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# SUPPORTING FACULTY

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LEADING FACULTY WITH PURPOSE AND VISION

LEGAL ISSUES

# Understanding Obligations to Unionizing Grad Students

**By Eric Lyerly**

Graduate student unions have risen steadily in the last decade, buoyed by a 2016 National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) decision finding that grad students are employees. However, these unions have seen their most dramatic increases in the last three years, thanks in part to a union-friendly NLRB. In the first half of 2023, there were 17 union elections involving graduate students or medical residents, exceeding the full year total of 16 for 2022 (https://bit.ly/3ujCExH).

Historically, grad student unions have been regional to some extent, finding the most success in midwestern, Mid-Atlantic, and New England states with a strong record of unionization. However, such unions are now finding life nationwide, including in the South, where private universities like Duke University and Emory University now have grad student unions (https://bit.ly/496w1h7).

Interestingly, the legal trend of regarding students as employees is expanding. In February 2024, a regional NLRB office found that Dartmouth College men's basketball players were employees and had the right to unionize (https://bit.ly/43teRsk), possibly creating a new group of student unions and an increase of union activity on campus.

Faculty leaders have a unique relationship with graduate students, often serving as advisors, mentors, and professional references. However, as supervisors, faculty leaders have certain legal obligations to grad students who are considering union organization. This article explores why graduate students are unionizing and highlights what faculty leaders can and cannot do when it comes to addressing union activity.

## Understand why graduate students are unionizing

Graduate student pay has long been a sore spot for student employees pursuing postgraduate studies. Yet, colleges and universities are relying more and more on graduate assistants to conduct teaching and research, allowing institutions to reduce employment costs and avoid obligations to reappoint or retain faculty. The following factors have inspired the proliferation of student unions on campus.

**Low wages**

Not surprisingly, grad students in research assistant or teaching assistant roles typically have heavy workloads, often exceeding the hours required by their appointments. Yet, their wages may not adequately reflect the value they are providing to their institution or students. On top of

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# Three New Meetings Worth Having

**By Rebecca Pope-Ruark**

Sometimes it can feel like meetings are both the lifeblood and bane of an academic leader's existence. Everyone wants to see you, even when a meeting could have easily been an email. They take up time, leaving virtually none for your own work or the projects you and your team have prioritized. So, for me to suggest there are three additional types of meetings you should add to your calendar, would be ludicrous, right?

Maybe not. What if there were meeting formats that allowed you to regularly prioritize the work of important projects, allow everyone to see progress made on those projects, and improve collaboration among yourself and your team members? Let me introduce Scrum.

Much of my faculty development work before burnout focused on productivity strategies for managing research, service, and teaching. Specifically, I adapted Scrum project management practices to academic work. Scrum is a process for organizing complex work projects that falls under the umbrella of "agile" methods created in software development. A project management framework, Scrum is built on the foundations of empirical control theory, through which cross-functional teams break down complex into smaller chunks and associated actionable tasks. These chunks are then prioritized and visualized to ensure transparency and capture progress in real time. I initially started using Scrum with my undergraduate students to teach them a process for effectively managing team projects and quickly saw how effective the practices were when applied to service work as well as individual project management tasks.

In Scrum, a project team works in time boxes called sprints, usually two to four weeks of focusing directly on the most important project tasks as defined at the beginning of the sprint. Project tasks come from a prioritized list called the backlog—essentially a list of all the projects a team is working on, each broken down into chunks that the team can then further divide into actionable tasks members can work on during the sprint.

Sprints have a defined meeting and work cadence that allows the team to find a rhythm of working together and accomplishing important work. I highlight three of those meetings here because adding these meetings to your team's calendar can have a real impact on productivity and team functioning.

## The "making sure we're on the same page" meeting

First, prior to planning exactly what projects and tasks the sprint will focus on, the team might hold a **backlog or project refinement meeting**. In a refinement meeting, the "owner" of each project would work with the team to break it down into smaller chunks of work and prioritize both the projects in the list and those smaller chunks of work. Working together to refine the backlog of projects and tasks allows the team to actively think about the work that needs to be done, what needs to be done first, and who can accomplish each task.

