



Academic Poster: Pedagogical Wellness Narratives Among Instructors at UCI

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Pedagogical wellness is the practice of integrating evidence-based teaching and wellness strategies into the educational space to promote both student and instructor well-being and success in the classroom. Pedagogical wellness fosters space for humanizing teachers and students while also extending mutual care, compassion, and respect for each other.

INTRODUCTION

- At UCI, nearly 80% of graduate and 70% of undergraduate students report facing moderate to severe psychological distress (American College Health Assessment, 2023).
- 71% of UCI faculty felt the pandemic had negative impacts on their sense of connection to the campus and ~35% are considering leaving their faculty job (Faculty Instruction Survey, 2021).
- 21% of faculty recognize that supporting students struggling mentally or emotionally has affected their own mental health and nearly 50% faculty believes the institution should provide more resources to combat this issue.
- The purpose of this study was to collect narratives of instructor’s pedagogical wellness practices and uncover resources needed to better support instructors and students.

MATERIALS & METHODS

We conducted semi-structured interviews with instructors at UCI utilizing the narrative engagement framework to assess the follow research questions:

- How do instructors define pedagogical wellness?
- What strategies do instructors implement in their classes?
- What resources do instructors need to support pedagogical wellness?

Interviews were conducted via Zoom for approximately 60 minutes and audio recorded. Interviews were then transcribed verbatim and reviewed by 3 coders for emergent patterns. The process included data immersion, primary cycle, secondary cycle, and then coded for themes.

RESULTS

Flexibility Narratives (student wellness)

“We loosened things really just slightly by saying, ‘You can have extensions on your practicum hours, and if you’d let us know that something is actually happening in advance, we’ll give extensions.’ The result was that one or two people fail a quarter, and it’s usually something is really wrong rather than something structurally.”

- Participant #7

Boundary Narratives (faculty wellness)

“If you’re thinking about compassion in a particular kind of way, a lot of the training that I’ve done, just as a teacher of mindfulness has also shown me that I don’t have to fix people. And I think that that’s not my job. My job is to be a listener and a teacher...”

- Participant #2

Instructor Identity/ Values Narratives

“Wow! I’m a woman engineering, but then also this idea of being an engineer is just one part of my identity, and really sharing that with students and being able to show them that being a caring, engineering instructor or being somebody that really thinks about society and all these things are part of what I’m educating them on in addition to being a really good problem solver or equation solver.”

- Participant #1

Instructor-Student Relationship Building Narratives

“Pedagogical wellness in my practices of being a faculty member of students is that element of seeing as them as a whole person versus just seeing them as an object of education or service.”

- Participant #5

Resources Needed

- Social support from other faculty
- Accountability for/and incentivized teaching quality
- More accessible training and office hours from DTEI
- Templates/structured guidelines for course design
- University culture of well-being

DEMOGRAPHICS

Instructor Position at UCI

Graduate Student
30.8%

Unit-18 Lecturer
7.7%

Research Faculty
7.7%

Teaching Faculty
53.8%

- Gender instructors identified with:
 - Female - 7
 - Male - 5
 - Non-binary - 1
- Race/ethnicity instructors identified with:
 - Asian - 4
 - Hispanic/Latinx - 1
 - White - 8

DISCUSSION / FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Faculty are already engaging in varying degrees of pedagogical wellness, but there are structures that need improvement to shift towards a collective culture of well being. Teaching quality should be prioritized at all levels of instruction and faculty rank. Professors and TAs need to be better equipped with resources and time to invest in pedagogical development, which would contribute to instructors’ pedagogical wellness.
- The research is ongoing, so new themes will be added over time since we have not reached data saturation. There are also limitations to this research because the faculty who are not as interested in wellness practices may not be captured in this study. Findings from this study will be used to implement additional resources and strategies needed for instructors to help their students holistically.