

# 2020



## NAFSA VIRTUAL REGIONAL EVENTS



### **Two-Year Colleges Knowledge Community Session**

Exploring the Emotional Wellness of International Students During COVID-19

# Exploring the Emotional Wellness of International Students During COVID-19



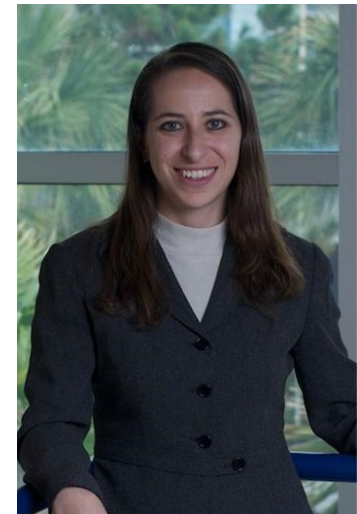
## Your Session Presenters



**Glorianna Felix, MLIS**  
International Student Programs  
Manager, DSO  
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# Exploring the Emotional Wellness of International Students During COVID-19



## **Session Agenda:**

- I. Understanding the Challenges
- II. What Students Are Saying
- III. Case Studies
- IV. Assessing SWOT
- V. Support Strategies at Embry Riddle & HCC
- VI. Resources
- VII. Q&A

# The Strain on Mental Health

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices.

Stressors include:

- Immigration
- Finances
- Housing
- Online Learning
- Making & Maintaining Friends
- Discrimination



# COVID 19 Stressors on F-1 Students @ Embry-Riddle



## The takeaways from our survey were...

- 77.4% of survey participants they were greatly impacted by the pandemic. They experienced feelings of fear/worry and uncertainty about immigration policies and ability to return to the US should they leave the US (homesickness)
  - Find out from students where they feel the most safe.
  - Provide current updates to students as it pertains to compliance
- Survey participants experienced stress about financial difficulty and academic stress (online classes)
  - myths surrounding F2F vs online classes
  - economic hardship application and external/internal scholarship resources

# COVID 19 Stressors on F-1 Students @ Embry-Riddle



## The takeaways from our survey were...

- 25.5% of survey participants found they support programs and resources provided very effective, while 49.1% of them found it somewhat effective
- 25.4% of survey participants either found the programming not so effective or not effective at all

# Case Study - OPT/ Financial Impact



- ❑ Student was on OPT but was laid off during the pandemic.
- ❑ Student has a pending STEM OPT and fearful and anxious about a possible denial since she is no longer employed
- ❑ SEVP throws in curve ball of termination and deportation for students who exceed 90 days of unemployment.
- ❑ Student had previously accrued days of unemployment
- ❑ Student is “forced” to prematurely end OPT and apply for a master’s degree since she was unsuccessful in getting another job.

# COVID 19 Stressors on F-1 Students @ HCC



## The takeaways from our survey were...

- **66.4% of survey participants experienced anxiety due to the uncertainty about immigration/travel policies**
  - Get information to students as soon as it's available. When SEVP sends a notice of a change in policy, be ready to interpret what it means to your students.
- **51% of survey participants experience loneliness most of the time or half the time.**
  - Focus on minimizing loneliness through programming, counseling, enrichment activities



# COVID 19 Stressors on F-1 Students @ HCC



- **72% of participants said they would reach out to a friend or family if they were concerned about their mental health.**
  - Mental health has a negative stigma despite recent advances in awareness and social acceptance.
  - To alleviate stigma, weave mental health education into student programming.
  - Invite college counselors to student events so students have opportunity to familiarize themselves with them; familiarity breeds comfort.
  
- **55% of respondents prefer learning in a face-to-face classes and find online education more challenging.**
  - Partner with tutoring services or library services to offer workshops; share links to tutorials; offer zoom sessions whenever possible and show yourselves.

# Case Study - Financial Impact



- ❑ Due to the economic impact of COVID-19, some sponsors have lost income which left F-1 students uncertain how they would pay future tuition bills.
- ❑ The impact has been felt in every country but students from countries which were already facing grave economic challenges, predictably, are faring worse.
- ❑ Rise in requests for Economic Hardship applications.
- ❑ Rise in requests for late start classes to allow more time to secure funds.
- ❑ Rise in scholarship inquiries.

