



# Supporting student well-being during COVID-19

OTC has made looking after our students a priority during these uncertain times. This is why the calling campaign and case managers have been highlighted in several of the latest notes from Dr. Higdon and Dr. McGrady. However, there is still considerable work that can be done in the classroom to help make sure our students are cared for and have the resource they need.

## **First, take care of yourself:**

Just like students, your life has been upended. You are unexpectedly teaching remotely, managing your home life, and living through some of the most unprecedented events of our time. Whatever you can do to take care of yourself will help you take care of students. There is no perfect path through this time. What you are able to do is enough. We hope these resources will support your work.

## ***You are worried about students and want to support them.***

### **At a high level, instructors said they wanted:**

1. To motivate students, while supporting those who don't adapt well
2. To keep social connections among students and between students and instructors
3. Resources for students who are dealing with financial challenges, food scarcity, unsafe home lives, mental health issues, and other personal matters

### **If you're looking for technical and pedagogical support:**

This guide focuses on ways to respond to your concerns about student well-being. Visit [Faculty.otc.edu/center/](https://faculty.otc.edu/center/) for additional resources about teaching remotely, blended learning, Zoom, and self-care.

## **1. Motivate and support students**

You want your students to succeed, but you might be worried they feel demotivated or aren't adapting well to remote learning.

### **Resources you can send to your students:**

- [Coping and Resilience during COVID-19](#)
- [Adjusting your study habits during COVID-19](#)
- [How to be a Successful Online Learner](#)
- [OTC COVID Website](#)

## Steps you can take in your own course:

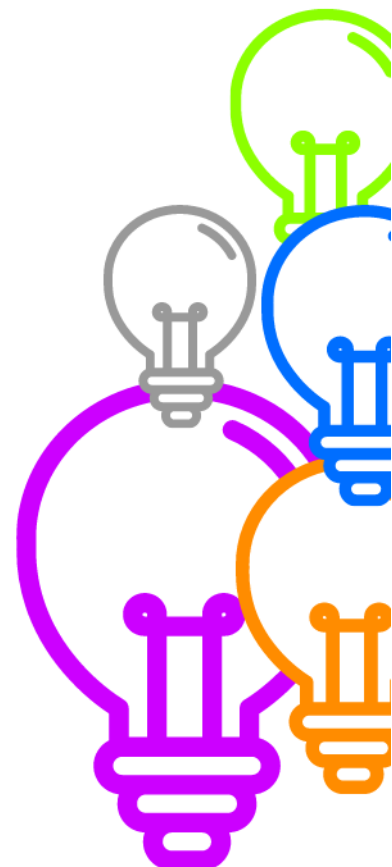
- **Acknowledge reality:** Tell your students you're concerned about them. Remind them that you hope the class will continue forward together as best you all can. Reinforce the respect you'll hold for each other as an inclusive classroom.
- **Be accommodating:** This is the time for accommodation. Stay informed on what is happening in your student community and meet them where they are. For example, a student who has tested positive or is caring for someone that has tested positive may need extensions on assignments.
- **Consolidate updates:** You are likely still making modifications to your course as needed. So are all of your colleagues. Students receive so many messages sometimes those who need the most support may tune them out.
  - *Update your syllabus and main page on Canvas:* Announcements on Canvas are a great tool for bringing attention to course changes and communicating updates to your students. Note changes in things like lectures, virtual office hours, assignments, and exam dates.
  - *Consider a weekly message:* A "Monday Morning Message" could outline any changes, links, and what students should be studying or working on this week. It may also be a chance to recognize something positive or offer words of encouragement. One tip: make it clear what one thing is most important that week. Some students need to focus on one thing at a time right now.
- **Consider assessments:** As you're navigating to the end of your course, consider how you can make assessments accommodating.
  - Breaking things up into smaller assignments might help students stay on track and not procrastinate. However, you'll want to strike a balance so there isn't redundant work or too many details to keep track of at once.
  - Reconsider exams: There are many ways to measure student learning. While you may be accustomed to giving exams, now may not be the best time. Student technological inequities, personal stress, students struggling with time management and the expense of offering proctored exams are all reasons to take a step and reconsider an exam you may have planned. Slow down first and think of the goal of your assessment. How can this goal be met with the least stress on you and your students? Consider scaffolded assignments, short essays, or other alternative ways of assessing students rather than just a high-stakes exam. Authentic assessments are a good substitute and can gauge learning throughout the course. [Schedule a 1:1 Consultation](#) with the Center for Academic Innovation and we will be happy to assist you with identifying, selecting, and building more authentic assessments in your course, regardless of modality.



## 2. Keep social connections

Many of you said you were worried about the loss of regular times to connect and share friendly banter. It's normal to feel like you can't perfectly achieve the same level of connection as an in-person class. Here are some low-lift ideas to get you started.

- **Offer a check in:** Offer a time and link to Zoom for a student to drop in and chat with you. Many instructors are holding virtual remote office hours and offer this to the whole class, but sometimes the most in-need students won't attend. Schedule a time to connect with them individually, perhaps to discuss a course topic.
- **Don't be afraid to reach out directly to students:** If a student hasn't attended or logged in recently, or hasn't participated in a discussion, consider sending an email asking if everything is okay. Reaching out directly to a student you're worried about or haven't heard much from could make a big difference.
- **Build in casual time:** The ten minutes before and after class, when some students are chatting or asking you questions, are often lost online. If you are using a video conference, use a few extra minutes at the start or end of the session to be casual. If you have a few attendees, just chat. If you have several folks, take questions and allow a student to volunteer to answer via chat.
- **Make smaller groups:** See if you can get small groups of students to have discussions (like in a Zoom breakout room). If you have a group project, consider making an assignment specifically about having a video chat.
- **Pic of the week:** If you're using a platform that supports profile pictures or other images (Zoom backgrounds), suggest a theme of the week for students to pick a new image. Try changing your background or have a prop to tie into each class session to pique students' curiosity.
- **What's streaming:** Allow a little creativity in your class. Ask your students what a binge-worthy show is this week. Ask students to create haikus of the week's content. Have students create videos instead of essays. You could connect it to your class -- make a plot of responses for your stats course or talk about the cultural implications of answers for your sociology course.
  - If you have a synchronous lecture, make a social poll or put it in chat as you start up the session or during a break.
  - If you are using a discussion forum, start a "for fun" thread and challenge students to respond.



### **3. Offer resources for students during COVID-19**

Finally, and very importantly, many of you said you wanted clear ways to help students who may be facing personal challenges with mental health and wellness, financial strain or food insecurity, and unsafe home conditions.

Many of the groups across OTC that always support students have assembled the following list available to students during this unprecedented time. The first thing you should do is file an [OTC Cares Report](#). A Cares Report can also be filed for academic early alerts. You can share the [OTC's I Need Help](#) webpage with your students which will guide students to the appropriate area for support. Also, you can personally suggest relevant resources to a student in need, or share the full list. This is a large collection, but not necessarily exhaustive.

*Note: This list may not represent all current offerings. Please use this as a starting place and contact areas for more information.*

- [Ozarks Technical Community College COVID-19 Information](#)
- [Springfield-Greene County Health Department](#)
- [OTC Student Support Services](#)
- [How to be a Successful Online Learner Resource](#)
- [Disability Support Services](#)
- [Counseling Services](#)
- [OTC Cares](#)

If you have questions or concerns, please contact your supervisor, location staff, or the Center for Academic Innovation for support.

