# Equity and Access in the Virtual Classroom

EQUITY AND INCLUSION ISSUES FOR THE FALL

1. Students, faculty, and staff of color are more likely to be at risk of the disease because of societal factors. They are also more likely to know people who have died from the disease.
2. Low income students may not have access to internet.
3. Families and students will not have had the opportunity to work over the summer to save money.
4. New faculty, staff and students, may have a harder time making connections and finding those with similar experiences.
    1. A new student from the LGBTQ community may struggle to find other LGBTQ students.
5. Students with disabilities may struggle to find accommodation that help them succeed.
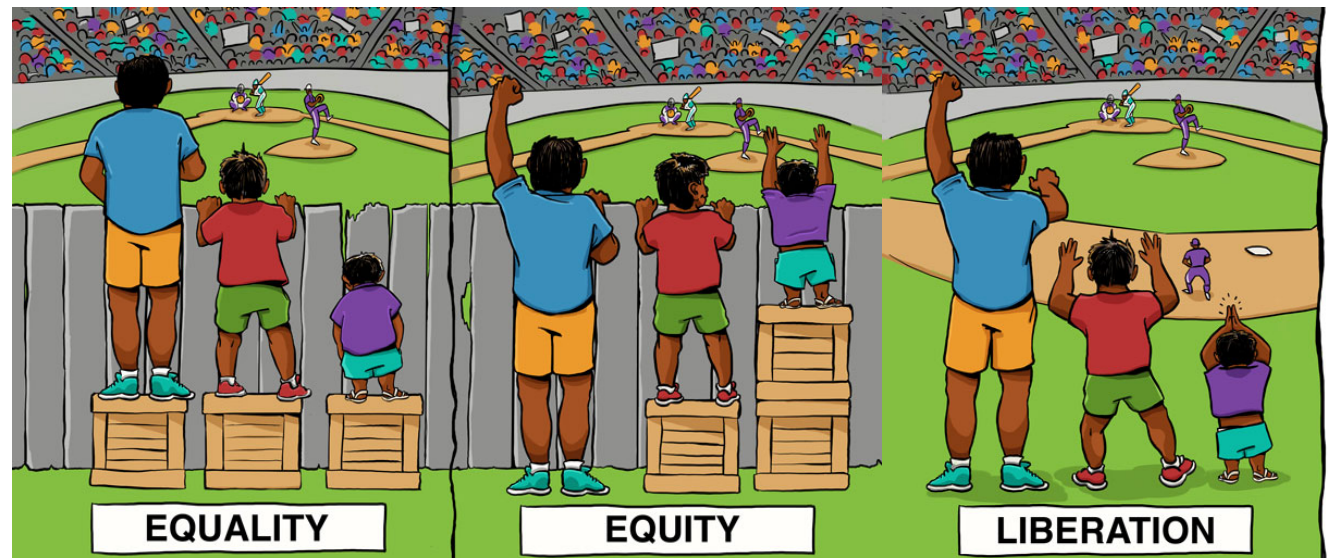6. Students on campus vs. students off campus may form in-group vs. out-groups.
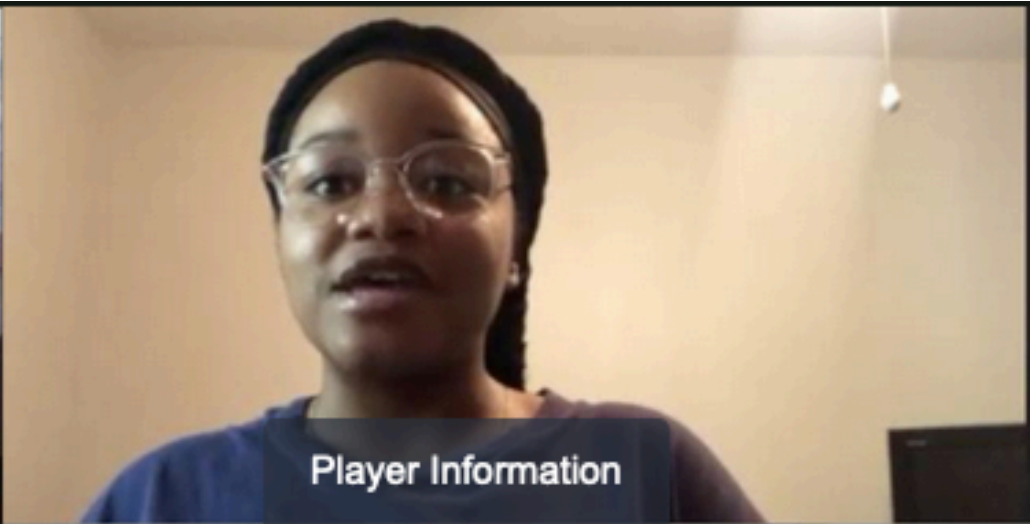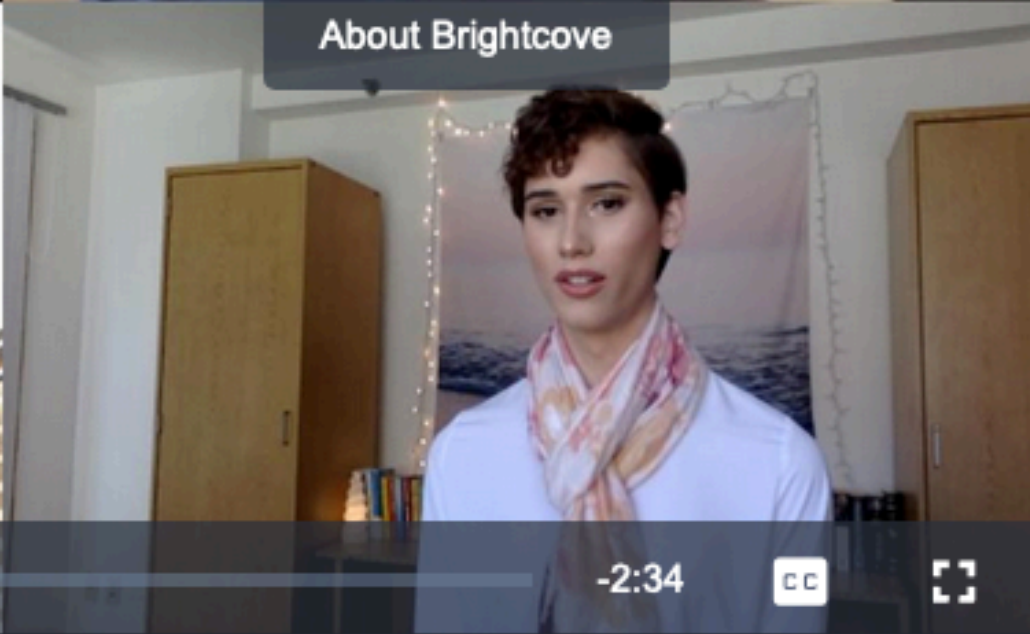
WHAT ARE OUR GOALS FOR THE FALL

