Positive well-being is a key predictor for learning and student success. In partnership with the SFU Teaching and Learning Centre, SFU Health Promotion is working with instructional staff to create conditions for well-being within learning environments. This print-friendly resource outlines some suggestions for creating these conditions which include personal development and social interaction among students, within a positive classroom culture. Additional conditions for student well-being include making a valued contribution, experiencing an optimal level of challenge and feeling supported by instructors, among others.

For more information visit www.sfu.ca/healthycampuscommunity/learningenvironments.html, or to share your own example please contact health_promo@sfu.ca
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

By providing opportunities for personal and professional growth in class you can increase students’ skills, resiliency and preparedness for the future.

Suggestions:

- Bring in guest speakers or alumni to help students connect in class learning to their career development
- Consider what skills students will need to succeed in life and in their careers and try to find ways to foster these in class (for example teamwork, communication, problem solving, empathy, initiative)
- Use journaling or other reflective activities to encourage personal growth (learn more)
- Offer mindfulness or other skill building activities during class breaks or as part of the course (see sample)
- Use activities and practices in class to help build you and your students’ intercultural competence (learn more).
- Link students to resources that support their personal balance and well-being (see sample)
- Encourage students to seek co-curricular and volunteer opportunities (for example Passport to Leadership, Mentorship Programs, or Peer Education)

TOOLS

- Mindfulness Meditation Practice Slide with 10 min Audio (ppt)
- Team Style Inventory (The McGraw-Hill Companies)
FLEXIBILITY

Providing students with some flexibility and control over their learning experiences helps them to feel empowered and supported, contributing to their well-being.

Suggestions:

- Offer students the option to choose their “best two out of three” for assignments or quizzes
- Offer students choice in assignments and opportunities to set their own deadlines or percentage of final grade for assignments (see sample)
- Seek feedback from students throughout the semester. This could be done through web-survey or an anonymous in class comment card (see sample)
- Use interactive tools like iclicker to promote class input and participation
- Consider providing students with lecture notes or power point slides ahead of class, and providing lecture recordings (particularly helpful for EAL students whereby they have more opportunities to work through the rate of speech during lectures)
- Consider alternative forms of office hours (for example skype, webconferencing, group office hours or canvas chat).

TOOLS

- Dr. Didicher's Sample Evaluation Agreement (pdf)
- Student Comment Card (pdf)
- Sample Mid-Term Check in Questions (you are welcome to use this survey – just email health_promo@sfu.ca for access)
SOCIAL CONNECTION

Facilitating interaction helps students build social networks which foster resilience and are an asset to well-being. Interaction in the class can help create a sense of community and positive classroom culture.

Suggestions:

- Have students introduce themselves during the first class or use a social connectedness start up activity in tutorials (see sample)
- Make it clear that the quality of teamwork in group assignments is important by including marks for the groups process in grading rubrics (see sample)
- Encourage students to participate in study groups
- If possible, move tables and chairs into small groups to facilitate discussion (just be sure to return them after class). You can request to have a classroom with moveable tables through your departmental manager. For more information click here
- Offer personality assessment or a Team Style Inventory in forming groups and to help groups function smoothly (see sample)
- Design lecture assignments that require students to collectively work on study questions
- Ask students to take down the name and number of at least one of their peers so that they can connect should they miss a lecture or want to form a study group
- Suggest opportunities for students to interact outside of class time (if you have time to join them that is even better)
- Offer mini breaks in class and encourage students to take this time to meet their peers and get to know one another

TOOLS

- Sample Group Process Grading Rubric (John Hopkins University)
- SFU Learning Commons Guide for Forming Study Groups
- Team Style Inventory (The McGraw-Hill Companies)
OPTIMAL CHALLENGE

Students perform and feel their best when they are challenged, but have adequate resources to meet the challenge.

Suggestions:

• Consider the timing of exams and assignments to alleviate undue stress
• Provide feedback on each stage of assignments and help students progress to the next stage of larger projects
• Avoid very heavily weighted components, such as an exam worth 50% of the final grade
• Recognize that more tasks do not always equate to more learning
• Set clear course goals, and ensure assignments and expectations are clear from the start
• Provide activities where students design mock test/study questions
POSITIVE CLASSROOM CULTURE

Creating an enjoyable and welcoming classroom culture can enhance positive well-being for students and instructors. This can be accomplished through humor, inspiration, open-mindedness, connecting with students or deeply engaging them in their learning.

