

Teaching and Learning @ RBC

Pedagogical Tips, Tricks, and Lessons Learned -
A Newsletter by Faculty for Faculty



WHAT'S NEW

*GATHERING STUDENTS
FOR FUN LEARNING
ADVENTURES*

*HARVESTING FACULTY
EXPERIENCES FROM AN
ENDEMIC PANDEMIC*

*CULTIVATING POSITIVE
MENTAL HEALTH FOR
FACULTY*

Welcome to Teaching and Learning at RBC

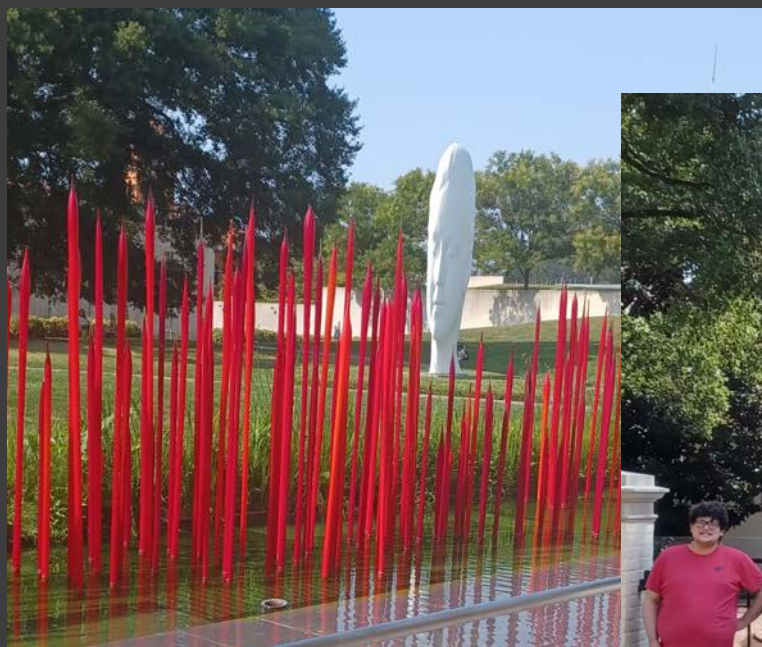
In honor of the changing seasons and chillier weather, this month's theme is Autumn and harvests. As promised in the professional development workshop from August, Profs. Dan Franke and Jena Zarling present the summary of discussion from the workshop breakout groups. There is also some information on resources for mental health for faculty provided by Prof. Evanda Watts-Martinez. And, there is an article showcasing student experiences from a field trip to the Virginia State Capitol and VMFA. Thank you to all of our contributors for this month's content!

Do you have something you'd like to share? What about something that you'd like to learn more about? Just email Jena Zarling at jzarling@rbc.edu!

Gathering Students for Fun Learning Adventures

By Jamia C. Hines

The Honors and Promise Scholar students enjoyed their first field trip of the semester to the Virginia State Capitol and Virginia Museum of Fine Arts organized by the Honors and Promise Scholar Coordinator, Jamia Hines. Associate Director of Government Relations, Terelle Robinson, also joined the group and helped to navigate through the capitol and city of Richmond. The students had the opportunity to explore some of Virginia's richest history through art and verbal narratives from great historians within our Commonwealth. At the capitol, students asked questions regarding political conflicts, slavery and the values and/or beliefs of presidents such as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and George Washington. The tour guide stated that he was impressed with how inquisitive and knowledgeable the students were and commended Richard Bland College for allowing him to cater to such a dynamic group of individuals. Students also visited the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts where they previewed over 35,000 works of art spanning over 5,000 years of world history.



Harvesting Faculty Experiences From an Endemic Pandemic

By Dan Franke and Jena D. Zarling

The "Workshop on Engagement, Standards, and Responsibility: A Discussion and Workshop on Working with Students in an Endemic Pandemic" was held during professional development week for the Fall 2022 semester. As promised to those who attended the breakout sessions, we wanted to share the overall takeaways, suggestions, and concerns that were brought up during the workshop. The workshop was held as a continued discussion from the SCHEV July Workshop on Working with Students that Prof. Franke attended. Three articles were also sent around to faculty to read prior to the workshop on August 25th along with a list of prompts (see below) to help start discussions.

What problems and experiences do you have [as faculty or in working with students]?

