



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

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## **Think-Pair-Share:**

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**Describe one factor/suggestion  
reported by UMN students that  
increases course-related  
student well-Being**

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- **Clarity**
  - **Equitable workload**
  - **Flexibility**
  - **Approachability**
  - **Instructional Strategies**
  - **Exam prep**
  - **Fair grading policies**



# Agenda

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- **Brief review of survey's seven themes**  
(handout pgs. 2-3)
  - Also detailed on webinar at CEI website (“[cei.umn.edu](http://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?

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- *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?

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- *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

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Percentages of respondents who reported the characteristics listed:

Undergrad	83	1st year of program	31
Graduate	10	2nd year of program	34
Professional	4.5	3rd year of program	18
Non-degree	0.47	4 <sup>th</sup> year of program	13
PSEO	0.32		



# Survey Demographics

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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.

Twin Cities	73	1 <sup>st</sup> generation	25
Rochester	14	Physical, mental, learning disability	23
Morris	6	LGBTQ	13
Duluth	5.9	Underrepresented minority	12
Crookston	0	International	8
		Returning/veteran	5.8





# Findings: Theme ONE

## Clarity about Course Organization

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- 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

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- 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

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- Helpful, meaningful assignments
- Balanced work distribution (within/between courses)



# Brainstorm

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**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)

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- 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**

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- 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

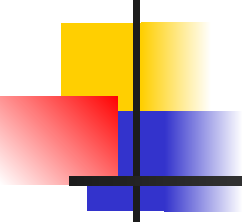


# Findings: Theme FIVE

## Instructional Strategies (Continued)

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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**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

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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?

	N	Overall Stress Perceived
All surveyed	(651)	6.7
1st-generation	(122)	7.2
Disabilities	(116)	<b>7.6</b>
LGBTQ	(62)	7.5
URM	(60)	7.2
International	(41)	6.5



# Survey Diversity Data Deep Dive

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- 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?

	<b>N</b>	<b>Course-Related Stress</b>	
All surveyed	(651)	7	
1st-generation	(122)	7.4	
Disabilities	(116)	<b>7.6</b>	
LGBTQ	(62)	7.4	
URM	(60)	7.2	
International	(41)	6.8	



# Survey Diversity Data Deep Dive

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- Q7 - On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest degree, to what degree are you **managing your stress**?

	<b>N</b>	<b>Degree of Managing Stress</b>	
All surveyed	(651)	5.9	
1st-generation	(122)		5.7
Disabilities	(116)	<b>5.3</b>	
LGBTQ	(62)	5.4	
URM	(60)	5.8	
International	(41)	6.6	



## Q8: What do you do to manage your stress or anxiety?

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### ■ 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?

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- **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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**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**

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- **Thoughts?**
- **Existing UMN resources to support student well-being?**
- **Resources needed?**



## Next Steps:

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- 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:

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



# Questions?

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Thank you!

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## References

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About Universal Design for Learning. Accessed 8.14.19 at:

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

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

<http://mentalhealth.umn.edu/facstaff/pdfs/JTFSMH%20Report%20Sept%202017.pdf>