

WELLNESS CONNECTION

for Faculty



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LETTER TO THE READER

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to offer you our fifth edition Wellness Connection newsletter for Faculty. We have created this publication to keep you up-to-date on health and wellness topics, and to provide information on how to support the well-being of yourself and your students.

Now that we are closer to mid semester, it's important to check in with how we're doing, as we all can start feeling that mid semester burnout and fatigue. If you start feeling this way or notice any changes in your mental health, please know there are resources for you and you don't need to struggle alone.

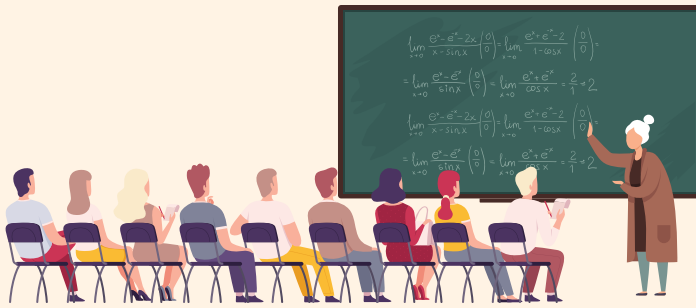
Overall, we want this newsletter to be made by faculty for faculty, covering the information you are interested in. If there are topics you want covered, or you want to contribute to this newsletter, reach out to Laura Woods-Buchanan (laurawoods-buchanan@mst.edu), Marketing Chair of the Health and Well-Being committee to learn more.

We hope you enjoy this publication, and we look forward to sending you the next edition soon.

Warm Regards,

The Health and Well-Being Committee and Student Well-Being

WELLNESS IN THE CLASSROOM



Getting Better as Teachers

Excerpt from L Dee Firk, University of Oklahoma

Originally published in Thriving in Academe

Read the full article [here](#).

In 2004, Ken Bain published the influential book, which offered an in-depth study of more than 60 outstanding teachers from quite varied institutions. His book contains numerous wonderful lessons, but the central theme was that these teachers created “natural critical learning environments.” They challenged students with authentic problems and questions and then supported their efforts to grapple with related ideas, rethink their assumptions, and re-examine their mental models of reality.

The way we do those tasks is influenced by our own views of knowledge, learning, teaching, ourselves as teachers, and our students as learners. Identified here are some lessons from Bain’s book on three of these factors: perspectives, course design, and interactions with students.

ATTITUDES AND PERSPECTIVES

Apart from their actions in relation to specific courses, these teachers had a special set of attitudes or perspectives about teaching and learning that was foundational to the way they taught. Not only did these teachers do the usual work of keeping abreast of changes in their discipline, they spent substantial amounts of time continuously learning new ideas about teaching and the nature of human learning.

In their own thinking and in their communication with others, they never engaged in the all-too-common practice of blaming students. They never made comments like “Today’s students just don’t [fill in your favorite problem] like they did in my days as a student,” or “You just have to force students today to work hard.” Rather, their conversations revealed a mindset that trusted students to be good students. They did not just glance at their end-of-course evaluations and ask: “How’d I do this time?” They examined the evaluations closely to see what students liked and disliked, then they used this information to get even better in their teaching. When students were not learning well, they examined the course, before automatically blaming the students. They did not view their teaching as their private domain—and no one else’s business. Rather, they saw their own teaching as an integral part of what their institution or their discipline was trying to do.

DECISIONS ABOUT COURSE DESIGN

Before the course even began, these teachers undertook a number of specific actions and decisions; many of them identified big questions or big stories that gave meaning to the whole course. One calculus teacher drew an irregular shape and then asked students: “How would you calculate the area under that curve?” A sociology professor posed the question: “How does society influence individual human behavior?”

Getting Better as Teachers (continued)

They used the first day to get the course started in a powerful way. Many used this to get to know their students better, both individually and collectively.

Others used it to pose their big question and start the process of engaging students.

These teachers clearly had moved into learning-centered teaching. They recognized the need to build their course around a set of high-quality learning goals. Many of these goals focused on “thinking” as well as “knowing.” But many also wanted learning that, in terms of Fink’s (2003), went well beyond the categories of cognitive learning. One medical school professor wanted her students to learn how to handle their own emotions, for example.

These teachers had moved well beyond primary reliance on the traditional staples of lectures, homework, and whole-class discussions. They had students engaging in authentic tasks, small group work, finding sources of information, answering those big questions themselves, and reflecting on their own learning.

INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS

Once the course was underway, these teachers communicated and interacted with students in a way that motivated and empowered them to effective learning. They were concerned about students as human beings; they deeply wanted students to learn; the whole teaching-learning process excited them; and they truly believed their subject was the most important and exciting in the world. These passions were made visible to students, not hidden or kept secret.

