



Supporting Students as Whole-People Online During a Global Pandemic

Dr. Deeksoon Kim, Dean Stanton Wortham, Katrina Borowiec, Drina Yatsu, and Sam Ha

Introduction

College students report increased stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Healthy Minds Network & American College Health Association, 2020). Many students are taking courses online which can be an isolating experience (McInerney & Roberts, 2004).

Formative Education

Wholeness

Sense of Meaning & Purpose

Community with Others

Faculty need strategies to support students during these challenging times. We adopt ‘formative education,’ an approach to teaching and learning that centers cura personalis or “care of the whole person,” emphasizing holistic development and student well-being (Casalini, 2020).

Research Question & Findings

How can faculty support students as whole-people in an online environment, within the greater context of a global pandemic?

Demonstrate *empathy* for students by centering their complex emotions during this period of crisis.

(e.g., Check-in on students; Be vulnerable with students)

“I have to recognize that everyone is going to have their own journey. And to recognize and validate whatever they share with me, to understand it, empathize with them. And then to say, ‘You know, we can do this together.’”
– STEM Professor

Utilize *reflective* activities that encourage students to draw connections between the material and the world.

(e.g., Incorporate content from current events; Utilize creative writing and journaling)

“A lot of the prophetic literature of the Bible was written during a time of crisis and upheaval, and so [the pandemic experience] became a way, a lens [...] of engaging the course material in a new way.”
– Humanities Professor

Adapt your course to meet students’ needs.

(e.g., Allow students to choose their paper/project topics; Hold office hours at multiple times)

“I gave students the option of asynchronous or synchronous learning. [...] So, I would record my lectures with PowerPoints on Panopto, and post them, but students also had the option of sitting in a live class with me. [...] Some students really needed the structure of knowing they had to be someplace three times a week. Some students, they needed a ton of flexibility because they had other people at home.”
– Humanities Professor

Methodology

Multiple case study (Yin, 2009)

Through purposive sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), identified 37 faculty members who demonstrated successful formative education online amid the global pandemic.

1-hour semi-structured interviews and course artifacts/evaluations

Ethnographic, inductive approach to coding and data analysis (Erickson, 2012; Kelle, 2000)

Cross-case analysis (Miles et al., 2014)

Implications

- Provides suggestions about intentional online design and instruction that enacts formative education.
- As remote learning becomes common, this study can undergird a framework for formative education online.

*References are available upon request.