For example, a faculty affairs (FA) team might have a number of projects in their backlog, such as improving dual career services, conducting a faculty pay equity study, and completing a variety of technology upgrades to support

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faculty hiring processes, among other regular responsibilities. These are large projects spread out over multiple members of the team, each with its own project leader. This FA team might hold a backlog refinement meeting once per month to look at the projects, brainstorm what needs to be done on each in the next month, and prioritize those tasks across the team. They could decide they need all hands on deck to address the faculty pay equity study because of a coming deadline, so they list tasks that need to be done and assign them to different members of the team, giving those people permission to put the dual career services project on the back burner. People leave the meeting with a solid sense of what they need to do next and what the team's priorities are.

## The "look what we've accomplished, give us feedback" meeting

The second meeting to consider adding is a review meeting. Scrum teams hold a review meeting at the end of a sprint—essentially to showcase the work they completed during those weeks. For a software team, this would likely be a demo for stakeholders and anyone interested in learning about what they've done (other teams, for example). The purpose of the review meeting is to both hold the team accountable for the work they committed to completing during the sprint and get feedback from people outside the team on how to move forward.

As for our FA team, they might have a review meeting at the end of the month to which they invite the whole team and perhaps a few administrative or faculty representatives if their input would be valuable. During the meeting, they might show the final data they collected and processed and an infographic they will use in the final report. They can also work attendee feedback into the final report or direct them as to next steps before the deadline. People leave this meeting confident in the work being done and with ideas for what to do next.

## The "how well did we collaborate and what can we do better" meeting

The last meeting I recommend adding to your monthly calendar is called the retrospective in Scrum. It's the second meeting held at the end of the sprint, and while the review meeting is for the team to showcase their work to those outside the team, the retrospective is a meeting for team members to discuss their team process. The retrospective is an opportunity for the group to gather and discuss what went well in the last sprint, how effectively (or not effectively) they collaborated to achieve the shared goals they set for themselves, and how they can improve their collaboration for the coming sprint.

These discussion-based retrospective conversations can often be facilitated through an activity that allows team members to be honest with each other while still maintaining discretion. For example, here are two of my favorite retrospective activities: the starfish and the sailboat. You'll need a whiteboard, sticky notes, and Sharpies for both.

- **The starfish**: Draw a five-armed starfish and label the sections Keep Doing, Start Doing, Do More of, Do Less of, and Stop Doing. Thinking about the team's process in the last sprint or month, have each person brainstorm as many points for each section as they can in three to four minutes. Everyone writes one idea per individual note and, when time is up, places each note in the appropriate section of the starfish drawing. Once everyone has posted their sticky notes in the appropriate locations, have someone from the team summarize the comments for each section and allow that to lead to natural discussion, again focusing on the team's process as a unit. Once discussed, commit to something you can do as a team to improve your process in the next sprint, and write that commitment down somewhere everyone can see or keep track of it.
- **The sailboat**: Draw a sailboat representing the team as well as an anchor hanging from the boat and wind in the sail. Then, on individual sticky notes, brainstorm aspects of your process that are holding you back from achieving your goals (anchors) and aspects that made you most successful (wind). If you are feeling extra creative, you can add a shoreline with palm trees to represent your "promised land" or goal and sharp rocks hiding under the surface to represent danger ahead. After putting the sticky notes in the appropriate places on the drawing, summarize what you learned as a group, and again commit to one or two changes you can make to improve your process.

Our FA team might hold a retrospective to discuss how well they worked together and met their goals for the faculty pay equity report. Using the sailboat activity, the director of FA asks her colleagues to think about what they should start, stop, keep, do more, and do less of. Once all the sticky notes have been brainstormed and placed appropriately, she asks a member of the team to summarize the feedback, and as a group they identify themes in the comments. From those themes, they have a conversation about how they were sharing data and what they can do to streamline their process next time. Everyone leaves feeling heard and ready to move to the next task.

As you consider how you are using meetings with your team and if having a refinement, review, or retrospective meeting (or all three) would help you meet your goals more effectively as well as improve collaboration and productivity. You might be surprised.

This article first appeared in *Academic Leader* on August 7, 2023.

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low wages, graduate student workers may be juggling student debt and struggle to cover daily expenses.

**Broader labor trends**

Recent unionization activity has not been limited to higher education. There have been strong union drives across many industries. Additionally, workers from various industries have fought to be classified as employees and secure collective bargaining rights (e.g., rideshare drivers for Uber and Lyft). Grad students have chosen to unionize to collectively bargain for better wages, healthcare benefits, and improved working conditions.

**The pandemic**

Many graduate student workers complained of poor working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. RAs and TAs claimed that they were forced to return to campus without adequate safety precautions. Some graduate students struggled to perform the functions of their roles remotely and expressed concern with the lack of support they received from their institutions. Unions provided these grad students with a way to advocate for better working conditions.