Bain mentioned three specific actions by teachers that motivated students to work hard on learning: (a) they gave praise in a special way, e.g., using “task” praise rather than “person” praise, (b) they listened carefully to students, and (c) they figured out what motivated different students, and then responded in special ways to each student.

Part of this involved using a sense of drama and rhythm in their dialogue. They also used the language of “promises” [“This is what you will be able to do as a result of this course...”] rather than “demands” [“This is what you must do in this course...”]. In addition, they:

- Invited students into a community of learners about the subject at hand, both past and present.
- Repeatedly expressed their belief that each and every student in the course really could learn this material.
- Celebrated the achievements of students.
- Used the “warm” language of good story telling.

They were sensitive to how they handled the power-trust issue inherent in any hierarchical relationship. They did not use the classroom to demonstrate their power or brilliance, but instead to invest in students, displaying a trust that students were ready to learn.

When possible, they gave students power to make decisions about their own learning.

And finally, they were fair, i.e., they equally applied the same policies for all.



For more articles from Thriving in Academe, visit their [website](#).

WELLNESS OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

Healthy Coping Skills

By Kelly Tate, Associate Teaching Professor

“Come back to the breath,” says Tamara Levitt. Her voice guides listeners through daily meditations on the Calm app., one of my best Covid-era purchases. My mind wants to push back though, to analyze its way through the thoughts that skid through my mind. I sip chamomile tea with lavender.



My mind bounces across lily pads of thoughts: whether I need to wash some masks, what I should add to my grocery order, when to get to unanswered emails. Then my mind circles and lands on the heavier, brick-like thoughts: how to keep my son safe from Covid, news of natural disasters and profound human suffering, worries about my family and friends. I try to come back to the breath; simple doesn't mean easy. For a few minutes, my breath deepens and steadies, and a clearer, sweeter feeling comes over me. I feel kind of good. The thoughts muscle through, but I keep trying to let go, to let them appear and then exit stage left. Sometimes I'll think, I get this now, and other times, I still let the thoughts crowd and push so that at least I see them and don't allow for a surprise attack. I'm told that's not a good approach. I'm trying.

As we enter the third academic year that has been affected by Covid-19 pandemic, I don't know anyone who is not feeling increased stress. We keep going, and to do so, we have to find healthy ways to cope. As we roll along through this terrible pandemic, it can seem that there is no end in sight, and it can be easy to reach for coping mechanisms that are harmful.

In a recent article in *Psychology Today*, Susan Biali Haas, M.D., lists a variety of healthy ways to cope with stress, including:

- “-Do a breathing meditation to induce the “Relaxation Response”
- Go for a brisk walk (or some form of physical activity)
- Process your stress in a journal
- Get counseling help
- Use food as fuel, not as comfort
- Change what you can; let go of what you can't
- Practice gratitude, especially when stressed”

Whatever the source of the stress, finding the healthy coping skills is important. The CDC also says to, “take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories [and] connect with others.” What strikes me is that it seems that we need to actively choose to develop these skills. They often won't be the easiest choices, but the payoff can be significant. I like to give myself an assignment, right on my to-do list, so that I'll follow through. My list might look like this: Take one week off from reading the news, exercise for 30 minutes, call my sister instead of just texting, watch a TV show that makes me laugh out loud, read a chapter book with my son while enjoying some popcorn. I need the assignments to remember that these acts are just as important as anything else that I do.

But no matter what I'm doing, whether I'm working on a healthy coping skill or whether I'm lily pad leaping from stressful thought to stressful thought, I can always come back to the breath. It is always there, always accessible, and always helpful. Awareness of breath, alone, will not solve everything or replace other coping skills, but for me, it's an important tool, one that I will probably never fully master, but that's ok. That way, I get to keep relearning and seeing again and again, that incredible feeling that I have more power to create peace than it sometimes seems. I fill my tea kettle, I inhale, and I try.

