

Roundtable Discussion: Compassion Fatigue and Staff Burnout SUMMARY

Challenges

- Finding a work/life balance
- Building a culture of self-care when the behavior isn't modeled by leaders
- Addressing workload
- Maintaining moral among staff members
- Evaluating poor working conditions in parts of campuses (e.g., temperature, rodents, lighting, heat/air)
- Balancing self-care and time with students
- Working through the weekend with little recovery time
- Addressing symptoms of staff burnout (e.g., disengagement, retention, resentment, lack of motivation)

Solutions

- Allow flexible schedules for employees (not all work happens between 8 AM to 5 PM) and stagger employee schedules, when necessary
- Have honest conversations about when it is acceptable to say no and/or to delegate
- Set up a hand-off process when your plate is too full
- Establish "share and care" practices (e.g., collaborative meals, workshops, professional development, one-on-one discussion)
- Share spaces and resources across campuses
- Set an expectation for response to students (e.g., allow 48 hrs to respond to students, not on weekends)
- Increase staff size and office space
- Assess work atmosphere and create a safe and open environment
- Create a "chill out zone" or quiet space for over-burdened staff
- Create a "one stop shop" for mental health services
- Assess areas of responsibility, clearly define roles, and distribute duties equitably
- Set up office hours at a specific time for drop-ins
- Set aside weekly "wellness hours" for staff to refuel
- Provide support for both personal and professional priorities
- Provide self-care training (e.g., mindfulness, breaks, yoga)
- Allow time off for self-care outside of annual and sick leave
- Do not respond to emails on weekends
- Debrief difficult conversations with other colleagues
- Provide onboarding or orientation for those entering higher education from other fields
- Senior staff share best practices for handling traumatic events
- Senior staff serve as models for self-care and response to students
- Establish an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Set up a network of outside consultants that can be a resource for UT counselors

- Hold staffing conferences to discuss difficult scenarios or experiences
- Form intentional relationships and support systems on campus and throughout the system
- Build in time for “venting” in staff meetings
- Attend faculty meetings, when possible, and tap into faculty resources
- Plan inter-office collaborations to learn from each other and set boundaries
- Identify potential community partners to share mental health resources
- Develop a “tag team” approach for campus call centers after hours and during holidays.
- Make time for informal gatherings to relieve stress (e.g., potlucks, pizza, picnics, recognition and celebrations, collaboration)