There are many reasons for the increased grad student unionization across the country. By understanding the causes and aims of the union activity, faculty leaders can put themselves in position to support the research and teaching assistants in their departments.

## Understand what faculty leaders can't do

The National Labor Relations Act (NRLA) is a federal law that provides the right for employees to join or form unions. It empowers employees to engage in (protected) activities to improve pay, working conditions, etc. Importantly, the NLRA applies to private sector employees (i.e., private universities).

The act excludes public sector employees, such as those at state-affiliated universities, from its protections. Employees at public colleges and universities typically have rights to unionize under state laws. However, collective bargaining rights differ from state to state. Some states offer greater protections from the NLRA; some states offer far less.

The NLRA restricts employers from interfering with, restraining, or coercing employees from exercising their rights to unionize or collectively bargain (https://bit.ly/3HT6tYV). To this end, colleges, universities, and faculty leaders may not:

*By understanding the causes and aims of the union activity, faculty leaders can put themselves in position to support the research and teaching assistants in their departments.*

- Express the message that joining a union would be futile.
- Threaten grad students with adverse employment consequences (termination, loss of benefits, or harsher working conditions) if they engage in protected union activity.
- Terminate, suspend, demote, discipline, or take any other adverse employment action against grad students who engaged in protected, concerted union activities.
- Promise benefits to grad students that reject a union.
- Provide benefits to employees to induce them to vote against a union during a union organizing campaign.
- Withhold changes in wages or benefits during a union organizing campaign that would have been made but for the presence of the union on campus.
- Ask coercive questions or coercively poll employees about their union activities or sympathies or those of their coworkers.
- Spy on or surveil graduate students or union meetings to obtain information about their union activities.
- Restrict employees from discussing the union during working time (if employees can discuss other non-work-related subjects).
- Restrict employees from wearing union T-shirts, buttons, or other union insignia.
- Retaliate against an employee for filing an unfair labor practice charge with the NLRB.

Importantly, deans, department chairs, and faculty advisors are considered "supervisors" by the NLRB. Therefore, the NLRA and the list above applies directly to them. If this list is too long to remember, the NLRB has developed the acronym "TIPS" to help supervisors understand their responsibilities. In short, **no threats (T), no interrogation (I), no promises of benefits (P), no spying (S)**.

Faculty leaders are often caught in between their administration and graduate students contemplating unionization or other activities to improve pay and working conditions. The administration may call on faculty leaders to keep the peace while the institution addresses grad student wage and work concerns. However, faculty leaders must still avoid interfering with or restraining a graduate student's right to join or form a union or engage in collective bargaining.

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## Understand what faculty leaders can do

Deans, department chairs, and faculty advisors should remember that they are supervisors as far as the NLRB is concerned. Therefore, they must demonstrate caution when discussing or advocating for/against graduate student union organization. Faculty leaders may wonder what they are allowed to do under the law.

The NLRB has stated it is permissible for faculty leaders to:

- Discipline a grad student for misconduct unrelated to their union support or membership, so long as the discipline follows customary policies and procedures.
- Direct graduate students to individuals and offices where they can find more information on union membership.
- State their personal position on union representation and discuss prior experiences they have had with unions.
- Explain the reasons for their position—without threats or promises of benefits.
- Explain financial requirements of union representation (i.e., dues) for which grad students may be responsible.
- Underscore that good-faith collective bargaining does not require parties to agree to the demands of the other party.
- Explain the importance of voting in any NLRB-conducted election to form a union, noting that a majority of votes will control the outcome.

As supervisors, it's important that faculty leaders be aware of what they can and cannot do under the NLRA and thus avoid being parties to charges of violations to the NLRB.

## Understand the consequences of violating grad students' rights

If a graduate student feels that their NLRA rights have been violated by a faculty member (or another institutional employee), they have the right to file a NLRB charge against the institution (https://www.nlrb.gov/about-nlrb/what-we-do/investigate-charges). The NLRB will investigate the allegations and determine whether an NLRA violation has occurred. Faculty leaders may be required to provide an affidavit regarding their observations/recollections about the charges or incidents in question.

If the NLRB finds evidence to support a charge, it will attempt to facilitate a settlement between the parties. When the parties cannot agree to a settlement, the NLRB will issue a complaint, ultimately leading to a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge. The NLRB may seek various remedies for the charging employee(s), including but not limited to backpay for a discharged employee, reinstatement, or the publishing of notice by the employer promising to comply with the NLRA.