WELLNESS OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

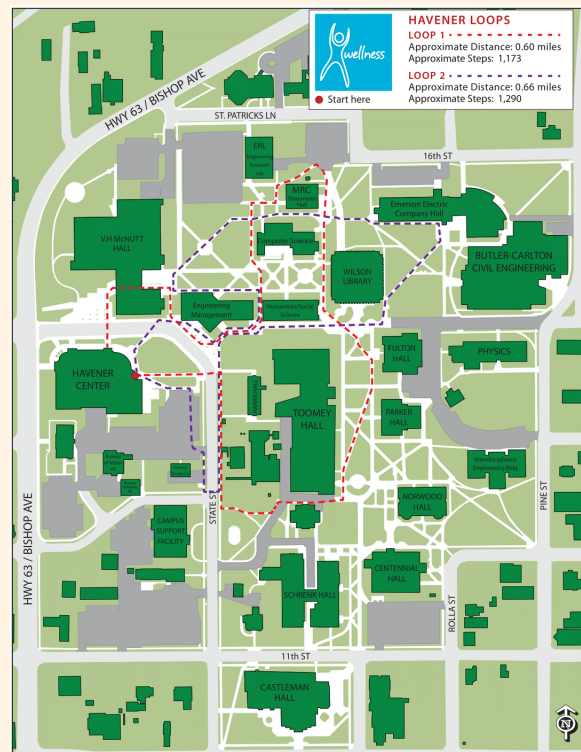
Walk Your Way to Wellness

by Laura Woods-Buchanan, Health Communications Specialist, Student Well-Being

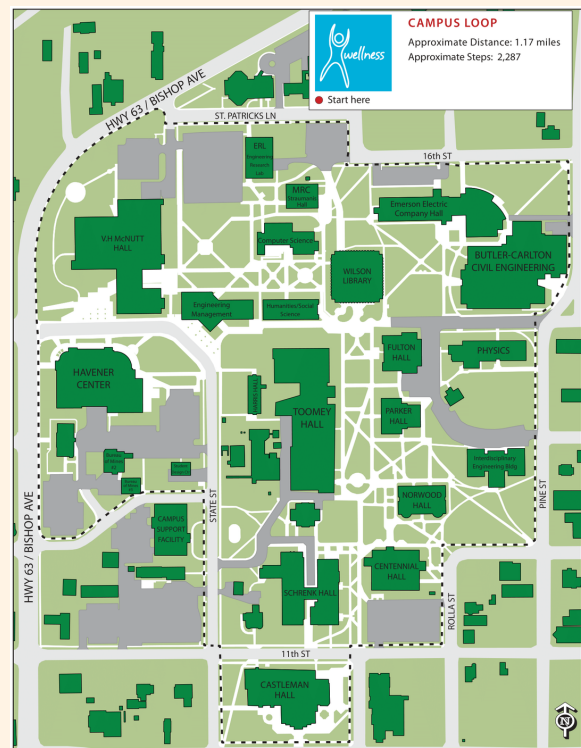
Staying active throughout the week can be difficult, as most likely we spend most of our time at work where we are staying inside one office or building all day. This is especially true when we're busy and feel like there's no time on the schedule for anything but the essentials. When we do have that time though, it's important to use it in a way that's healthy, energizing, and motivating for the rest of our day.

A great and easy way to stay active in your work week is to incorporate more walking, even for short distances. My Total Rewards, through UMSys, has S&T campus maps with walking paths and their distances, starting and ending at various locations on campus. The longest route is a little over one mile, so the distances are short enough to do during a lunch or break, before or after classes, or taking a longer route from one building to another.

Some of the walking paths are featured to the right; you can also find them [here](#) on the Total Rewards website. The website also features a link to find Rolla area walking and hiking trails.



Havener Loops



Campus Loop

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT



Dr. Merilee Krueger **Teaching Professor,** **Psychological Science**

from Dr. Amber Henslee, Associate Professor

What classes do you teach?

I teach undergraduate courses in General Psychology, Psychology of the Exceptional Child, Developmental Psychology, Cross-Cultural Psychology, Psychological & Educational Development of the Adolescent, Educational Psychology, and a graduate course in Leadership, Motivation, and Culture.

Where did you attend school?

I obtained my bachelor's degree in Psychology from Creighton University and my Master's in Developmental and Cognitive Psychology from University of Nebraska. Recently, I finished my doctoral degree in Educational Leadership from University of Missouri-Columbia.

What made you choose this career path?

Like many students when I was in college, I wasn't certain what I wanted to do but I was required to take a psychology course, and I loved it. Afterwards, I took a developmental psychology course and loved that specific discipline even more so. The campus also had a childcare center where students interned, and I enjoyed that too. When I went to graduate school, I got to teach and I fell in love with it. I knew that this is what I wanted to do.

What are some of your hobbies?

I most enjoy spending time with my family – my husband, Jon, our sons, Nicholas and Sam, and our black lab, Murphy. I also love to read and to go boating.

How do you manage a work/life balance?

It's easier now that my children are grown and not at home, but I find just like with anything, when you teach you can work 24 hours a day. So, I have to be careful that I schedule my worktime inside the workday, so I can make time to be with my family.

