Supporting Department Chairs: Self Care During Unprecedented Times

2021-22 ADVANCE Leadership Workshop
Dec. 1, 2021
2:30 – 4:00 pm
NOTE TO SELF:
I am doing the best I can with what I have in this moment, and that's all I can expect from anyone, including me.
Agenda

2:30 – 2:40 Welcome and Introductions
  > Your microphone is set on mute
  > Slides: https://tinyurl.com/Fall21LW-Slides
    (view only, shared version coming post workshop)

2:40 – 3:30 Speaker presentations and Q&A
  > Dr. Jane Simoni, Professor & Director of Clinical Training in the Department of Psychology
  > Dr. Julie Kientz, Professor and Chair of Human Centered Design & Engineering
  > Q&A: raise hand feature (under reaction menu in Zoom)

3:30 – 4:00 Breakout Rooms

Evaluation: https://tinyurl.com/Fall21LW-Eval
Self-Care for Academic Leaders in the Midst of a Pandemic

Jane M. Simoni, Ph.D.
Professor & Director of Clinical Training
UW Department of Psychology

Workshop for the ADANCE program, Dec, 2021.
Photo credit: Dennis Wise/U. of Washington. Acknowledgements to Kim Eckart of UW NEWS and UW Psych Dept Grad Students
The Context

Syndemics: Covid epidemic, BLM, Anti-Asian assaults, climate change, political divisions, economic uncertainties

Increasing rates of substance use and mental health distress
Signs of Distress

- Trouble concentrating or prioritizing
- Lacking motivation, procrastinating
- Doubting the meaning and impact of our work
- Loss of pleasure in doing what we once enjoyed
- Absenteeism, AWOL
- Stress, distress, burn out, anxiety, sadness
- Feeling simply numb
Caveat

- If you or someone you know are truly struggling – unable to function at home or work, drastic changes in sleep or weight or substance use, or thoughts of hurting yourself – **you should reach out to others** and perhaps seek professional help.
- **Stigma** around substance use and mental health problems can be a barrier to addressing these issues and getting help.

  If you can face these challenges head-on and get help early, you’ll be better off in the long run.

*The Crisis Connections phone line (866-427-4747) and Crisis Text Line (text HEAL to 741741) are available to the UW community.*
Step #1: Recognize and Validate Your Emotions

- Acknowledge how you’re feeling now:
  - Overwhelmed, sad, disappointed, grieving, hopeless, anxious, fearful?
  - Frustrated and disappointed over the seemingly endless cycles of the pandemic?
  - Tired of constant crisis management?
  - NY Times: “languishing”?
- REMEMBER: All emotions are understandable, and you’re not alone in your pain.

Positive Coping Strategy: Cultivate Appreciation

- **Identify three good things about each day** and what you appreciate about them. These should be very specific events or experiences.
- Write them down. Explain why they went well, how they made you feel, what caused them to go well.
- Come up with three new things each day, and focus your attention on them, rather than ruminating on the things that bother you.

https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/three-good-things
Practice good “sleep hygiene”: Get the right amount of sleep (7-10 hours) and go to bed and rise at the same times each day.

Stay hydrated and eat enough healthful foods each day. Your nutrition can affect your mood.

Go outside. Connect with nature and remind yourself that there’s more to life than a computer screen.

Stay active. Movement boosts energy and mood.
Be mindful of changes in your substance use.

- **Alcohol and other substance use rose during the pandemic**, as people started consuming earlier in the day, and more often.
- Relying on substances can interfere with successfully coping with stress.
- Monitor what you’re doing and cut back as needed, seeking help if necessary.

Connect with other people. In-person is best.
Thank you

The Crisis Connections phone line (866-427-4747) and Crisis Text Line (text HEAL to 741741) are available to the UW community.

Jane Simoni, jsimoni@uw.edu
How I Learned to Stop Worrying and (kinda) Love the Chair Life

Julie Kientz
Professor & Chair, Human Centered Design & Engineering
Context

I am a reluctant department chair!

Started as Interim Chair in September 2019, became full Chair in April 2020

I chair a medium-sized interdisciplinary department (25 full time faculty, 10 staff) in the College of Engineering with 160 BS students, 240 MS students, and 70 PhD students

I have 2 kids aged 9 and 6
This Job is HARD

- Herding cats (er, managing faculty)
- Dealing with student complaints
- Managing limited financial resources
- Decision making under uncertainty
- “All of the responsibility, none of the authority”
- Rapidly changing contexts
- Transitioning from a peer to a “boss” with people you’ve worked with for years
- Managing both up and down
What Helps Me Manage the Load?