Faculty leaders should cooperate with NLRB investigations and avoid departmental retaliation against graduate students who file a charge with the board.

## The bottom line

As mentioned before, faculty leaders are often caught between grad students who want to unionize and administrations who may be opposed to such a union. Many faculty leaders may be sympathetic to unionizing graduate students (having been research or teaching assistants themselves). Others may be frustrated at the disruptions that union activity causes to their teaching and research work.

Whatever the case, faculty leaders are supervisors under the NLRA and have legal responsibilities to avoid discriminating or retaliating against unionizing grad students. As grad student unions continue to proliferate, faculty leaders should take these obligations seriously.

# Foundations for Effective Recruiting: A Chair's Perspective

**By Laura G. McGee**

A Facebook post showed three smiling young faculty members standing next to a departmental banner. The caption read simply "We are recruiting!" What did this post tell us? So little. What was missing? So much.

Faculty and administrators may be investing a huge amount of time in recruiting. And yet these efforts can be ridden with problems: failure to consider the needs of today's students, inconsistent messaging from within the department, inequitable distribution of effort in recruiting, and reluctance to abandon familiar but ineffective tactics.

When recruiting, many people want to start by creating visibility. This should be your last step. Think of it this way: you want prospective students to commit to your cause rather than join your club. Getting clarity about your cause requires that you establish your foundation or ROC—that is, your relevance, outcomes, and plan for collaboration—before you engage in visibility.

## Relevance

Engage in departmental conversations to establish consensus on these questions:

- Why do today's students need your degree?
- What other majors combine well with yours to make a graduate especially compelling on the job market? How do you communicate these combined degree paths?
- How can you convince current students that persistence is worth the return on investment?
- How can you demonstrate that graduates are successful or fulfilled because they earned your degree?
- Are you cultivating and harnessing the commitment of your alumni in support of the future of your programs?

Your answers to these questions may begin with anecdotal evidence. To determine a course of action, you need more. Substantiate the stories with senior exit interviews and alumni surveys, custom data inquiries to institutional research, and content-rich events that connect current students with alumni who are making a difference in the field. Create an annual cycle of gathering and examining data points and cultivating connections. Only in this way will you be able to speak to prospective students in a convincing way.

## Outcomes

Once you have determined why students need your degree and how it leads to success on today's job market, determine how you will measure the outcomes of learning in your program. You may have already identified outcomes and be measuring these to fulfill accreditation requirements, but you may want to review them with the purpose of recruiting in mind.

Express your program outcomes in everyday language. You need to be able to communicate to students what they can do when they commit to your program. Students in turn must be able to convey with ease and clarity to friends, family, and prospective employers what they can do because they have earned your degree.

Make every effort to ensure consensus among faculty on desired outcomes for the program. While this may be a lofty goal, it is worth having the difficult conversations that lead to greater mutual understanding and appreciation within the department. Doing so lays the groundwork for more consistent outward communication. Involve all ranks and disciplinary tracks in these discussions. Set aside any divisions between lower-division or pedagogy faculty and senior research faculty. Just as the component parts of a curriculum must work together to provide a quality learning experience, so must the people who teach in each program when messaging about it.

## Collaboration

This is where collaboration kicks in. If you didn't have it before, you need it now. The structure of graduate education today can have the effect of encouraging faculty to be solitary soldiers. But this does not work for an academic unit that is building a future together.

Labor should be shared and the work collaborative, even if this means that not everyone engages in the same activity in the same way. Make use of the varied talents of individuals while distributing the time on task as evenly as possible.

Do not expect faculty to engage in recruiting efforts without making that part of the formula for service or another existing reward system.

Do not allow recruiting to become the job of junior faculty. To do so is to support a caste system. Recruiting can be labor intensive, and it is essential to be respectful of the needs of junior faculty who will want to progress to promotion without unequal additional burdens on their time.

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# Dos and Don'ts for Prospective Department Chairs

**By Leonid Tsybeskov**

Have you ever considered becoming a head of an academic department? If the answer is yes, what follows should give you plenty of useful information. If the answer is maybe, it can help you make the decision. Even if the answer is no, it might change your mind.

