

Strategies and Resources for Dealing with Student Disengagement

This document provides a summary of information shared at the RCHSS “Strategies for Dealing with Student Disengagement” panel discussion (April 13, 2023), as well as additional resources.

Panelist Perspectives

Students

- Students may find talking to instructors intimidating.
- Students may need practice with conversational skills.
- First-year students need help understanding differences between high school and college (expectations, workload, etc.).
- Students may need help with study skills, time management, and identifying elements of “the hidden curriculum.”
- Students appreciate responsiveness.
- Students need to set goals and understand why they are here. “
- Students may benefit from having multiple/alternative ways of contributing to a course.

Faculty

- Recognize that you can’t reach everyone.
- Inattention is the default; engaging students’ attention takes effort and time.
- Offer choice and flexibility. Choice may help students identify meaningful connections between course content and their interests and experiences.

- Whether teaching online or face-to-face, emphasize listening and community building.
- Connection makes a difference:
 - Demonstrate care by communicating frequently with students and making time to connect through casual conversations.
 - Mention available resources and activities and encourage students to connect by participating in campus life.
 - Have students work together in pairs or groups.
 - In online courses, be clear about how students are expected to engage with peers and the instructor and use discussion boards and other tools to encourage conversation.
- Reach out to struggling students early and, if necessary, to their advisors or for students in crisis, to the Behavioral Response Team.
- Emphasize the meaning and purpose of tasks: Explain how what we ask students to do helps them work toward their goals.
- Build student capacity for success by encouraging metacognition and reflection. Have students evaluate their strengths and weaknesses as learners.
- Scaffold assignments and break major projects up into smaller “checkpoint” tasks so progress can be tracked, and roadblocks can be identified and addressed.
- Consider encouraging students to work ahead by setting up automatic reminders, offering extra credit for work submitted before a deadline, or offering feedback on student work submitted early.
- Help students understand expectations by providing examples of successful projects from previous semesters (with permission).
- Make course materials accessible and when possible, offer support like lecture outlines students can fill in or links to supplemental resources, such as video demonstrations or checklists.
- When the entire class seems to be struggling or when nothing else seems to be working, pause the focus on content to listen first, regroup, and come to a mutual understanding of where you’re headed.
- Consider offering review or tutoring sessions, especially if students aren’t taking advantage of drop-in office hours.

Administrators

- Recognize that faculty members’ student success efforts represent a substantial time investment.
- Acknowledge faculty efforts and provide opportunities for them to share their work.
- Understand that faculty may also experience disengagement and need support.
- Consider increasing the availability of resources, such as GTAs, supplemental instruction leaders, course reassignments for major pedagogical projects/SoTL, and incentives for peer review systems.

Resources

Campus Resources

- [Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning](#) – CETL’s faculty development offerings include webinars, workshops, book discussions, and mutual mentoring groups.
- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) – In addition to clinical services, CPS offers student success services, including wellness coaching, self-help resources, and [workshops](#) on study skills, stress management, and topics like procrastination, test anxiety, and time management. For faculty, CPS offers [Question Persuade Refer Suicide Prevention and Mental Health First Aid trainings](#).
- [Behavioral Response Team](#) – The BRT provides a coordinated resource to report individuals exhibiting distress or concerning behaviors. Concerns about a student’s health, welfare, unusual behavior, or well-being should be reported to the Behavioral Response Team using the [Red Flag Report](#). See the [BRT Guide](#) for more information.
- Department of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity – [“What do I do about a disruptive student in the classroom?”](#)

Recommended Books

- Cathy N. Davidson and Christina Katopodis, *The New College Classroom* (2022)
- Peter Felten and Leo M. Lambert, *Relationship-Rich Education: How Human Connections Drive Success in College* (2020)
- Rebecca A. Glazier, *Connecting in the Online Classroom: Building Rapport Between Teachers and Students* (2021)
- James M. Lang, *Distracted: Why Students Can’t Focus and What You Can Do About It* (2020)
- Sandra Yancy McGuire, *Teach Students How to Learn: Strategies You Can Incorporate into Any Course to Improve Student Metacognition, Study Skills, and Motivation* (2015)

Technology Resources

- [D2L Intelligent Agents](#) – This tool allows faculty to schedule emails to be automatically sent to students who meet certain criteria, such as reminder emails to students who have not posted to a discussion by a certain date or praise emails to students who earned a certain score on an assignment.

Created and shared by Jen Willard, Associate Chair and Professor, Department of Psychological Science:

Credit Hours, Instructional Time, & Out-of-Class Time

[KSU policy](#) on credit hours: “KSU’s policy defines a credit hour as one hour (50 minutes) of classroom or direct faculty instruction and one hour and 40 minutes of out-of-class student work each week for 15 weeks in a semester [4]. This equates to a minimum of 750 minutes of class and 1,500 minutes of out-of-class academic engagement per semester credit hour. An equivalent amount of work is required in educational activities that are out of the classroom or do not include direct faculty instruction and equates to a minimum of three hours of student engagement per week, per semester credit hour or a minimum of 2,250 minutes. These equivalencies are provided for use in online and hybrid courses. This policy is published in the academic policies section of the undergraduate and graduate catalogs and covers all courses regardless of type of course, term length, or delivery mode.”

Thus, for a typical 3 credit hour class, there needs to be 2250 minutes (37 hrs & 30mins) of instructional time and 4500 minutes (75 hrs) of out-of-class time.

Terms	Minutes per Week for a 3-Credit Hour Course			Hours per Week for a 3-Credit Hour Course		
	Instructional Time	Out-of-Class Time	Total	Instructional Time	Out-of-Class Time	Total
15-weeks	150 mins	300 mins	450 mins	2 hrs & 30 mins	5 hrs	7 hrs & 30 mins
8-weeks	281 mins	563 mins	844 mins	4 hrs & 41 mins	9 hrs & 23 mins	14 hrs & 14 mins
7-weeks	321 mins	643 mins	964 mins	5 hrs & 21 mins	10 hrs & 43 mins	16 hrs & 4 mins
4-weeks	563 mins	1125 mins	1688 mins	9 hrs & 23 mins	18 hrs & 45 mins	28 hrs & 8 mins
2-weeks	1125 mins	2250 mins	3375 mins	18 hrs & 45 mins	37 hrs & 30 mins	56 hrs & 15 mins