Suggestions:

- Acknowledge stress within your class syllabus (see sample)
- Share your teaching philosophy with students (see sample)
- Take care of your own well-being so that you can be present and encouraging for your students
- Use a class check-in activity to connect with students (see sample)
- Tell a joke or provide an inspiring quote within your slides to lighten the mood (see sample)
- Use active learning techniques to create an engaging and dynamic learning environment (learn more)
- Offer breaks in class where students can take a breather and connect to one another
- When possible, ensure a pleasant and inviting space through use of colour, art, music and well maintained facilities

TOOLS

- Check-in Activity - Shared by an SFU Instructor (2013)
- Sample Syllabus Language to Acknowledge Stress (doc)
- Sample Teaching Philosophy: Stephen Brown (pdf)
- Inspirational Quotes to Share with Students (ppt)
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Providing students with opportunities to make a valued contribution through their coursework can give them a boost to their emotional well-being.

Suggestions:

- Create assignments in which the results can be utilized by a community group or campus initiative
- Where possible incorporate community service or service learning components into your course
- Use a Giving Game in your class to give students an opportunity to contribute (learn more)
INSTRUCTOR SUPPORT

As an instructor you play an important role in setting a positive and supportive tone that can go a long way in helping students to feel welcome and at ease.

Suggestions:

• Whenever possible, let students know you care about them and their success
• Demystify your role by sharing an anecdote, joke, or sharing something about yourself
• Be learner centered: “be interested in learners instead of trying to be an interesting teacher”
• Consider the “whole student” and the pressures and challenges the students may face outside your class
• Provide constructive feedback and outline specific actions students can take to improve
• Consider alternative forms of office hours (for example skype, webconferencing, group office hours or canvas chat), and let students know what to expect from office hours

TOOLS

• Get to Know Your Prof template (ppt)
SERVICES & SUPPORTS

The in class experience provides an important opportunity to connect students with resources that can support their personal well-being and readiness to learn.

Suggestions:

- Provide health tips or health resources in class or during breaks (see tools below)
- Use mindfulness or relaxation videos through SFU Health and Counselling for a break (see sample)
- Suggest opportunities for students to engage in activities together outside the classroom – (for example suggest they participate in the Terry Fox run or Philosophers café)
- Link students to resources that support their well-being (see sample)
- Familiarize yourself with the various student support services and co-curricular learning supports across campus
- Invite guest speakers from various campus services to present on their services

TOOLS

- Progressive Muscle Relaxation Slide with 10 min Audio (ppt)
- Mindfulness Meditation Practice Slide with 10 min Audio (ppt)
- SFU Health Promotion Online Resources (ppt)
- Inspirational Quotes to Share with Students (ppt)
- 15 Stress Reduction Tips to Share with Students (ppt)
- Slides for Basic Stretching (ppt)
REAL-LIFE LEARNING

By connecting learning to life you offer students opportunities to build their personal skills and confidence in their future.

Suggestions:

• Utilize examples from the real world in class (for example news clips, career advice, guest speakers from the workforce students hope to enter)
• Consider what skills students will need to succeed in life and in their careers and try to foster these in class (for example teamwork, problem solving, empathy, initiative)
• Bring in guest speakers or program alumni who can help relate the course material to real life issues and work skills
• Where possible, incorporate experiential or service learning components into your course
INCLUSIVITY

An inclusive learning environment demonstrates an intentional consideration for all students and in doing so, can enhance positive well-being.

Suggestions:

- Create class guidelines as a group to respect difference and create a safe place for discussion (Ie. “Appreciate perspectives and differences,” “Remember that people are talking from personal experiences - be empathetic”) (see sample)
- Publish grading rubric in advance
- Break final paper into a series of smaller assignments
- Make expectations clear; remind students what resources are available to them
- Provide visual support (text and/or graphic)
- Pause and summarize or ask students to summarize (“I want you to summarize my example and add another” or “take a minute to prepare a question about this”)

TOOLS

- Sample Class Guidelines developed by Students in CRIM311