Equity refers to a heightened focus on groups experiencing **disproportionate impact** in order to remediate disparities in their **experiences** and **outcomes**.
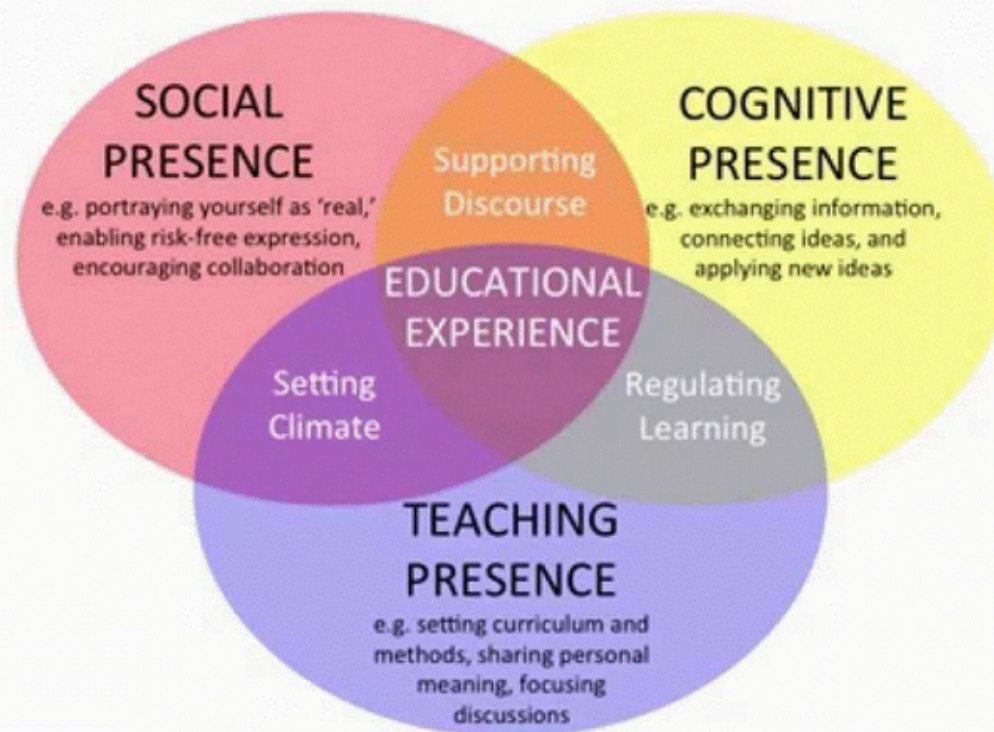
WHAT ARE OUR GOALS FOR THE FALL

