

TennACADA Times

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Letter from Dr. Karen Sullivan-Vance

Dear All,

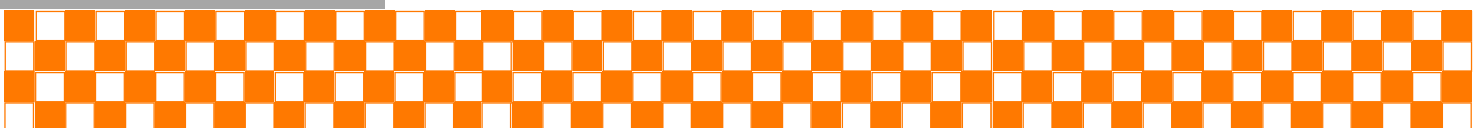
I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your contributions to helping our student scholars during this difficult time. I know that the last few weeks have been incredibly challenging and that the days ahead will be hard. Even so, I am deeply humbled by the spirit of service, which is evident across the Volunteer community.

Many of you are trying to advise students while taking care of your families and teaching your children at home. Many of you are taking care of elderly parents, relatives, and neighbors. Some of you cannot get to your families and are worrying about their health and well-being. And some of you have a family member serving on the front lines of this global health crisis and are concerned for their safety every day. And still, you are showing up every day online to support our student scholars.

One of the NACADA Core Values is caring, and as a community, you have stepped up to support, encourage, and empower our students through this crisis. Many of you have volunteered to help in the ALL VOLS CALL Campaign, reaching out to each of our students. On social media platforms, parents have commented about how incredible it is for UT to reach out and check in on students. You are actively looking forward when it feels like time has stopped. Vols help Vols is not just a tag line, but it is a way of life on Rocky Top, and you personify that spirit.

I am so profoundly grateful to work with colleagues who, even amid their worries, rally to support and encourage our student scholars. The Volunteer Creed, "One that beareth a torch shadoweth oneself to give light to others," is never more real than right now. And we must not forget that even in the darkest of times, the Torchbearer holds the flame on high, reminding us that we will emerge from this into the light.

Take care,
Karen



School in the Time of COVID

One of the refrains those of us in the Student Success Center hear from students since going online March 23 is that they're having difficulty learning online. There are myriad reasons why learning online is difficult, and some of those may require referrals to [Student Disability Services](#), the [Counseling Center](#), and/or [974-HELP](#). Some other reasons for difficulty with learning require that we re-frame what learning looks like in an online environment.

Students learn best when they are active participants. If students are analyzing, evaluating, and creating, they are more likely to internalize what they are taught (Bloom 1956). We also know that there are multiple ways that learners take in information: auditorily, through reading and writing, through visual means, and through kinesthetic means (Fleming 1987). When we combine these ways of learning, the ability to understand and make connections among ideas increases. Online learning becomes problematic when a student is watching a lecture but not doing anything with the content. Whether online or in person, this doesn't prime a student for learning.



An optimal learning environment will look different for each student. Talk with students about what learning looks like to them when they feel like they are in the “zone.”

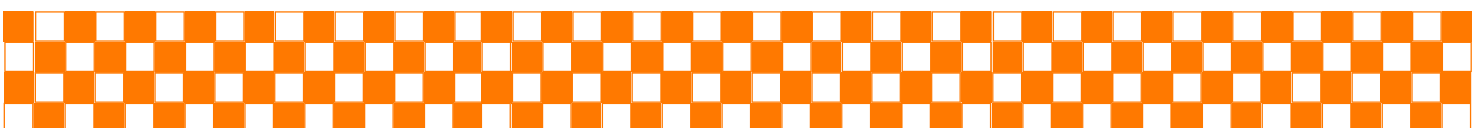
- What's happening around them? Is there music playing? Do they have a cup of coffee?
- Are they sitting? Standing? Walking?
- Are they doodling? Drawing?
- What time of day is it?
- Are others learning with them?

Students can then identify aspects of their learning environment that they can change. Ask students to be creative in making their learning environment ideal for them.

- Enjoy learning with others? Ask peers to form a study group. Better yet, have each person come with a worksheet on a topic from class. Many people learn best by teaching.
- Learn best around 11 but class is at 8 a.m.? Plan study and homework time for 11.
- Prefer to learn in a coffee shop? Make a cup of coffee, sit in an armchair with light music playing, and log into the online session ready to work.
- Like doodling or using lots of color during a class? Grab pens, colored pencils, and other materials to draw out the lecture in real time.
- Need to move while learning? Create a standing desk with a stack of books and use a white board (or taped sheets of paper) to the wall to take notes.