- Having two Associate Chairs I trust implicitly and that complement my skills
- Adopting a spirit of prototyping and iteration within the department reduces the pressure to get things right the first time around
  - Aiming for “80% good” rather than perfection
- Developing policies and procedures for everything I can -
  - So much work load comes from uncertainty about who is doing what in what way
  - Every policy also comes with “values” or “guiding principles” that we agree on before implementing in specific cases

Diagram:
1. Prototype
2. Review
3. Refine & Iterate
Deliver

Rapid Prototyping
Building an Amazing Support System

My support system

- Group of other chairs I can vent with over margaritas and nachos
- My ATC who makes sure I don’t drop (too many) balls and knows the faculty code inside and out
- A supportive dean and college HR manager
- My spouse who is also an academic and equal parent
- Kids that keep me accountable to a personal life and are proud of their mom
- Friends who are NOT academics
- A nanny that picks up our kids after school and makes everyone dinner M-F and also runs personal errands for us
- My cat and dog
- Academic Mamas Facebook Group
Work Things I DON’T do...

- Answer every email
- Send emails on evenings or weekends
  - I do occasionally work on email in the evening or weekends but I schedule send for the next morning/Monday
- Fight every battle
- Write every policy from scratch
  - Most every policy you can think of likely has already been written and you can remix
- Teach every quarter
  - I mostly teach seminar classes
- Micromanage staff

H/T Eric Klavins
Things I Prioritize Over Work

● Time with my family on weekends and evenings
● Going to the gym
  ○ 3-4 times per week in the mornings
● I make a yearly strategic plan for my personal goals
  ○ This year’s goals:
    ■ (Re-)Learning Piano with SimplyPiano app
    ■ Hike 20 hikes
    ■ Read 12 non-work books
● Having regular social activities with structure and accountability
  ○ Bi-weekly D&D games, Book Clubs
Personal Things I DON’T Do...

- Cook every meal
- Pack my kids’ lunches (they do it themselves using a bento box)
- Shuttle my kids to every activity
  - Max 2 at a time, and they do the same ones and/or ones at their school whenever possible
- Go to every birthday party or playdate invitation
- Play with my kids every waking hour or solve all their problems
  - “Good enough” parenting is actually ideal
- Meditation
Mantras

- There are very few true academic “emergencies”
- There’s always next year!
- Sometimes the chair just needs to be someone’s punching bag
  - (thank you Jim P.!)  
- When asked to do things: If the answer isn’t “hell yes!” it should probably be “no”
  - My framework for saying yes - should be at least 2 of 3
    - 1. Will I learn something?
    - 2. Will I have fun doing it?
    - 3. Am I uniquely skilled to do it?
- Give the people in your life a framework in which to do the things you need them to do while also allowing them to be creative
Finding Humor in What We Do

- Watch “The Chair” on Netflix
- Frequent emojis used with other chairs on Slack 🤔😬🤷‍♀️🤦‍♀️
- Follow accounts and websites that poke fun at academia
  - @ass_deans, @academicssay, McSweeney’s Internet Tendency
Breakout Rooms
Next up: Breakout Time

- Engage with some concepts shared by Jane
- Have a structured format
- Will be forming small breakout groups of 3
- If you are unable to stay for at least 15 minutes, you may want to exit now to minimize disruption to the small groups or stay in the large room for a little connecting time with others before you go.
  - Evaluation Feedback: https://tinyurl.com/Fall21LW-Eval
Break Out Room Details

> Groups of 3
> Structured Format: 3P, 3M, 3Q
> Reflection: Share ideas via Google Doc
  – Must be logged into Google Drive with your UWNetID
> Open Discussion

> Wrap up:
  – No return to the large group – leave whenever ready
  – Complete evaluation form and share future workshop topic ideas
    (https://tinyurl.com/Fall21LW-Eval)
3 people, 3 minutes, 3 questions

- 3 rounds - each round takes 3 minutes (1 min/person/round)
- Different person starts each round
- Each person has one full minute to respond – others remain silent and just listen
- One person serves as timekeeper
- After 3 rounds are completed, share insights via Google Doc

https://tinyurl.com/ADVLW3M3P3Q
3 Rounds: 3 questions

> Round 1: What is currently working for me and helping with my self-care?
> Round 2: What the hardest thing about being a chair (or your position) right now?
> Round 3: What is something that has been rewarding as a chair (or your position)?

> At the end, visit Google doc to share insights, themes, thoughts, etc. at https://tinyurl.com/ADVWLW3M3P3Q (log in with UWNetID)
Reminder: Breakout activity

> 3P, 3M, 3Q
  - Instructions and questions at https://tinyurl.com/ADVLW3M3P3Q

> Reflection: Share via Google Doc
  - https://tinyurl.com/ADVLW3M3P3Q
  - Must be logged into Google Drive with your UWNETID

> Open Discussion

> Wrap up:
  - No return to the large group - leave whenever ready
  - Complete evaluation form and share ideas for workshop topics (https://tinyurl.com/Fall21LW-Eval)