Provide an example of how you incorporate well-being in the classroom.

Teaching psychology courses, I think it's rather easy, but I do try to encourage well-being in just about everything I teach. For example, I have students complete an undergraduate student stress scale to evaluate their stress level and then we talk about healthy coping mechanisms. So, it's not just having the students identify "yes, I'm stressed" but also what they can do about it, how to understand their stressors, and how they can deal with them.

FEATURED RESOURCES



Collegiate Recovery. Ally Training

The Missouri Alliance of Collegiate Recovery Organizations (MACRO) Recovery Ally Training Program was designed to help faculty, staff, and students support individuals in recovery from substance use disorders.

The training covers:

1. Substance use disorders and recovery
2. Myths and stigma about substance use disorders
3. Using person first, recovery friendly language
4. How to support someone seeking, or already in, recovery

The training takes about 30 minutes to complete. It is intended to be educational and should be completed in one sitting. Logging in and out of the program may cancel your progress and prevent you from obtaining your certificate of completion.

[Click here](#) to learn more!

Ask.Listen.Refer.

The Missouri S&T Ask.Listen.Refer Suicide Prevention Training Program was designed to help faculty, staff, and students prevent suicide by teaching you to:

- identify people at risk for suicide
- recognize the risk factors, protective factors, and warning signs of suicide
- respond to and get help for people at risk

The training takes about 20 minutes to complete. It is intended to be educational rather than therapeutic, and it must be completed in one sitting. Logging in and out of the program may cancel your progress and prevent you from obtaining your certificate of completion.

[Click here](#) to take the training. We all play a vital role in helping prevent suicide!



FEATURED RESOURCES (CONTINUED)



Libby.

Libby

All over the world, local libraries offer millions of ebooks and audiobooks. You can borrow them — for free, instantly — with a library card and Libby: the award-winning, much-loved app for libraries.

Libby allows you to connect your library cards to access e-books, audiobooks, and other digital content for free. Just connect your card(s), search for the book you want in any/all your connected libraries, borrow, and you're set to enjoy your next read.

You can use Libby through the app or through the web browser. You can listen to audiobooks or read ebooks right in the Libby app or browser, or connect to your ereader (Kindle, Nook, etc), tablet, any ereader app (Kindle app, etc), or wifi-compatible device.

Download the app and learn more at overdrive.com/apps/libby.

Employee Assistance Program

Missouri S&T's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), provided by ComPsych, is a fully confidential and professional service provided to all employees, their families, and retirees. The EAP provides a variety of services to help employees influenced by a range of personal concerns or stressors. The service is free and available 24/7.

The EAP can be a resource for the following concerns:

- Stress Management
- Emotional Distress
- Family Concerns
- Work / Life Balance
- Alcoholism
- Substance Abuse
- Financial Pressure
- Relationship Difficulty
- Legal Problems
- Phase of Life – Transition Management
- Change management

When you call, you will speak to a Guidance Consultant who will answer any questions and can refer you to a counselor or other resources. Call 833.515.0754 (TTY 800.697.0353) to access. Learn more at umsystem.edu/totalrewards/benefits/eap.



CAFE TIP OF THE MONTH Mid-Semester Feedback

From CAFE, Center for Advancing Faculty Excellence

Educational research suggests that mid-semester feedback sessions can lead to better instructor evaluations at the end of the semester. Seeking student input shows students that you are engaged and care. Mid-semester feedback can lead to more engaged students, allow for course correction as needed, and can improve the student learning experience for the remainder of the semester.

Mid-semester feedback surveys allow instructors to ask a wide range of questions. For convenience, the Center for Advancing Faculty Excellence has compiled a list of required questions that are asked of all participants. Instructors are also welcome to add additional questions that relate directly your course.

To incorporate mid-semester feedback in your classroom, [sign up for a session with CAFE here](#). You'll select your survey questions, receive a survey from CAFE, and send that survey link to your students. After the survey period ends, CAFE will compile the results and send them to you. From there, you are able to schedule a consultation to discuss the results if desired.

Learn more about mid-semester feedback on CAFE's [website](#), or contact CAFE at cafe@mst.edu or 573.341.6713.

GET IN TOUCH



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UPCOMING EVENTS

All October: [Take this poll](#) to help guide campus health promotion initiatives.

October 12th: Faculty professional development event "Promoting Academic Integrity through High Impact Classroom Practices and Course Design" hosted by CAFE. There will be discussion, time for questions, and a drawing for copies of James Lang's book [Cheating Lessons: Learning From Academic Dishonesty](#). [Sign up here](#) to to get the Zoom link.

October 25th: [Enrollment](#) begins for 2022 insurance elections