- Developmental challenges: Students in general are underprepared for college life thanks to remote learning during the pandemic, the cultural value of "participation trophies", the push to accept work at any point in k-12 due to funding ties to student success rates, and a lack of development of social skills needed for college and workplace success.
- Resilience and persistence: Students seem to lack a sense of urgency regarding activities and deadlines. Students also lack the ability to persevere through setbacks and knowledge of how to incorporate feedback into continuous improvement. Is this a misconception about expectations or a cultural difference between high school and college?
- Fairness: What constitutes fairness? As discussed in the article "The Redefinition of Rigor" by Supiano (2022), academic rigor is important and different from logistical rigor. While the focus is always on academic rigor, logistical rigor has been lessened during the pandemic as faculty work with students and focus more on compassion. Where is the balance between compassion, preparing students with the professional "soft" skills needed for the workplace, and faculty risk of burnout?
- Institutional culture: Too much focus is put on college as a business rather than as an academic institution. Where is the balance between being an institution of learning and citizen development and corporate success?
- Student-Society balance. What do we want our students to be like when they leave? What do we want to give [have given] them when they leave?



Harvesting Faculty Experiences From an Endemic Pandemic (Con't)



Whom does this problem or experience affect the most?

- Middle College students
- Younger students, particularly those who may be first-generation college students
- Student athletes who are juggling multiple demands on their time and are taking classes in the Summer prior to their entry Fall semester to lighten their Fall courseloads
- Students who are primary caretakers for children, parents, or other individuals and must balance work, school, and caretaking
- Faculty, as we support all students during a period of rapid change and are asked to juggle this with our own health and welfare in an endemic pandemic

What are some ways these could be addressed?

- Accepting late work with penalties. Canvas will allow you to set assignments up to automatically deduct points by submission date.
- Incorporate a professionalism rubric or policy into your class. Prof. Zarling has a sample of this she is happy to share.
- Set up modules with set open and close dates in Canvas. Use Canvas to set course deadlines.
- Focus on the overall goals of the course and discipline rather than strict deadlines.
- Utilize low stakes assignments that have frequent deadlines, beginning from day 1 of the class.
- Tell students what timeline to expect for email responses (ie. Not available Saturday or Sunday, all email will be replied to on Monday.)
- Set up a social network within the class itself, having students trade contact information with a classmate during week 1, or utilize an activity like Prof. Majewski's "selfie" exercise.
- Let them fail – "burn to learn". Learning that actions have consequences now in a class or on a particular assignment is better and lower stakes than learning this in the workplace or at their 4-year transfer institution where they may not have the support they need to learn how to work through challenges.

Harvesting Faculty Experiences From an Endemic Pandemic (Con't)

What are some ways these could be addressed? (Continued)

- Setting workplace boundaries and prioritizing self-care. Taking care of faculty means that students are better cared for. The article by Klusmann et al. (2022) demonstrated that teacher burnout is correlated with less emotional support, less classroom organization, and student academic achievement. Specifically, teacher emotional exhaustion is negatively correlated with students' self-concept, interest, and achievement (Klusmann et al., 2022).
- Think about how we present ourselves as a model to our students both within and outside of the classroom. What do I need to model? What do we model?
Be the student who I trust
Clarity and Transparency; Respect
Consequences?
- Learner Mentors are key to student success. They provide resources, advising, and helpful advice to students. Make use of DropOut Detective and cultivate relationships between the students and the LM's and the LM's and faculty.
- Revise student onboarding process to better prepare students for the transition from high school to college and perseverance through the program.
- View rigor as a function of care. Manage expectations for students including what they can expect from us and what we expect from them. What is the causing discomfort and how do you learn to tolerate the discomfort? Put emphasis on an introduction to syllabus and the use of intro videos. It is a very difficult balance between "rigor" and the "soft bigotry of low expectations."

What solutions do you think would work for you?

Every faculty member must determine this for themselves based on their needs, the needs of their students, and their courses.



Harvesting Faculty Experiences From an Endemic Pandemic (Con't)

Next Steps?

- Provide faculty with resources to help them manage their mental health. Some suggestions included: information on Protocall+, use of the RBC gym, treadmill desks, gym or workout streaming memberships, allowing pets at work, faculty lunches where food and a space to build community is provided, access to student workers or teaching assistants, or a faculty wellness day. Some of this information is already available via the human resources page for all Virginia employees but is not well advertised to faculty.
(<https://www.dhrm.virginia.gov/employee discounts>)
- Find ways to enable students to be more autonomous and independent. This includes teaching them to ask for help, empowering them to know why they make the decisions they do, teach them about screentime impacts, and helping them learn to be inquisitive and self-sufficient. This is something that needs to happen both within the classroom and outside of it. "It takes a village...."
- Explore the possibility of pioneering an Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) in Virginia. This is a counseling and student support program designed to help underprepared students acclimate to the college environment and build cultural capital to help them be successful as college students. This could include training and support before the start of their 1st year over a period of 2 weeks, a kind of "boot camp". With a full program it's not uncommon to have a director, an assistant, and 4 support staff. We could use positive take-aways from existing LSL and ESE programs at RBC. Would additional funding be needed from the State Assembly? Sample program overview: <https://blog.prepscholar.com/what-is-eop>. There are numerous institutional pages for many individual EOP programs that could be reviewed and used to model what is successful at other institutions.
- Continue these discussions. Several faculty members indicated an interest in continuing to discuss these issues. Discussions could be held in department or Faculty Assembly meetings. However, it would be just as useful for faculty to have informal workshops and meetings where they could exchange frustrations, successes, and tips with one another (ie. Brown bag lunches, etc.). This would not only allow for the sharing of pedagogical techniques and ideas, but it would also help to build more social cohesion and a sense of community between faculty that are otherwise separated by buildings.