- Psychological Safety
- "the sense that one's identity, perspectives, and contributions are valuable, despite the experience or possibility of discomfort or harm within a learning setting."

Garrison's Three Types of Presence

Students can forgive our technological hiccups, they will forget our poor classroom design, and most will be generous about our grading errors if they understand that there really is a human being teaching their online courses. And what does our students' forgiveness, forgetfulness, and generosity really mean - it means that students learn better and are more satisfied in online courses with consistent social, teaching and cognitive presence. Regardless of how instruction is delivered, effective learning is always more about the student and the instructor, and less about the technology. Think of technology as a supplemental tool for the instructor or students to use to amplify their presence and engagement in the learning environment.

Community of Inquiry

SOCIAL PRESENCE
e.g. portraying yourself as 'real,' enabling risk-free expression, encouraging collaboration

COGNITIVE PRESENCE
e.g. exchanging information, connecting ideas, and applying new ideas

Supporting Discourse

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Setting Climate

Regulating Learning

TEACHING PRESENCE
e.g. setting curriculum and methods, sharing personal meaning, focusing discussions

Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (2000). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education. The Internet and Higher Education, 2(2-3), 87–105. doi:10.1016/S1096-7516(00)00016-6

5 MINUTE DISCUSSION QUESTION

- What barriers and inequities for our students are you most worried about navigating?

Jess Calarco
@JessicaCalarco

I've seen professors talking about universities switching to online classes to reduce Coronavirus spread, but I haven't seen a discussion of how that switch might disadvantage some students. In Intro Soc today, multiple students raised concerns about not having wifi at home.

♡ 2,864   1:20 PM - Mar 5, 2020   ⓘ

💬 **681 people are talking about this**   ＞

ADDRESS UNEQUAL ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY, HARDWARE, AND SOFTWARE

- Anonymously ask students about their level of access to technology.

- When possible, offer flexibility or alternatives to students when access is an issue. If you have a student who anticipates or who has demonstrated need regarding technology access, ask them what they would need in order to participate more fully in the course or submit work.

- Ensure materials are accessible and mobile-friendly. PDFs are generally more accessible for students with disabilities who may rely on screen-readers, and PDFs adapt to different devices and cell phones more readily than other formats.

- If you anticipate students may need materials from the campus bookstore, inquire as to whether the bookstore will ship materials off-campus to students.

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PROVIDE A BALANCE BETWEEN ASYNCHRONOUS AND SYNCHRONOUS TOOLS AND COURSE MATERIALS

- Ask students if they have particular needs concerning access and accommodations during remote or online learning. Because of the change in learning contexts, students may have accommodations they had not previously requested, and some students may need to make adjustments to their accommodations.

- Offer students resources on how to stay motivated and keep up with coursework when classes are being offered remotely.

- Consider whether video is necessary in all cases, given how streaming videos require strong internet connections, and how they can deplete data plans and memory on students' (and your!) devices. Record lectures and virtual meetings so they can be downloaded and viewed by students later.

