



Office of Equity and Inclusion Newsletter

May 5, 2020



A Message from Keith Johnson, Vice President of Equity and Inclusion

"The playing field is still not level."

By now many of you may have experienced and others have read numerous articles about how teaching and learning via "Zoom" has become exhausting. In other words, you may have experienced "zoom fatigue". Students and faculty both may be suffering from this same problem.

Due to COVID 19, transitioning our campus environment from a "face to face" interactive setting, including migrating our classroom setting to an on-line setting was no easy feat for anyone. However, there are many side effects of this new learning environment for many that may have a negative lasting impact.

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This month's message will focus on a student who has been negatively impacted by such transition and I would like to share her story.

To avoid identifying the student, I will not reference them by name. She is a junior and is from Nashville, TN. She chose East Tennessee State University for the reputation of the major she selected, and the fact it was an on-ground program with small class sizes. She was persisting towards her degree when she learned that the university was transitioning from the traditional classroom setting to remote learning. She recognized this as a bad thing for her.

Initially Leaving Campus

"It was a Thursday when they sent the emails out, and I was at work on campus. As someone who plans her days out, I found out I had to be moved out of my dorm less than 24 hours before the doors locked, which was the following Friday, a packed day for me. At the time, I didn't have a car and had to make quick

~Continued on page 2 ~



The eye sees only what the mind is
prepared to comprehend.
~Robertson Davies ~

Inside this issue

Message from	1-3
E & I Conference.....	4
Upcoming Events.....	5
Free Webinars	5
Advisory Council.....	6

Continued - "The playing field is still not level."

arrangements to figure out how to get back home to Nashville, TN. With the little time I had on Friday, I quickly packed as much of my dorm as possible and bounced around different homes until I was able to get back to Nashville."

Being at Home

"Immediately switching to online after spring break was difficult for me, especially with so many assignments due. Since I am studying a major that [highly technical in nature], it's important that I have all the programs I need to complete my work. There have definitely been some technological issues, especially in the beginning when I had projects due right after spring break, but didn't have the proper software to complete it.

Furthermore, when I was able to get the software I needed, my computer started to struggle. We use [specific software] to complete our work, and there were times when I needed to use Zoom and that [software] at the same time, which I can't do because using both programs at the same time causes my computer to glitch and shut down. Anything that isn't saved is lost. Also, I've been having issues with my computer randomly disconnecting with my home's internet. I've been working with my family to figure out the problem, but situations like this get in the way of completing online school or logging into class.

Speaking of family, that's another thing that's been difficult. I love my family with my entire being, but when you're back home, you have home-life responsibilities that also have to be taken care of. Being at home with family is ultimately a distraction. I live in a semi-small house, and no matter where I go, I can hear everyone's conversations. My house is placed in an interesting area in Nashville, where we're right beside the entrance to our neighborhood, which is a main road that leads to company businesses. It's hard to explain, but with school being out for everyone in grades K-12, the high school drag racers we have, have been out a lot more. Whether the windows to my house are open or closed, you can hear them, and it has messed up some of my presentations. A couple of my teachers require that our microphones are on, but when my mic is on, all you hear are the annoying drag racers.

Furthermore, online university has really messed with my health. Physically, my eyes hurt all the time, and I frequent headaches. With my major, I already have to look at a screen a lot to use the software. However, when I was at school, I could turn around and look at the board because I was in a physical classroom or I could walk to the Culp and grab a bite to eat. Now, all of my work is being done online, and since classes are taught through Zoom, I look at screens a lot more than I normally would. I have a strong blue light prescription on my prescription glasses, and it's gotten to the point where those don't help my eyes anymore. As a solution, I'll take "no screen" days, where I spend most of my day reading or writing and not looking at screen, including my phone screen. However, on those days, I feel guilty because I'm essentially falling behind on work, especially with the end of the semester being so close. Then I think about all the work I'm not doing and begin to get overwhelmed, which has led to a few emotional breakdowns that happen in the bathroom. I can't have emotional breakdowns outside of the bathroom because my family will try to fix something they can't fix, which leads to frustration and tension. Being quarantined together, we do not need frustration and tension. Staring at a screen has been physically, emotionally, and mentally draining, especially when the workloads haven't been reduced by much. In fact, one of my professors assumed we have all the time in the world since we're quarantined and added to the workload, which made things worse."

Other Related Experiences

"During my time completing school online, I've talked to my friend about her experience, and she also struggled with the internet and has a changed work schedule. In one of my classes, we spent an hour having a mini therapy session where everyone talked about how they're dealing with doing school online. One girl explained that she worked for the school as her source of income and since she is claimed on her parents' taxes, and doesn't get the stimulus check, she is struggling financially.

~Continued on page 3 ~



Continued - “The playing field is still not level.”

Another girl had a difficult time getting back home. She went to a state up north for spring break, and when her flight got cancelled because of the pandemic, she had to take a long road trip to get back to her home state, which is below Tennessee. While she was on the road during her trip, we had presentations due, and she had to log onto her phone, which went in and out during class. A third girl talked about how switching to online is really messing with her mental health. Being cooped up in a room to complete work and log onto class has worsened her mental health; whereas, if she was on campus, she could hang out with friends or participate in one of her clubs to help her. Lastly, a lot of us are still trying to figure out how to get back to school to move our stuff on campus. Yes, there's a form they sent out where we have to sign up for a time, but for those of us who don't have a car, it takes a minute to figure out transportation and a time to make it back to campus”.

