Student Well-Being & Course-Related Stress: Student Perspectives

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University of Minnesota
Think-Pair-Share:

Describe one factor/suggestion reported by UMN students that increases course-related student well-being.
- Clarity
- Equitable workload
- Flexibility
- Approachability
- Instructional Strategies
- Exam prep
- Fair grading policies
Agenda

■ Brief review of survey’s seven themes (handout pgs. 2-3)
  ■ Also detailed on webinar at CEI website (“cei.umn.edu” check Teaching Resources)

■ Deep dive into data: “identities relevant to their experience in courses” (handout pgs: 4-10)
  ■ First generation
  ■ Disabilities
  ■ LGBTQ
  ■ URM
  ■ International
Where did this UMN student survey come from?

The Faculty & Instructors Committee of the Provost’s Council on Student Mental Health (PCSMHFI) identified a primary goal to identify faculty and instructor development needs regarding prevention of undue student stress and response to student mental health problems, including potential opportunities to address those needs.
Where did this UMN student survey come from?

- The (PCSMHFI) and the Provost's Advisory Committee on Teaching, Learning, and Technology (PACTLT) subcommittee on Serving Students with Mental Health Concerns collaborated to develop a UMN student survey to glean data regarding how UMN students experience course-related stress in order to help faculty and other instructors become aware of student perceptions and suggest ways to reduce this stress.
## Survey Demographics

Percentages of respondents who reported the characteristics listed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Year of Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergrad</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>1st year of program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2nd year of program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3rd year of program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-degree</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>4th year of program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSEO</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Survey Demographics

Percentages of respondents who reported the characteristics listed; the columns on the right include any identities or factors that students thought may be relevant to their experiences in their courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Identity/Factor</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twin Cities</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} generation</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochester</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Physical, mental, learning disability</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morris</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>LGBTQ</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duluth</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>Underrepresented minority</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crookston</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Returning/veteran</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings: Theme ONE
Clarity about Course Organization

- Clear expectations for the course (assignments, homework, assessments, grading) from beginning of semester.
- Clear syllabus, calendar of class activities, materials, rubrics
- Clear communication (written, verbal….reminders, instructions, feedback)
Findings: Theme TWO
Instructor Behavior

- Approachability (open to discuss student issues, course content)
- Accept student feedback (early/mid-term feedback)
- Caring, empathetic (checked in with students, listen)
- Knowledgeable about, responsive to student mental health concerns
- Provide extra help
- Create supportive climate
- Effective teaching
Findings: Theme THREE
Course Workload

- Helpful, meaningful assignments
- Balanced work distribution (within/between courses)
On your Student Well-Being Action Plan, describe and share with a colleague one of the following:

- one way you can increase clarity about your course organization; and
- an instructor behavior to increase student well-being.
- create an equitable course workload
Findings: Theme FOUR
Flexibility (Course & Instructor)

- Attendance, homework deadline, office hours
- Assessments (make-up exams/quizzes)
- Course scheduling (more time for some topics—not cramming content into class before major exam)
Findings: Theme FIVE
Instructional Strategies

- Multiple course assessments (in-class activities, clicker questions, homework/assignments, projects, quizzes)….not 1-2 exams only
- Interactive classroom activities (discussion, labs, group work in class, case studies, activities similar to authentic situations)
- Aligned course design
Findings: Theme FIVE
Instructional Strategies (Continued)

- Constructive, timely feedback
- Scaffolding large projects
- Relevant examples
- Effective use of learning management systems (Canvas) to post slides, recorded lectures, resources, eBooks
Findings: Theme SIX
Exams and Exam Preparation

- Study guides
- Going through most difficult problems and/or applications in class
- Practice exams
- Review sessions
- Allow students to return to previous questions on an exam
Findings: Theme SEVEN
Grading Practices & Policies

- Drop lowest exam/quiz/assignment grade
- Distribute course points across multiple exams, assignments and activities
- Base grades on competence so all can succeed (contract grading, group exams, open book exams, take home exams, no bell curve grading)
- Observe UMN final exam policy, including that if student has three or more exams scheduled in same calendar day, may request that the date of one be changed.
Brainstorm

On your Student Well-Being Action Plan, describe (and share with a colleague) one way to promote student well-being using (or revising) a suggested:

- course and/or instructor flexibility
- instructor strategy
- exam or exam preparation idea
- a grading practice or policy
Survey Diversity Data Deep Dive

Q5 - On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all, 5 being moderate but manageable, and 10 being extreme, how much stress do you perceive in all aspects of your life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Overall Stress Perceived</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All surveyed</td>
<td>(651)</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st-generation</td>
<td>(122)</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabilities</td>
<td>(116)</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ</td>
<td>(62)</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URM</td>
<td>(60)</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>(41)</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q6 - On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all, 5 being moderate but manageable, and 10 being extreme, to what degree does course-related stress impact your total stress levels?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Course-Related Stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All surveyed</td>
<td>(651)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st-generation</td>
<td>(122)</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabilities</td>
<td>(116)</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ</td>
<td>(62)</td>
<td>7.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>URM</td>
<td>(60)</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>(41)</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q7 - On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest degree, to what degree are you managing your stress?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Degree of Managing Stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All surveyed</td>
<td>(651)</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st-generation</td>
<td>(122)</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabilities</td>
<td>(116)</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ</td>
<td>(62)</td>
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<tr>
<td>URM</td>
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<tr>
<td>International</td>
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</table>
Q8: What do you do to manage your stress or anxiety?

- **Adaptive--Constructive**
  - Time management---plan things out (i.e., calendar, organize, goals, schedule, reminders, short breaks, eat and sleep well, reward self after a chunk of study,
  - Time for relaxation (i.e., mediation, yoga, music, judo, boxing, watching/playing sports, recreation/work out, crocheting, study breaks, walks, movie, time with friends or family or pets, doing art, brief nap to reset, etc.)
  - See a professional (i.e., psychologist, psychiatrist, success coach)
Q8: What do you do to manage your stress or anxiety?

- Maladaptive—Less than constructive
  - Drugs/chemicals-self-medicating (CBD, alcohol, etc.)
  - Compulsive behavior (eating, cleaning, shopping, etc.)
  - Not sleeping or too much sleeping
Q9  In particular, are there any specific things that you do to manage course-related stress?

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In small groups, discuss Q8 & Q9 sample of responses---share on Action Plan

- Thoughts?
- Existing UMN resources to support student well-being?
- Resources needed?
Next Steps:

- Faculty survey to ascertain current practices
- Faculty development to increase student well-being based on student perspectives
- Expand this pilot UMN Student Survey
- Align student findings with empirical strategies and Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
On Index Card:

- One helpful aspect/idea you could use from this session:

  [Insert idea here]

- One suggestion for improving this session:

  [Insert suggestion here]
Questions?

Thank you!

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References


http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html

University of Minnesota Joint Task Force on Student Mental Health Report (2017):