Rice Center for Teaching Excellence

PROVIDE A BALANCE BETWEEN ASYNCHRONOUS AND SYNCHRONOUS TOOLS AND COURSE MATERIALS

- Provide transcripts and captions of audio and video. This benefits not only students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, but those who are participating in classes in noisy locations like a computer lab or dorm, those who don't have headphones, and those who might have English as their second language.
  - For class discussions, have students participate in the collaborative production of notes or live-type discussion notes in a shared Google document.
  - Google Slides and YouTube offer automatic captioning that, while imperfect, can increase access. Zoom does not offer live-captioning, but captions are available if a Zoom session is recorded and viewed later.
  - Provide narrations of the material you're presenting on the screen (for example, describing a diagram, chart, or photograph) for students who are blind, have difficulty reading on a computer screen, or who are otherwise unable to view the video or slides.

  Rice Center for Teaching Excellence

Advantages to Synchronous v. Asynchronous

Advantages of Synchronous Teaching

- Immediate personal engagement between students and instructors, which may create greater feelings of community and lessen feelings of isolation
- More responsive exchanges between students and instructors, which may prevent miscommunication or misunderstanding

Disadvantages of Synchronous Teaching

- More challenging to schedule shared times for all students and instructors
- Some students may face technical challenges or difficulties if they do not have fast or powerful Wi-Fi networks accessible

Teaching Effectively During Times of Disruption, for SIS and PWR

Advantages to Synchronous v. Asynchronous

Advantages of Asynchronous Teaching

- Higher levels of temporal flexibility, which may simultaneously make the learning experiences more accessible to different students and also make an archive of past materials accessible.

- Increased cognitive engagement since students will have more time to engage with and explore the course material.

Disadvantages of Asynchronous Teaching

- Students may feel less personally exchanged and less satisfied without the social interaction between their peers and instructors.

- Course material may be misunderstood or have the potential to be misconstrued without the real-time interaction.

Teaching Effectively During Times of Disruption, for SIS and PWR

5 Minute Discussion Question

- What technology decisions have you already made to embrace equity? What plans will you change to embrace equity?

CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT INCLUDES AND VALUES ALL STUDENTS

If you are in a position to do so, advocate for the students in your community that may have greater need and fewer resources on which to depend. Not all students have safe and welcoming homes to return to in times of crisis, and many students rely on campus resources for regular access to food, shelter, employment, and health care (including mental health care). These needs may be invisible, and students may be reluctant to disclose these needs to individual instructors. Consider the impact remote teaching and campus closures have on all students, and encourage other instructors, staff, and administrators to do the same to ensure support is available for all students.

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Create an environment that includes and values all students

Ask students if they have concerns about accessing other campus resources, as well as any other concerns about remote teaching and learning they want to share. You can use this information to shape your class and teaching. Be prepared to connect students to resources or to offices who can help them if they disclose they are in need of support.

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Create an environment that includes and values all students

Be mindful of the ways in which a crisis can impact communities in different ways, and how students from different identity groups (race, ethnicity, age, religious affiliation, gender, sexual orientation) may have different responses to a situation. Moreover, consider that some communities may become targets of bias incidents, discrimination, and even hate crimes during times of crisis. Be prepared to address tension, heated moments, or bias incidents if they occur in your classes or on campus, and step in to shut down inflammatory or hurtful language or actions. Reflect on how your own response to the situation is impacting you, your approach to teaching, your interactions with students, and what steps you can take to best support your students.

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Create an environment that includes and values all students

Consider whether and how to discuss the cause of the disruption in class, and how you will prepare for those conversations. The CTE resource [Teaching after Hurricane Harvey](#) and [Teaching in Times of Crisis](#) from the Vanderbilt Center for Teaching offer valuable tips for discussing local, national, and international crises in class. Misinformation spreads easily in times of crisis, and students may have misconceptions about the causes of an issue or about communities that are impacted. When possible, correct misinformation that students may be sharing.

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Create an environment that includes and values all students

Remember to practice self-care! Moving to remote teaching requires balancing a lot of competing needs and expectations--a balancing act that can be stressful and require more emotional labor than usual. It's ok not to aim for perfection during a time of certainty and constantly changing landscapes; allow flexibility in course planning, be transparent with students, and expect that mistakes and hiccups will happen! As you support your students, remember to seek support and assistance from your fellow instructors, department and university administrators, university support staff, as well as friends and family when you need it.

Rice Center for Teaching Excellence

EMBRACE UDL

The UDL Guidelines are a tool used in the implementation of Universal Design for Learning, a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn.

5 Minute Discussion Question

- What types of UDL or equity issues do you need to address in your classroom, both during this pandemic and after?

