedback communicate that I care about the student's learning and success?

Quick assessment: Is it clear? Is it kind? Is it useful?

When does the use of AI-generated feedback enhance student learning, even if it is not as good of quality as I could provide myself?

3 *How can I have a healthy classroom climate?*

Q3 | *How can I provide feedback to students?*

Actions to Practice

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Focus feedback on the work and strategies, not the student as a person. Explicitly frame mistakes as part of the learning process. ☒ Explicitly acknowledge what is working before addressing what needs revision. ☒ Tell students what to do next, not just what was wrong. Emphasize learning, progress, and development over performance alone. ☒ Limit feedback to the most important learning goals for the assignment. Excessive feedback can overwhelm students (and faculty!) and obscure what matters most, increasing stress without improving learning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Return feedback soon enough that students can apply it. ☒ Leverage technology to make feedback feel personal and supportive such as short audio or video feedback, personalized comment bands, or inline comments with a brief summary note. ☒ Use rubrics and reference them explicitly in comments. Transparency reduces uncertainty and perceptions of arbitrariness, which are major sources of student stress. |
|---|---|

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3 How can I have a healthy classroom climate?

Q4 | How do I integrate well-being activities into my curriculum?

Q1 Why this Matters for Well-being and Learning

While formal curricular programs have been shown to improve student well-being (Bannigan 2025), they may have additional implementation barriers and not fit in campus-wide curricula.

Smaller interdisciplinary activities embedded into existing curricula may be more feasible and promote better student learning outcomes (Liu 2025). Examples of activities include arts integration (Zhang 2025) and embodied learning (Skulmowski 2018; Liu 2025). **In addition to promoting learning, research has shown these types of activities can improve student well-being and reduce stress.**

As one example of well-being integration, experiencing art can have a powerful effect on the learning environment. Students who engage in the visual and performing arts through field trips to museums and live theater demonstrated stronger critical thinking skills, higher levels of tolerance, and

This section was created with contributions from Hung Pham, Director of the Center for Children and Youth

greater empathy.

Studies suggest the reading of fiction, including short stories, can increase empathy and prosocial behavior (Bal and Veltkamp, 2013; Johnson, 2011). Finally, participating in dance and movement has shown powerful potential to affect well-being on a range of factors, including improved stress levels, sleep quality, confidence and life satisfaction (Rodríguez-Jiménez et al., 2022; Wiedenhofer et al., 2017; López-Rodríguez et al., 2017).

The benefits of incorporating the arts in college and university curricula may be even more important for students in fields where art is less common. The Association of American Medical Colleges has called the arts and humanities essential to medical education for its impact on both professional effectiveness and individual well-being (Howley et al., 2020).

Reflections for Faculty and Instructors

What is the learning goal that I have for students and how might an arts-based or embodied activity support that goal?

Does this activity deepen understanding beyond what a lecture or reading alone could do?

Is this activity accessible to students with physical, sensory, or neurodiverse needs?

Does this activity help students regulate stress or could it overwhelm them? Am I providing enough structure and grounding before and after the activity to help minimize stress?

Actions to Practice

☒ Begin with brief, low-stakes arts or embodied activities rather than high-exposure performances.

☒ Set expectations for respect, confidentiality, and non-judgment.

☒ Clearly connect the activity to learning goals and course content.

☒ Build in time for students to reflect on meaning, not performance.

☒ Participate alongside students without positioning yourself as the expert performer.

☒ Offer multiple ways to participate that are equally valued

3 *How can I have a healthy classroom climate?*

Q4 | *How do I integrate well-being activities into my curriculum?*

Q1

UARK Policies for Consideration

Q2

Students' Religious Observances
(Faculty Handbook)

Q3

Attendance Policy
(Faculty Handbook)

Guidelines for the acceptable
use of Artificial Intelligence

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4 How do I effectively consider student financial concerns when teaching?