References:

Klusmann, U., Aldrup, K., Roloff, J., Lüdtke, O., & Hamre, B. K. (2022). Does instructional quality mediate the link between teachers' emotional exhaustion and student outcomes? A large-scale study using teacher and student reports. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 114(6), 1442–1460.

Supiano, B. (2022, July 29). The redefinition of Rigor. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.



Cultivating Positive Mental Health For Faculty

By Evanda Watts-Martinez

Faculty Mental Health: Who Cares for the Professors?

A transformative faculty development experience kicked off Richard Bland College's fall 2022 semester for professors who explored innovative curriculum designs and critical thinking approaches that supported the academic flourishing of their students. Capping off the week was Dr. Jena Zarling and Dr. Dan Franke's workshop on faculty support for students in an endemic pandemic. This session not only considered the challenges of COVID-19 and its residual effects on learning and instruction, but also its impact on students' mental health. Evolving from the faculty participants' reflections on potential remedies for learning gaps were discussions on the fusion of support strategies with academic instruction. Also advanced were possible solutions for addressing students' learning loss through reimagined academic approaches that respond to the needs of students who were thrust in uncharted waters amid unprecedented educational disruptions. A subsequent dialogue around teaching and learning shifts prompted an observation of the impact of the significant educational modifications on the mental health of students and those who teach them.

Who Helps the Faculty?

The intrinsic rewards of caring for students are known at Richard Bland College. Indeed, the majority of professors at RBC could attest to the ways in which their students have relied on them for mental health support and accommodations—despite the longstanding notion that professors are not responsible for preserving students' mental health (Flaherty, 2021; Riba, et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the enthusiastic mentoring of high-need students has occurred at RBC long

before the pandemic. With intrinsic rewards notwithstanding, professors nationwide remain curious about who takes care of faculty that care for the students. This concern is legitimized in studies that show one in five faculty reporting students' distress taking a toll on their psychological wellbeing (Lipson, et al., 2021) and research findings that call for the prioritization of professors' mental health (McKoy-Boston, 2021).



Cultivating Positive Mental Health For Faculty (Con't)

Faculty Support at RBC

As the answer to the question regarding the mental health support for faculty remains elusive among colleges across the nation, Richard Bland College has become attuned to faculty burnout and has supported faculty through the Commonwealth's offerings of mental healthcare through the Department of Human Resources Management's [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#). Moreover, the campus' Counseling Services Office provides confidential assistance to full and part-time faculty through its individual and group support sessions. The expanded mental health services that is provided by [ProtoCall Plus](#)—its 24/7 Mental Health Support Line, and [WellTrack Interactive Self-Help Therapy](#) are available for the campus community. Counseling Services is focusing on future initiatives and developing action plans for supporting faculty whose ideas regarding ways to best assist them are welcomed.



References:

Flaherty, C. (2021). [Faculty: Gatekeepers of student mental health? \(insidehighered.com\)](#)

Lipson, S.K., Talaski, A., & Cesare, N., (2021). [The-Role-of-Faculty-in-Student-Mental-Health.pdf \(marychristieinstitute.org\)](#)

McKoy-Boston, J. (2021, April 16). [Faculty aid students with mental health but lack training - Futurity](#)

Riba, M.B., Malani, P.N., Ernst, R.D., & Parikh, S.V. (2022, March 18) [Mental health on college campuses: Supporting faculty and staff](#). Psychiatric Times.

Library Lounge

- **Printing and Scanning** - Students are given 75 free prints per semester. Once the 75 free prints are used, they are charged ten cents per page. The copier also allows you to scan documents or photos.
- **Interlibrary Loan** - If you are a student, faculty, or staff member, and the RBC Library does not have a copy of the book or article you need, we can request it through Interlibrary Loan. We request items from colleges and universities all over the state of Virginia!

Ask a Librarian

- **Email us** – We will respond to you within 48 hours, excluding weekends, holidays, or special closings.
- **Phone us** – We are available to answer your questions any time our library is open. Call (804) 862-6226
- **Schedule a meeting with us** – We are available throughout the week to help with research, citations, digital projects, and more.

Reminders

- Registration for Spring 2023 and the 2022 Winter Intersession is now open.
- A small number of Late Start classes are being offered this semester. The schedule for these is October 31-December 16. Interested students can register for these classes now.
- Fall Break is October 15-18th.
- November 1 - Graduation applications for students graduating this semester are due.