Online Equity Rubric

Online Equity Rubric
Version 2.0 – May 2019

	Incomplete	Aligned	Additional Exemplary Elements
E1: Technology	Technology needs aren't clear, or issues related to technology access are not addressed.	All technology required for the course is listed and described in the course syllabus; each technology is listed in the learning unit that requires it; and resources for technology help are provided where appropriate.	Offers alternatives for students with technology impediments, and clearly delineates where/how students can get assistance with required course technology.
E2: Student Resources and Support	Information about how students access online student services and support is incomplete.	Syllabus outlines student support & well-being services in, at least, these areas: a) general student assistance, b) online academic supports; c) assistance with using technology; d) health and well-being resources; and/or e) resources for students with disabilities.	In addition to outlining student support resources, there are clear explanations and pathways for online students to access and utilize all needed resources.
E3: Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	Course content and activities are not aligned to UDL principles.	Course content and activities are aligned with core principles of UDL--i.e., multiple means of representation, action & expression, and/or engagement.	Syllabus explains how and why online course content and activities are aligned with specific UDL principles.

BUILDING AND MAINTAINING BELOVED COMMUNITY

Take time to establish norms for being present, mindful, and safe. You may bring a set of norms to students, bring a set that they then expand or provide feedback on, and/or co-create classroom norms.

- Some examples of norms are:
  - Be present. Each class will be packed, so prepare yourself to be engaged throughout.
  - Listen deeply to whomever is speaking in the virtual room.
  - One mic. Try not to interrupt, and if you do, apologize.
  - Make space, take space.
  - Be open to learning. Be comfortable with being uncomfortable.
  - Use personal pronouns and gender-conscious language. One way to support this is through using the "Rename" function to use the name and pronouns that you would like others to use.
  - We start on time and end on time.
  - We expect your full and safe participation in our online sessions. This means being free from any distractions including driving, the consumption of drugs and/or alcohol, and/or multitasking.

BUILDING AND MAINTAINING BELOVED COMMUNITY

- Engage students in a "temperature check" at the beginning of class. You may wish to do this weekly. It is harder to tell how students are doing when you are in a virtual space, so this can help to get a read of the virtual room. It can also help students to feel more comfortable, warming up to speak online. You may get creative and come up with a check-in prompt that both allows students to share how they are and is related to your class content. Some general examples of temperature checks are:
  - A high and a low
  - A rose and a thorn
  - Represent your week in an emoji or hashtag
  - Share how you are doing in the form of a weather pattern or forecast
  - Fist to five (fist being a ranking of zero, up to all five fingers) on how you are doing and explain why
  - What is one joyful practice that is energizing you (as a student or human in the world)?
  - *Perhaps when you first see students online after a school closure:*
    - What is on your mind most in this time?
    - What support do you need, and do you have what you need to get it?
    - What is something or who is someone bringing you joy and hope in this time?
    - Identify a basic human need you have, and how you are already fulfilling it or can fulfill it

BUILDING AND MAINTAINING BELOVED COMMUNITY

- You may also invite announcements or celebrations- these are things students usually share with each other in person as they walk into a classroom, so it can be good to make intentional space for them.

- Just because you are online does not mean you can't do things like mindfulness practices to center the class.

- Take time for students to share appreciations with one another at the end of class, for anything big or small, related to the class or not. Again, this helps in fostering community when you are not in person.

- Ask students to all use the video to help to maintain human connection. In an online environment, we can still connect through body language and eye contact, though limited.

How to Make Your Online Pivot Less Brutal

- It's OK to not know what you're doing. Be-cause, honestly, none of us fully do. When you think about moving your courses online in this particular context, it's easy for your thought process to go straight to "I can't even keep up with email; how the hell am I supposed to teach online now?"

- Keep it as simple, and accessible, as you can. A sudden move from in-person to distance learning is disruptive enough — there's no need to add to it by introducing complicated, unnecessary tools and proce-dures.

- Online doesn't have to mean imperson-al. Most important, remember that teach-ing and learning are inherently social acts, that this is an eminently human enterprise. As Sean Michael Morris, a senior instructor in learning, design, and technology at the University of Colorado at Denver, has said: When it comes to online education, teach through the screen, not to the screen.