# Case Study - Financial Impact - Flexible Solutions



- ❑ The 30 day reporting window allows the DSO an opportunity to retain students.
- ❑ Giving the student additional time to secure funds has proved helpful in retaining some F-1 students during these challenging economic times.
- ❑ Rather than terminating students at the end of the first week of classes, DSO's gave students the full 29 day window to be registered for classes.
- ❑ HCC offers late start classes (Sept - Oct). This option gives students more time to secure funds.
- ❑ Additionally, students who were seeing a medical doctor for stress related treatment were granted Medical Reduced Course Loads which allowed for less than 12 credit hours.

# SWOT Analysis: A valuable assessment

## Strengths

- Do your international students know about all the supports your institution provides?



## Weaknesses

- Do you and your colleagues know what is available to students?
- Is health insurance coverage mandatory?

# Questions for SWOT Assessments



## Strengths

- If students are required to have health insurance, do they know how to use it?
- Who are your campus allies?

## Weaknesses

- If students are not required to carry health insurance, do they have access to other mental health services?
- What if a student dies? Repatriation?

## Opportunity

- Is there a dept. on campus that offers health services including counseling?
- Affordable community providers?

## Threats

- How would your campus handle a crisis situation if it does not offer mental health services?
- Who is the liability expert at your institution?

# Current Support Strategies @ HCC



- ❖ Mental health as a topic is weaved into orientation, SLS 1101, workshops, and student social programming.
- ❖ HCC's **Student Assistance Program** - HCC has partnered with **BayCare Life Management** to provide FREE professional and confidential [counseling services](#).
- ❖ On campus counseling centers offer virtual services and in person counseling.
- ❖ **SGA phone app** provides students easy access to all campus activities.
- ❖ International Student Ambassadors create socially engaging events including: Mental Health Workshop, Manage Stress through exercise and more.
- ❖ Food Pantry - provides food for students facing food insecurity. Items are bagged and provided in designated areas around campus.

# Current Support Strategies @ Embry Riddle



- ❖ Daily Let's **Teletalk**
- ❖ **Workshop Topics:** Coping with COVID-19, Managing Loss, anxiety
- ❖ **"Reality Warrior"** - Self-exploration to challenge negative feelings. How to manage anxiety, depression and self-doubt
- ❖ International student "buddy"**mentorship program**
- ❖ **Project call a student.**
- ❖ **Meditation Mondays** - students are guided through a 15 minute mindful meditation
- ❖ **Grief and loss support** provided by Counselling center
- ❖ **Zumba** and **Full moon Yoga** sessions

# What are your Support Strategies? SWOT Analysis



## STRENGTHS

- Robust Virtual Engagement Programming
- Counselling center offering various virtual services
- Communication with students has been great
- Offer multiple perspectives and lens to contribute to narrative
- Utilizing best practices across the country



## WEAKNESSES

- Status quo
- Uncertainty regarding immigration policies
- Students feel fear, anxiety & confusion
- Staff/faculty: do more with less
- Comfort level with online classes
- Need to develop stronger time management skills



# What are your Support Strategies? SWOT Analysis



## OPPORTUNITIES

- Best practice models
- Increased appropriate use of technology
- Student organizations to share in messaging; wellness ambassadors
- Personal mental health tips
- Connect safety and wellness
- Offers alternative perspectives
- Celebrate wins and successes



## THREATS

- Social distancing
- Messaging around Mental illness
- Retention/attrition
- Fear of travelling home for holidays
- Finances / Money to support
- Election year & increased stress
- Concern about second wave
- Academic stresses
- Student zoom fatigue
- Loss of freedom/agency

# Ways to Maintain Mental Health



## Coping with COVID-19

**Take breaks  
from the news**



**Take care  
of your body**

**Make time to  
unwind**



**Connect with  
others**

**Set goals  
and priorities**



**Focus on  
the facts**

# Partnerships of Support

- Insurance Plan
  - Ensure coverage includes substance abuse and mental health
  - Telehealth/telecounseling
  - Orientations/workshops
  - Online videos
- On Campus Counseling Center
  - How much does it cost?
  - What are the wait times?
  - Will they provide services to students not on campus
  - Is there language support and multicultural training
  - Can services be accessed virtually?
- Counseling Services in Your Community