For students who enjoy the social aspects of school, a move to online can lead to low motivation. If the student reports low motivation, ask them to connect with peers with whom they can share their feelings. You might also have them identify both long- and short-term goals. For those who are more artistic, have them create a vision board with pictures of their intended career or goals. Finally, remind them of resources across campus where they can connect with others and discuss motivation, life, and learning.

Contributed by Dr. Jennifer Hewardine, Assistant Director, Student Success Center



Online Advising

Every conversation I've had with students since the University moved online has had one thing in common: they are not sure how to feel but feel as if something is "off". Some have the support they need at home and are excelling in online classes while some have struggled and even started blaming themselves for feeling like they "gave up" on classes after the switch. What I've said to them will be my first piece of advice to everyone: [that discomfort you're feeling is grief](#). Grief for a semester we didn't have, grief for the life we had in January, grief for the lives lost in the pandemic, and grief for our unknown future. We can't change our automatic trauma response to what's happening around us, but I have found is we can change how we work around it for our students and ourselves. Here's just a few tips I've gained from going online as a student and advisor over the past few weeks:

1. **Make/Keep the connection.** Research ([Pentland, 2008](#)) suggests that people have a higher interest or investment of a new idea when there is a social face-to-face connection. Zoom is our way to get the "face-to-face" contact, but access might limit us from doing this. We can still have meaningful connections with students via email and phone. Take extra time with newer or transfer students to make the connection before we get to physically see them in the fall.

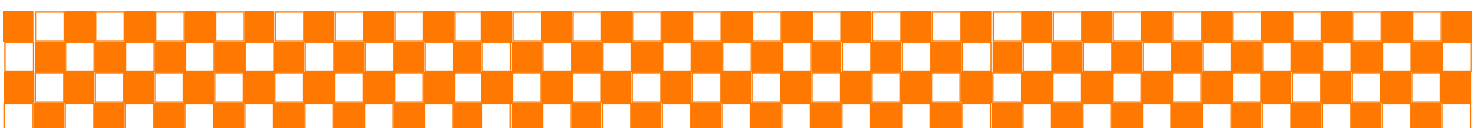


2. **Be honest with students.** On the topic of connections – share as much as you're comfortable with about your life in quarantine with your students. The students I've shared personal stories with have opened up more about their own struggles at home, and quite a few have enjoyed meeting or hearing my very social husky. It's okay if your children (furry or human) make noise while you're on the call – it shows you're doing your part to fight COVID-19 and having some of the same struggles as our students.

3. **"Office Hours" aren't just reserved for faculty.** My emails were getting so overwhelming that I finally decided to block 3 hours of one afternoon to get on Zoom and host virtual office hours. I saw 15 students within the first hour and 20 overall, and all of the students waited patiently for their turn. A few colleagues even stopped by too! *Personal Note: A 2-hour time frame would have been sufficient.*

4. **Utilize all of the benefits of Zoom.** Setup meetings directly with Zoom and allow it to automatically generate calendar events and set reminders for you and your students. Enable waiting rooms for Office Hours. UT and Zoom offer so many tutorials for us to get the most out of Zoom and stay secure while doing so - use them.

5. **Search for outside resources.** [NACADA](#) and other professional organizations have put out helpful articles about advising online and remote education. Creativity is usually stifled in crisis-mode, so seek out others' creative output during this time. It's okay to not have all of the answers!



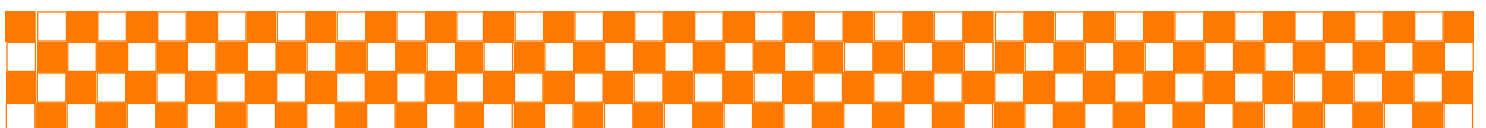
Online Advising (continued)

6. **Take some time for yourself.** None of this is normal, and none of this is easy. The one thing you can do is be easy on yourself for needing personal time.