Q1 | *What are the direct and hidden costs of my course and how can I minimize them?*

Q2 **Why this Matters for Well-being and Learning**

Q3 **There are several potential costs for students enrolled in a course in addition to tuition.** Textbooks are one cost that faculty can influence. Another consideration of course costs are costs for other software or technology.

Q4 There are a variety of textbook options from standard print textbooks, online textbooks and open access resources. High additional costs may result in students not purchasing required textbooks or withdrawing from a course due to not having the materials (Wittkower and Lo 2020).



Reducing textbook costs through open educational resources has shown positive student feedback

(Valentino and Hopkins 2020). One study in high school students found that those using open textbooks scored higher on end-of-year standardized science tests compared to those using traditional textbooks (Robinson 2014)

Online or E-textbooks have been suggested to improve retention and student involvement (Sun 2012). When considering learning effects, multimedia learning modules can improve learning compared to traditional textbooks (Stelzer 2009), however other studies have found that E-textbooks alone may have poorer learning outcomes (Fike 2016) or no difference (Rockinson-Szapkiw 2013).

Reflections for Faculty and Instructors

Do I fully utilize any required textbooks for my course? Or do I only teach a small section of the book where reading is not required?

Are there other Open Educational Resources available for my course?

Do I utilize interactive materials provided with textbooks?

Do my assignments or assessments create hidden costs (paid proctoring, specialized software, travel, printing)?

Actions to Practice

- ☒ Adopt or adapt OER with librarian help; prefer library-licensed or open materials.
- ☒ Put copies on Course Reserves; provide older/alternate editions where feasible.
- ☒ If using auto-billing ("Inclusive/Equitable Access"), clearly explain pricing, opt-out dates, and alternatives; verify it's the lowest-cost option for students.

- ☒ Use low-/no-cost assessment options (e.g., authentic assessments, open-resource exams, on-campus proctoring).
- ☒ Coordinate with librarians to ensure software/media are available via campus licenses.

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4 How do I effectively consider student financial concerns when teaching?

Q2 | Should I require the UARK approved clicker (PointSolutions)?

Q3

Why this Matters for Well-being and Learning

Real-time response systems can boost engagement and give every student a voice.

Student response systems increase student motivation and engagement (Hall 2005)(Muir 2020).

At the University of Arkansas, the only approved student systems are EchoPoll and PointSolutions Mobile (smartphone/browser).

Using the approved tools ensures support, Blackboard integration, and compliance.

Students with more responses had higher grades in nursing class (Tornwall 2020). Students perceive it enhances learning (Benson 2016).



Reflections for Faculty and Instructors

Am I using the student response system punitively (punishing students who are absent or answer incorrectly) or am I using it to increase engagement?

Am I using the university supported system?

Are my questions accessible to all students?

Actions to Practice



Default to PointSolutions Mobile. Faculty should reach out to clickers@uark.edu for assistance, training, help with initial set-up, and report issues.



Post the official syllabus excerpt for clickers and link to student setup/troubleshooting pages.



Schedule a low stakes practice poll in Week 1; delay graded clicker use until onboarding is complete.



Address academic integrity explicitly (e.g., no proxy voting, one device per student).



Upload responses from each class session to the Blackboard gradebook on the same day or as soon as possible.

References

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4 How do I effectively consider student financial concerns when teaching?

Q3 | *Do my course policies account for students who work 20+ hours/week or have caregiving responsibilities?*

Q4 Why this Matters for Well-being and Learning

Working long hours is common among university students, and **evidence suggests that working more than about 20 hours per week may be linked to lower grades, reduced attendance, and a higher likelihood of dropping out** (Sanchez-Gelabert 2017), however, evidence is conflicting (Riggert, Boyle, Petrosko, Ash, and Rude-Parkins, 2006) and needs to be updated.

Some studies report a clear negative link between working and academic success (Humphrey, 2006; Kulm and Cramer, 2006), whereas others observe that the highest academic performance appears among both full-time students and those employed for more than 20 hours weekly (Bradley, 2006). Conversely, some researchers find no meaningful connection between work hours and grades (Mounsey, Vandehey, and Diekhoff, 2013).