- Expect turbulence, change your flight plan accordingly. These are not the circumstanc-es any of us imagined teaching in when the year began, and it's useful to acknowledge that to both yourself and your students. Rec-ognize that it's not a matter of if, but rather when, you will need to rethink things like grading, due dates, assignment design, and class participation. For a lot of us, a re-ex-amination of what we think we mean by "rigor" is also in order.

"You don't have to build a trapdoor for your students to fall through. It's your job to point out there's a hole in the floor."

5 Minute Discussion Question

- How did you do with building community last spring? What will be different with building community this fall?

10 Tips to Support Students in a Stressful Shift to Online Learning

1. Survey students about tools and plat-forms.

2. Co-construct your class : Giving students some control over their learning can help combat feelings of helplessness in the current circumstances, says Jody Greene, associate vice provost for teaching and learning at the University of California at Santa Cruz

10 Tips to Support Students in a Stressful Shift to Online Learning

3. Favor asynchronous approaches: Many colleges that have moved classes online are continuing to hold them at their regularly scheduled times. While that may provide consistency for students, it disadvantages those who have to work, take care of family members, or share a computer. Requiring students to sign on at a particular time can compound the stress of the switch to remote learning.

4. Go low tech and mobile friendly. Be sensitive to students with limited data plans or weak Wi-Fi

10 Tips to Support Students in a Stressful Shift to Online Learning

5. Temper your expectations. That goes for both your students and you. Everyone is dealing with a lot right now.

6. Share your story. Telling students how your life has been disrupted by the coronavirus, and inviting them to do the same, can create a sense of togetherness and community, says Laura Horne, chief program officer for Active Minds, a national organization that supports mental-health awareness and education among students. The message you're sending is: "I don't just care about academics; I'm here for you as an individual," she says.

10 Tips to Support Students in a Stressful Shift to Online Learning

7. Offer support and resources. Many of your students are dealing with depression and anxiety right now. For students with existing mental-health conditions, or housing or food insecurity, those struggles could become acute.

8. Create opportunities for students to process the moment. In William Horne's first-year seminar at Villanova University, the reading assignment for the first class that went online was John Steinbeck's Cannery Row, which features an influenza epidemic.

10 TIPS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS IN A STRESSFUL SHIFT TO ONLINE LEARNING

9. Don't forget about students with dis-abilities. With the shift to online learning, some students will require different accommodations than they had in the face-to-face class; others will need accommodations for the first time.

10. Assign self-care, and model it. Start a lecture with a mindful moment, or share a mediation exercise with your students, suggests Laura Horne, of Active Minds. Task them to do one thing a week to prioritize themselves, and report back what it was

Alana Hendy, a junior at Georgetown U., is now at her family's home, in Bowie, Md. Speaking of her classmates, she says, "a lot of people are anxious because not everyone can afford a flight home or a flight to campus to pick up their stuff."

You don't have to diagnose a mental illness; you just have to recognize that someone is in distress.

How to Help a Student in a Mental-Health Crisis

Step No. 1: Notice. Only about 15 percent of students who have killed themselves on a college campus had any interaction with their institution's counseling service. At the same time, research strongly suggests that those who do attempt or complete suicide are telling people before they do it.

How to Help a Student in a Mental-Health Crisis

Step No. 2: Ask. So once you've noticed their distress, what do you do next? Schreier is adamant on this point: Ask them about it. "Lean in on your students," he said. "Lean in and ask them about themselves. Help them tell their story a little bit."

How to Help a Student in a Mental-Health Crisis

Step No. 3: Refer. Keep a piece of paper in your office with the phone numbers of relevant mental-health and student-services offices on the campus. Bookmark your institution's counseling center. Be ready to point students in the right direction. If necessary, you can even call the counseling service yourself, and hand the phone to the student.

5 Minute Discussion Question

- What skills do you need to work on to support students both inside and outside the classroom?

Resources

- [Coping With Coronavirus- Chronicle Special Edition](#)
- [Teaching Remotely for Accessibility, Equity, and Inclusion](#)
- [Online Equity Rubric](#)
- [Inclusive Teaching and Learning Online- Columbia University](#)
- [About Universal Design for Learning](#)
- [The UDL Guidelines](#)
- [Covid-19 Sent LGBTQ Students Back to Unsupportive Homes. That Raises the Risk They Won't Return.](#)
- [Bridging the Digital Divide: Teaching for Equity and Empathy in the Wake of COVID-19 (Webinar)](#)
- [Inclusive Online Teaching- Appalachian State University](#)