

UC DAVIS

WELCOME TO



Supporting Graduate Student Mental Health

Goals for Today

- To normalize discussing graduate student mental health issues
- To increase your understanding of the scale of this issue
- To help you identify signs and signals that a student may need help
- To increase your familiarity with resources to assist you in helping your student
- Remember – this takes practice, and you will not leave here an expert!

Workshop Agenda

- Welcome
 - JP Delplanque, Dean and Vice Provost, Graduate Studies
 - Phil Kass, Vice Provost, Academic Affairs
- Brief Overview of Data
- Introduction of Resource Experts
- Scenarios and Discussion
- General Q & A
- Resources

Data Overview

The Graduate Student Well-Being Survey

The University of California Graduate Student Well-Being Survey

- Administered by UC Office of the President in Winter/ Spring 2016.
- Surveyed a stratified random sample of over 13,400 students from across all 10 campuses.
- UCOP received 5,356 completed responses, for a response rate of 40%.
- Students were surveyed on the topics of life satisfaction, depression, mentorship and advising, food security, financial confidence, and career prospects.
- At the end of the survey, students were asked to select the top 3 priorities for university attention and resources. Mental health was the overall top choice.

The Graduate Student Well-Being Survey - Depression

- Students were asked to respond to 20 questions to measure their level of depression using the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale Revised (CESD-R).
- 35% of respondents overall reported symptoms indicative of clinical depression. (Some significant differences linked to field, stage of program, LGBTQ.)
- Respondents with elevated scores on depression symptoms scale were less likely to report being on track to complete their degree programs on time or to be engaged by their day-to-day work compared to those without elevated scores on the depression index.
- Students with more severe depression symptoms were less likely than those with milder symptoms to know where to get medical help.

Introductions

Our Resource Experts

Our Resource Experts

Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, Associate Dean, Graduate Studies
Associate Professor, Department of History

Dr. Bai-Yin Chen, Psychologist
Counseling Services/Graduate Studies

Margaret Walter, Executive Director
Student Health and Counseling Services

Our Resource Experts

Lauren Bloom, Director

UC Davis Office of the Ombuds

Dr. Jennifer Chow, Assistant Director of Student Support / Case Manager

Office of Student Support and Judicial Affairs

Richard Grosberg Director, Coastal and Marine Sciences Institute

Distinguished Professor, Department of Evolution and Ecology

Patrick Helbling, Associate Director

Bodega Marine Laboratory

Group Discussion

Scenarios

Scenario 1

You are talking with Zhang, a first-year international graduate student in your program, at a department function. You casually ask how their first year is going and how they like Davis. Zhang tells you things are fine and Davis is nice. As you talk more, Zhang shares they are having trouble with family issues back home but that shouldn't really affect their academics. Zhang says that they have made some friends on campus but they would like more "American" friends. Throughout your conversation Zhang has responded quietly, sometimes looking away. When you ask Zhang if they are aware of resources available on campus, the student nods and says, "Yes."

- What concerns come up for you in this situation?
- How would you respond? With what outcome?

Scenario 2

Jane is a graduate student doing research at an off-site research location. She balances her research with her commitment to maintaining a 4.0 GPA, working 20 hours/week, and spending time with her long-time partner. Jane is cheerful, enthusiastic, and forthcoming. As Jane's major professor, you communicate with her remotely, but don't often meet face-to-face. During a recent visit, Jane shared she recently broke up with her partner and is working with a mental health professional on finding the right combination of medication.

- What concerns come up for you in this situation?
- How would you respond?
- What are some ways in which you can create a supportive environment for this grad students?

Scenario 3

You are concerned about Chen, a graduate student in your lab. Chen is usually very well-organized, focused, and even-tempered. Lately, Chen has been coming late to the lab, appears tired, has poor hygiene, and seems generally irritable and disengaged. You've also observed Chen having arguments with other students in the lab.

- What concerns come up for you?
- How would you approach this situation? What would you do? What would you say?
- How would you support Chen?

Scenario 3b

Before you have a chance to connect with Chen, you're relieved to see that Chen's "issues" seem to have resolved themselves. Chen seems back to being their usual organized and collegial self. All the changes you'd noticed seem to have disappeared, and while you're not sure what happened, you decide to leave things alone and let life in the lab go back to normal.

- What benefits and risks could there be in taking this approach?

Scenario 4

Sam has been enjoying graduate school in many ways, but is surprised at how hard it is. He doesn't sleep enough because he always figures it's worth running one more experiment, reading one more article, doing one more thing. Sam decides he needs to say something to his advisor about how stressed out he is, so he makes a date to have coffee with Professor X. Sam describes how he's been feeling, and asks Prof X for some guidance on how to "do grad school" better. Prof X says, "That's just how it is. When I think back on my grad school experience, I don't remember ever sleeping. I remember reading journal articles all night, grading papers, preparing presentations, checking data *ad infinitum*, and not spending much time with my family. I figured it would all get better once I had my PhD in hand, that this was just part of the process. Relax, Sam. This too shall pass, and life will look a lot brighter as soon as you finish and move on."



Q & A

Resources

- Resource page for you and your students, includes full UCOP Well-Being Report
- Program-specific resources

- Coming soon – helpful language and phrases



Thank you!

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