- Take a vacation day if you need it – even if it’s to sleep in or to watch Netflix, or my personal favorite, TikTok.
- Work on a goal you’ve been putting off or learn something new – [Harvard University is offering free certificate programs right now.](#)
- Utilize your University benefits – the [Employee Assistance Program](#) can provide you with free and confidential help during this time for a range of topics including mental health, financial stress, and relationship stress while at home.

Hopefully these tips can help you as we go into an online Orientation season like nothing we’ve ever done before. I miss seeing and advising my students every week, I miss the connections with faculty, and I’m sad we missed the excited and anxious faces as seniors finished their last day of class. If nothing else, I hope this gives you some distraction from all the negative as we face such an uncertain and different future.

Contributed by Tracy Trentham, Academic Advisor for Haslam College of Business



Spotlight: Chris King

Chris serves as an academic advisor in the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences. He has been in this role since December 2019.

How did you get into the advising profession?

When I was in graduate school I was working with the Virginia Tech football team and really began helping student athletes not only on the field but found myself having deeper connections by helping them with what they may want to do with their degrees after graduation. Eventually working in the athletic advising offices eventually lead to a position on campus advising exploratory students. After working at Virginia Tech for three years, my wife and I moved to Charleston, SC where I became an advisor at the College of Charleston. After spending six years in Charleston, I am excited to be here at UT, specifically working in the CEHHS, and being a part of this great Knoxville community.

What is important to you in your work with students?

That students know I will truly listen to their needs, and they have confidence knowing I will do everything I can to help them.

What is the best advice that you give to students?

Get involved, build meaningful relationships, never hesitate to ask questions, and stay positive!

What are some of your hobbies?

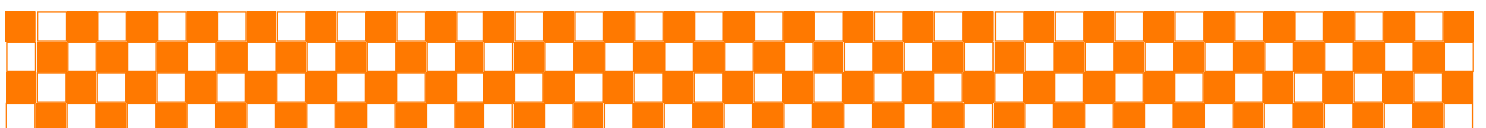
Everything about college football, wood-working, fitness, golf, reading, and cooking for my wife and one year old son!

What books are you reading?

Just finished reading *Love Does* by Bob Goff and started *Taste and See* by Margaret Feinburg, excited to continue to read through more books as the year goes on!

Describe what you were like at age 10.

I was all about Michael Jordan and football. My dad was a high school football coach, so I would ride my bike around the track during football practice. And loved hanging out with my older brother, going to Virginia Tech football and basketball games with my family, and was really in love with eating pop tarts while watching *Saved By the Bell*.



Spotlight: Dr. Wendy Davis

Wendy serves as the Director of the Undergraduate Admissions Transfer Center. She began this position in April 2019.



Please tell us a little bit about your professional background. I've had a multi-faceted professional career. I've worked in the Child Welfare system both domestically and internationally. That work spanned from the moment a child or children entered the foster care system through the education and support of youth aging out of the foster care system, teaching them how to live and function independently. I had the privilege of working with an Unaccompanied (Refugee) Minors foster care program when the lost boys (and girls) from Sudan came to the US. I've worked in workforce development, which included career coaching adults from every part of life encompassing veterans, ex-felons, welfare recipients, unemployed, and underemployed. I've owned my own business, and of course, I've worked in higher education at community college and universities.

What is the best advice that you give to students? Give yourself permission to grow, make mistakes, and change in your education, your career, and your life. We are all perfectly imperfect and allowed to regroup, recoup, and restart when we need to.

What are three career lessons you've learned thus far?

1. The work you do has a lot to do with how much you believe in yourself to do the work and the amount of risk you're willing to take to leap towards what you want to do.
2. Every job creates transferable skills that you can use on your career trajectory.
3. There are no accidents in life. Even the worst job you've ever had can make you a better person, employee, and leader. Don't take those lessons for granted.

What books are you reading? I'm trying to finish *A Colony in a Nation* by Chris Hayes

What is your favorite quote? "Faith is taking the first step, even when you don't see the whole staircase" Martin Luther King, Jr.

Tell us one fun fact we would not know about you. I used to play the cello and viola. It's been many years since I've played but my retirement plan includes playing again with a symphony orchestra.