# References & Resources

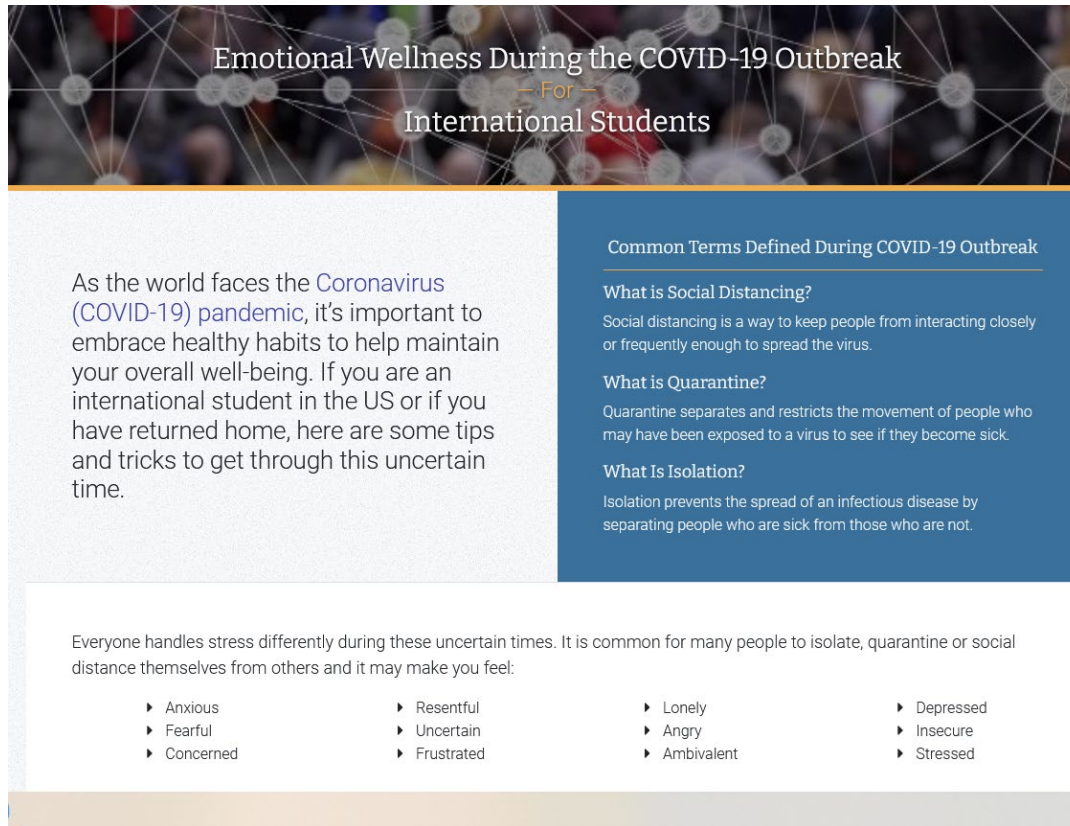
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# Emotional Wellness During the COVID-19 Outbreak For International Students



## Emotional Wellness During the COVID-19 Outbreak — For — International Students

As the world faces the **Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic**, it's important to embrace healthy habits to help maintain your overall well-being. If you are an international student in the US or if you have returned home, here are some tips and tricks to get through this uncertain time.

### Common Terms Defined During COVID-19 Outbreak

**What is Social Distancing?**  
Social distancing is a way to keep people from interacting closely or frequently enough to spread the virus.

**What is Quarantine?**  
Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who may have been exposed to a virus to see if they become sick.

**What Is Isolation?**  
Isolation prevents the spread of an infectious disease by separating people who are sick from those who are not.

Everyone handles stress differently during these uncertain times. It is common for many people to isolate, quarantine or social distance themselves from others and it may make you feel:

- ▶ Anxious
- ▶ Fearful
- ▶ Concerned
- ▶ Resentful
- ▶ Uncertain
- ▶ Frustrated
- ▶ Lonely
- ▶ Angry
- ▶ Ambivalent
- ▶ Depressed
- ▶ Insecure
- ▶ Stressed

<https://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/explained/>

# Free Emotional & Mental Health Training Program



## Powerpoint Presentation

Professionally designed presentation to walk your students through the training.



## Video Content

Two videos on mental health awareness and student perceptions on culture shock and stress from around the world.



## Student Handout

A downloadable student guide take-away, or we can supply hard copies, to distribute to students.



## Interactive Activities

Activities that encourage dialogue on many of the larger issues such as myths surround seeking help.



## Proctor Guide

Complete guide to walk you or your staff through the training, including a full script and talking points.



<https://administrators.internationalstudentinsurance.com/resources/>



# Exploring the Emotional Wellness of International Students During COVID-19



## *Thank you for attending!*

**Apply** to the NAFSA Academy – Deadline November 13

**Submit** a Poster Presentation for Annual Conference 2021  
in Orlando – Deadline December 9

**Free resources** for career mapping via NAFSA PATH

**Volunteer** with your NAFSA Region! Reach out to your  
region regarding open positions.