

Faculty Matter Teaching Tip #25: Starting off on a good foot – building good habits and connections

Welcome to the new school year! By now, your rosters are likely settled, and you and your students are well into the heart of your courses. So *now*, before major assignments are due and before exams loom, is the perfect time to make sure that your students are establishing healthy routines that will enable them to function – and learn and perform – to their capabilities. This will also help ensure that they can maintain their stride as the pace and stress of the semester pick up.

- Check in with your students about their **study habits and time management strategies**. This can be especially helpful for students new to the campus. Dedicate a few minutes of class time to general discussion of these topics. Share your expectations and advice. Consider inviting a **peer mentor** (from [Peer Connections](#)) to give a brief **presentation in your class**. Students will often take their suggestions to heart much more readily than yours, even if they are substantively identical.
- Refer students to the **calendar of workshops** offered through [Peer Connections](#), the [Tutoring Hub](#), and [Educational Counseling](#). Have them check out the [Spartan Success Portal](#) and complete one or two of the online academic success modules.
- Check in with students about their **physical and emotional well-being**. Inform or remind them of the extensive resources available to them, free of charge, through [Counseling and Psychological Services](#), including workshops and individual counseling sessions. Counselors are also happy to make tailored presentations in your classes.
- Build activities into your courses that **help your students get to know at least a few of their classmates**. One of the most common – and in many ways saddest – factors disclosed by students in crisis is that they feel they don't know anyone to talk to at the university. Whether the activities you design are formal group assignments or more casual discussions, they can help students feel a sense of connection and belongingness.
- To the degree that you can, consider **making yourself available to your students**. Circulate throughout the class as they engage in group activities, and take advantage of the opportunity to talk with them as you move around the room; encourage them to come to your office hours – individually, or in pairs if they feel more comfortable bringing along a classmate; consider inviting them to ask you to coffee through the [Coffee with a Professor program](#); sign up to be a **mentor** (you may be matched with a student in your class, or from some other part of the campus – either way, you may help them feel like they have someone they can reach out to).
- And finally, think about the *laminated card in the seat-back pocket of the airplane seat in front of you: If those oxygen masks appear, make sure to secure your own before helping others with theirs*. As you encourage your students to establish these interpersonal connections and good habits, **take a few moments to do the same for yourself**.

You can read all previous tips on the [Faculty Matter Tips](#) page of the CFD website, and share your own thoughts and ideas on the [Provost's Academic Spotlight blog under the category "Faculty Matter"](#).. **Please add your own strategies using the comment link** on the [Provost's Academic Spotlight blog under the category "Faculty Matter"](#).