

Online student wellness: Examples of technology-enhanced activities, programs, and services that can promote wellness

Matthea Marquart, NSWM Policy Fellow, Mentored by Murali Nair



ABSTRACT:

Online students may be at risk of feeling a loss of community or a loss of support around holistic wellness, but there are options for online programs to address this by offering technology-enhanced activities, programs, and services. This poster will describe the wellness needs of online students and examples of wellness-related programs from online higher educational institutions. Members of the field of online social work education in particular have the potential to create supports for online student wellness.

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL



- Online students need equitable access to services that are available to on-campus students
- In addition, online students may benefit from virtual community-building activities such as virtual charity runs, social media campaigns, virtual networking
- Students who are new to online education may need orientation to study skills specific to online coursework or virtual communication

PROGRAM LEVEL



- Schools and programs can livestream on-campus events, including events focused on wellness
- Administrative offices can offer services via phone or webcam
- Field instructors can model and support self-care, e.g. taking lunch, working reasonable hours, managing stress
- Student groups on wellness topics can include online students

CLASSROOM LEVEL



- Instructors can build short wellness activities -- such as deep breathing or stretching -- into class time as warm-ups, transitions, before class, during breaks
- Instructors can discuss the value of self-care for the profession
- When activities may be triggering, instructors can support students from a trauma-informed perspective, e.g. build in breaks, provide guidelines for communicating about non-participation

Acknowledgements:

Columbia University's School of Social Work, the Social Work Distance Education Conference, Amelia Ortega, Karma Lowe, Steven Schinke, Kristin Garay, Rebecca Chung