Overall, the literature suggests that working only a small number of hours, approximately seven per week, may enhance academic outcomes (Applegate and Daly, 2006), with minor additional benefits up to around 20 hours; however, once students exceed that threshold, their academic performance typically begins to decline (Hovdhaugen, 2013).

While evidence on academic outcomes from working is mixed, the effect of working and attending university on well-being may be detrimental.

One study found that while grades may not differ between working and non-working students, those who worked reported higher levels of stress and anxiety (Mounsey et al., 2013). Research based on the 2015 American College Health Association National College Health Assessment II survey also indicates that as full-time undergraduates increase their work hours, they tend to experience poorer sleep and greater feelings of overwhelm (Lederer 2015).

Employment can additionally elevate the risk of dropping out (Bozick, 2007; Staff and Mortimer, 2007), and lead to fatigue, time pressure, and less opportunity for leisure (Curtis and Williams, 2002). Institutional supports such as stable scheduling, flexible assessments, and alternative modes of participation can help working students succeed without lowering standards.

Reflections for Faculty and Instructors

Are any requirements or assignments outside of class time flexible to accommodate students who may be working?

When are deadlines for assignments and are they concentrated when working students may have the least flexibility?

Do I release major deadlines and assignments early enough for students to plan ahead?

Do I interpret missed classes or late work as lack of motivation rather than structural barriers?

Can I utilize the experiences of working students within my courses?

Are instructions, examples, and expectations transparent enough to reduce cognitive overhead?

Can mentorship, feedback, or enrichment be offered in ways that do not require physical presence?

4 How do I effectively consider student financial concerns when teaching?

Q3 | *Do my course policies account for students who work 20+ hours/week or have caregiving responsibilities?*

Q4

Q1

Q2

Actions to Practice

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>☒ Know and be aware of campus policies with respect to required attendance at times outside of class time.</p> | <p>☒ Record key mini-lectures or provide annotated slides.</p> |
| <p>☒ Offer flexible exam windows (e.g., 24–48 hours), allow a dropped quiz, and provide multiple office-hour options including late afternoon/early evening.</p> | <p>☒ Avoid mandatory cost-incurring activities when viable alternatives exist.</p> |

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4 *How do I effectively consider student financial concerns when teaching?*

Q4 | *What University of Arkansas policies and resources do I need to be aware of to help students financially?*

Q1 **Do I understand (and can I relay to students) how adding/dropping/withdrawing affects financial aid and bills?**

Schedule changes can trigger Return-to-Title-IV calculations, new balances, or holds. Students often do not realize that withdrawing can create an immediate bill or jeopardize future eligibility (SAP). Early conversations with Financial Aid and Financial Empowerment can prevent avoidable aid loss.



Encourage students to contact Financial Aid or a Financial Empowerment coach before making schedule changes.

Q2 **Am I helping students access income supports (on-campus work, Work-Study, SNAP, tax credits, transportation)?**

Proactive referrals to student-friendly work, food benefits, and free tax filing can improve financial stability during the term. Razorback Transit provides no-fare routes that can reduce transportation costs.



If needed, share links to on-campus jobs (Handshake) and Work-Study eligibility.



Share SNAP basics for college students and the Arkansas DHS application site.



Before tax season, share links to free IRS-certified VITA sites.

When a student confides in you about money concerns **Quick, ethical response:**

- 1** Thank them for sharing; affirm privacy. Avoid making loans or personal promises.
- 2** Clarify the timeline/need (today/this week/this term?).
- 3** Offer 1–2 concrete next steps: **U of A Cares referral, Full Circle Pantry, Financial Empowerment Coaching,** on-campus job leads.
- 4** Right-size course impacts: short extensions, alternative readings, flexible exam windows, as appropriate.