Let us take a quick look at routine responsibilities of a department chair. Here is a partial list (and nothing can be delayed or forgotten): assigning course instructors; conducting annual reviews, evaluations and promotions; assigning and reassigning faculty to the department committees and subcommittees; responding to complaints; and answering endless emails. At the same time, prospective department chairs should know that they will have limited power. A dictatorship does not work in academia; nothing can be forced, and everything should be done via discussions and negotiations. Therefore, instead of barking out orders, try to generate enthusiasm, offer exciting tasks, and build alliances. Here are details.

## Build your team

As Marshall Goldsmith said, "You are only as good as your team." A strong academic team cannot be built without consensus and trust; thus, you will have to form the consensus and earn the trust. Make your staff an integral part of your team. Most of them have a lot of experience and internal knowledge. Select and appoint associate chairs as well. You will need them, especially for a department with multiple programs.

## Update the curriculum

Review and update the existing program curriculum (actually, this should be done every three to four years). Put together a committee and provide general guidance—for instance, checking your program against other universities' curricula. Pay attention to student graduation rate, and do not forget about compliance with the latest accreditation requirements. It is an important task, and every faculty member should contribute.

## Hire new faculty (if possible)

Hiring new faculty is always an exciting process, and it should start with justifications. Remind your opponents that hiring is the best investment in academia and try to involve in the process as many faculty members as possible. It will be a lot of work for everyone—writing the position description, screening applicants' CVs, selecting top candidates, organizing their visits, and no doubt having long discussions about your final hiring recommendations. This is one of the most important tasks because new faculty members will define the future of your department.

## Upgrade facilities

Every new department chair should review the state of their classrooms and teaching laboratories. But a bottom-up approach is better than a top-down one. Start by asking your instructors to provide suggestions for the laboratory and classroom upgrades, produce a list of desired equipment, and request suggestions on updating the lab manuals. Summarize the suggestions in a proposal, prepare a budget, and establish deadlines (because nothing works without budgets and deadlines). Present the proposal to a college dean and argue that the proposed upgrade will help your department to get ready for the next accreditation and, most important, to improve the quality of teaching.

## Develop the right attitude

A chairperson must have a positive attitude because whining and complaining will not help. Being optimistic, well-organized, and efficient creates a productive environment. Also, having the right attitude will help to establish a good working relationship with your college dean.

At the same time, it is important to not become a yes man and to openly discuss with the dean your concerns. These discussions should take place behind closed doors, not in public. And when you are overruled (and it will happen), you will have to follow orders or resign. Unfortunately, there is no other way.

## Do not stop teaching and conducting research

Some skills are perishable (in my opinion, most of them are), and without practice, your classroom confidence will quickly disappear. Don't let this happen to you. Keeping your research on track will also be difficult but not impossible. Declaring one weekday a research day and freeing yourself from administrative duties will help.

## Learn the art of conducting meetings

Every meeting requires preparation; otherwise, it could quickly go out of hand. This must not happen. Thus, the agenda and timetable must be established and followed, the information

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needs to be properly presented, and discussions should be kept in line. Having a good sense of humor is always helpful; as Mark Twain once wrote, "Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand."

### Learn to say no politely but firmly

Undoubtedly, people in your department will ask for favors, especially some of them. From my experience, the same people (approximately 10 percent of the faculty members) will consume close to 80 percent of your time. So, do not be dismissive, but remember that you have limited resources, only 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

### Understand what you should not do

It can be summarized in a few words: the rules cannot be broken. The major rules are written in the university faculty handbook, the department bylaws, and the labor union contract. And it does not matter if the pressure to break the rules is coming from above or below, the answer should be the same.

Also, a department chair should never break the administrative chain and talk to the provost or the president about an issue before discussing it with their dean. Going over the dean's head will immediately create mistrust and poison the working relationship. At the same time, your staff should not receive orders from the upper administration without your knowledge and consent.

### Know when and how to step down

When should you decide that your time as chairperson is up? The answer is different for different people. Some may become tired of fighting nonsense and realize that their enthusiasm is fading. Others will decide that they have accomplished their goals, they have made their departments better, and it is time to fully go back to teaching and research. In any case, having an exit strategy means stepping down on your own terms and not losing the final battle.

### Last advice

Before you decide to consider the job or not, here is one more piece of information. If you take the above pointers to heart, you may find, as I did, that chairing a department can be surprisingly rewarding and fun.

This article first appeared in *Academic Leader* on January 18, 2022.