Tips for Faculty

Though this writing focuses on one student, please understand that there are others out there who may have similar profiles including, but not limited to, anxiety, lack of resources, a challenged living environment, being treated as the child they were prior to going away to college and the like. This can be a lot for students to balance and be successful as a student at the same time. As we approach the conclusion of a second month of this arrangement of distance education and operations, the impacts are becoming more and more noticeable. As faculty continue to monitor their students, and we conclude this semester, it is important that the early signs of zoom fatigue are recognized, as it can lead to other problems and breakdowns. For some students professional counseling may be necessary. Not all of our students at ETSU are privileged to have the ideal study environment and technology resources to perform at the same level they did when they were on campus. ETSU Counseling Center is an excellent resource for our students who are not quite sure where to go for help <https://www.etsu.edu/students/counseling/>.

A student's sense of belonging and connection in the classroom is directly linked to a student's academic success. Having a “belonging-in-action”

plan can foster more positive responses from your students and make your job easier during this difficult time.

STAY CONNECTED TO YOUR STUDENTS

- Whenever possible, keep classes “live” on Zoom.
- If not, think about organizing a Zoom “drop in” weekly.

BE KIND & COMMUNICATE A LOT

- Connect positively and encouragingly with each student weekly, within boundaries and guidelines. Ask for feedback from students regarding challenges and needs.

BE UNDERSTANDING

Students may be struggling to engage for a variety of reasons, such as -

- Returning home to an unhealthy, unsupportive environment.
- Family may be struggling financially – loss of jobs, food, eviction.
- Low functioning computer and internet (some may not have computer, doing all work on phone).
- Privacy and study space may be difficult or non-existent.
- Lack of understanding of student needs from family members.
- Student's support network, routine, and structure may have disappeared.

BE CLEAR & AVOID AMBIGUITY

- Everyone is living in a chronic “unknown” right now, and the more clear you can be regarding assignments, expectations, grading, and structure, the better.

SUPPORT EACH OTHER & BE KIND TO YOURSELF

- Fears, anxieties, uncertainties, loss of structure, and routine are the “new normal” and are happening to you too. It's ok to struggle and it's ok to talk about it. Seek support and support others.



2nd Annual Equity and Inclusion Conference

SAVE THE DATE

September 21-23, 2020
D.P. Culp Student Center

**Due to concerns related to
Coronavirus/COVID-19
preparations are being
made to have a
Virtual Conference**



*Equity and
Inclusion*
CONFERENCE

By All, For All: Remapping
Our Communities, Economies, and
Lives Through Equity and Inclusion

etsu.edu/equity



**EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Participants will:

- Increase their knowledge and awareness of equity and inclusion issues on campus
- Recognize the importance of equity and inclusion in the health of our organizations and communities
- Develop increased empathy for diverse student populations and student experiences
- Learn how to advocate for the well-being of diverse student populations
- Acquire tools for making their classrooms and co-curricular programs more inclusive

Upcoming Events

May 2020				
Friday	May 8	Lavender & Multicultural Graduation Celebrations		Video\Spotlights
June 2020				
Tuesday	June 9	Lunch and Learn Session <i>The Culturally Responsive Classroom</i> Discussion lead by: Amy Johnson, Interim Associate Provost for Faculty and Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence	12:00-1:00pm	Join Zoom Meeting https://etsu.zoom.us/j/95436219629 Meeting ID: 954 3621 9629
July 2020				
	TBA	Lunch and Learn Session—Reframing Disability	12:00-1:00pm	Via Zoom
August 2020				
	TBA	Lunch and Learn Session	12:00-1:00pm	Via Zoom
September 2020				
Mon-Wed	Sept. 21-23	2nd Annual Equity and Inclusion Conference	TBA	Virtual Conference
Up-Coming				
Spring	2021	Corazon Latino	TBA	

Free Webinars

The **Center for Organizational Responsibility and Advancement (CORA)** supports the development of educators in advancing their capacity to serve historically underrepresented and underserved students.

Topics include:

- Responding to Racial Bias and Microaggressions in the Online Environment
- Equity-Minded Student Services in the Online Environment
- Employing Equity-Minded & Culturally-Affirming Teaching and Learning Practices in Virtual Learning Communities

View their recorded webinars at
<https://coralearning.org/webinars/>

The **National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE)** in American Higher Education emphasizes the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and class with campus programming and the cultural environment.

NCORE is proud to announce a series of free webinars about self-care, building community, and staying engaged during the COVID-19 crisis.

For information about these free webinars go to <https://www.ncore.ou.edu/en/webinar-series/>.

Equity and Inclusion Advisory Council

The Equity and Inclusion Advisory Council serves as an advisory and working group for the coordination of the university's efforts relating to equity, inclusion, and cultural competency.

The council plays a lead role in advising the creation and coordination of strategies for equitable and inclusive campus activities and outreach.

The council is comprised of members consisting of cross-functional representation of employee groups across our main campus and the VA campus.

Each member was chosen by virtue of their past engagement, present passion, and future commitment to equity and inclusion.

Equity and Inclusion Advisory Council Member Spotlight



Felipe Fiuza is a Brazilian scholar who received his PhD in Spanish from Purdue University in 2017.

He is an Assistant Professor of Spanish in ETSU's Literature and Language Department. He is also the Director of the Language and Culture Resource Center at ETSU. Dr. Fiuza is also a poet, a translator, and an interpreter. His book, *Ucidea*, won first place in the Federal University of Espírito Santo's, Brazil, literary contest.

In his spare time, he practices Taekwondo and enjoys playing board games, roleplaying games, and card games.

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**We would like to
 hear from you.**

If you have an announcement, event, accomplishment, etc. you would like to have published in the newsletter send them to Kim Maturo at matur@etsu.edu.