UARK Policies for Consideration

Textbook and course materials policy

4 *How do I effectively consider student financial concerns when teaching?*



Resources

Q1

Copy-Ready Syllabus Statement: Basic Needs and Financial Support

If finances or basic needs are getting in the way of learning (food, housing, childcare, transportation, technology, health/mental health), please reach out early. You can talk with me or contact these resources directly. Seeking help is a strength, and I will work with you as you consider these potential helps:

Q2**Q3****Q4**

- [Full Circle Food Pantry](#)
- [U of A Cares](#)
- [Financial Empowerment](#)
- [Payment Plans](#)
- [On-Campus Student Employment](#)
- [Federal Work-Study](#)

Copy-Ready Syllabus Statement: Supporting Working Students

Students in this course may be balancing significant work responsibilities alongside their academic commitments. I recognize that many students work long hours, often out of financial necessity, and that employment can affect time, energy, scheduling flexibility, and stress levels.

Research shows that extensive work hours, especially beyond approximately 20 hours per week, can contribute to challenges such as reduced sleep, increased stress, absenteeism, and greater difficulty keeping up with academic requirements. To support your success while maintaining high academic standards, this course includes predictable deadlines, clear expectations, and multiple ways to participate.

If your work schedule creates unavoidable conflicts with course activities, please communicate with me as early as possible so we can discuss possible alternatives within the structure of the course. While flexibility cannot be guaranteed for every situation, I am committed to working with you to find reasonable options that uphold the learning goals of the class. You are encouraged to meet with me during office hours or by appointment to talk through strategies for managing coursework with employment demands.

My goal is to support all students, working or not, in fully engaging with this course and succeeding academically.

4 *How do I effectively consider student financial concerns when teaching?*



Resources

Q1

Quick University of Arkansas Links

Q2

[Financial Empowerment Program \(Free Coaching\)](#)

Our team is here to work with you to create strategies for navigating the financial aspects of college and understanding how academic choices can affect your total cost of attendance.

Q3

[Satisfactory Academic Progress \(SAP\)](#)

To receive Title IV aid, federal regulation requires that a student must be making satisfactory academic progress (SAP). All students enrolled at the University of Arkansas who receive financial aid through the Title IV Assistance Programs must meet the following SAP requirements.

Q4

[Withdrawing and Return to Title IV \(R2T4\)](#)

Federal aid (Pell Grant, FSEOG, Work-Study, Direct Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans, and PLUS Loans) is awarded to University of Arkansas students under the assumption that the student will attend school for the entire award period. Under federal regulation, when a student withdraws on or before completing 60% of the award period, a portion of their Title IV funds may need to be returned. A federally mandated calculation is used to determine aid eligibility and if any funds need to be returned to the Title IV programs at the time of withdrawal.

[Installment Payment Plans \(Treasurer\)](#)

Any student who completes registration agrees to pay the University in full by prescribed deadlines. Any unpaid balance may be subject to late fees and/or financial holds. UARK has payment plans, but unpaid balances may be subject to late fees and/or financial holds.

[Full Circle Food Pantry \(hours, ordering\)](#)

Student led emergency food assistance program, striving to serve clients with balanced meals through non-perishables and fresh produce from our own garden. Dedicated to nourishing bodies, empowering minds, and creating a community of compassion.

[U of A Cares \(Referrals and Case Management\)](#)

We seek to empower students to take advantage of the offices and services that exist on the University of Arkansas campus and in the local community in a manner that allows them to achieve their full potential.

[On-Campus Student Employment](#)

On-Campus jobs provide students with flexible hours, income, and a community on campus.

[Federal Work-Study \(Student Info\)](#)

Federal Work Study (FWS) is a federal program which offers eligible students part-time job opportunities. Students may work up to 20 hours per week and will be paid twice monthly.

[Razorback Transit — Routes and Schedules](#)

We strive to provide reliable and timely transportation services.

[Course Reserves \(Place Copies for Students\)](#)

Instructors may use the Course Reserve Form to request material for course reserve at any time throughout the semester. This form is for any material an instructor wishes to place on reserve apart from personal items.

Student Well-being Academic toolkit



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Student Affairs