# Ten Ways to Support Your Immigrant Colleagues

**By Dafna Lemish**

I am an academic immigrant who studies immigrants who, like myself, moved from their homelands to other countries to pursue academic careers. Institutions of higher education around the world are homes to many academics who migrated across geopolitical borders under a variety of personal, professional, and political circumstances to pursue opportunities, academic freedom, and disciplinary excellence. There are probably several in your own department, school, or college. In interviewing my study's participants, I learned about their motivations, hopes, and regrets. They shared challenges they are facing, even years after immigration, as well as their pride in the contributions they are making to their institutions and disciplines (Lemish, 2022).

Our conversations during the in-depth interviews and those stimulated by the publication of the study itself, including emails with feedback and expressions of gratitude, led me to reflect on the different ways we can help academic immigrants feel valued as well as develop their sense of belonging as full participants in our institutions. It is a shared interest for all of us—students, faculty, administrators—to cultivate a collegial academic culture of belonging that maximizes the potential of each member of our community.

Below are 10 suggestions I am making on our behalf:

### 1. Learn our names and try to pronounce them correctly.

Names are central signals of identity and meaning. Many of us really care that you make the effort to respect ours, even if it takes time and practice. Do not be afraid to ask us to pronounce our names for you or correct you. Such a sincere effort means a lot. Apologize and learn from your mistakes. Remember, your name may sound just as strange to us, and we are making an effort to learn it too.

### 2. Be patient with our English skills and accents.

Our English pronunciation may sound incomprehensible to you. We understand that it makes communication difficult. Imagine how incomprehensible you sound to us. We are all learning to communicate. With time and practice, our interactions will become more fluent and accessible. The more we talk to each other, the more practice we get, and the better we will become. Don't avoid talking to us because doing so requires such effort.

### 3. Recognize and show an interest in our main cultural holidays.

Many of us continue to celebrate the cultural and religious holidays of our countries of origin. Knowing when our holidays occur is the first thing you can do in this regard. Investigate whether your institution maintains an international holiday calendar; if it does not, propose that administrators create one.

Also, you will find we have many fascinating customs and traditions; many are actually quite similar to your own. Ask about them. Hold international holiday events, exchange recipes, wish us happy holidays, and ask us about our plans and what we miss from our home countries.

### 4. Show an interest in major current events happening in our home countries.

Many of us live double lives in our former and present countries. We are joyful when a peace treaty has been signed at home. We burst with pride when a compatriot wins a Nobel Prize. But most of the time we are worried about violent conflicts, political turmoil, or natural disasters in our homelands. We probably have family and friends back there—so we are concerned and maintain constant communication with them. Ask us how they are doing.

Of course, geopolitical borders do not keep those worries away. We often start our days scrolling our home news sources on our phones before we check local weather. If I am from India, express condolences for a horrific accident. Turkey—ask me what I think about results of recent elections. Eastern Europe—ask me whether the war in Ukraine affects me personally. Syria—ask whether I have relatives and friends who are refugees. Show sincere curiosity and empathy.

Help organize disciplinary-relevant academic events (e.g., "Western Media's Coverage of the Uprising in Iran" in a School of Journalism with a member from Iran or "Innovations in Earthquake-Resistance Planning" in a School of Engineering with a member from Turkey).

More broadly, demonstrate in multiple ways that you understand that we are all part of an interconnected world.

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### 5. Appreciate the strengths we bring to our institutions and disciplines.

We often ask different questions in class, in our scholarship, and in committee meetings because we have different experiences. As a result, we provide unexpected insights and examples and apply new approaches. All the above expands the worlds of students and colleagues alike. Our differences are our strengths; there is a lot we can learn from one another.

### 6. Appreciate the challenges we face.

It is not easy to relocate. Often, we feel longing, guilt, or worry. We are frustrated by being unable to express ourselves with the same ease, accuracy, and nuance as you do in your native language. We have "black holes" in understanding pop culture or in trivia games. We are often "othered" or left out. Our keeping quiet may be perceived as ignorance or complicity, or our speech as aggressive and inappropriate.

### 7. Help us network with other members of the community from our homelands.

Provide community building opportunities for us to bond with others who experience the same life circumstances in our new country. This will enable us to support each other, provide advice, and enjoy the relief of speaking in our native language and humor. Support compatriot social events and invite international guests to campus for us to enjoy, and be proud of us.

### 8. Introduce international students to faculty from their regions.

Connecting faculty and international students offers an important layer of mentorship, advice, and support that benefits the integration and success of both.

### 9. Employ multiple forms of teaching evaluations in reviewing promotion cases.

Do not rely solely on quantitative student surveys (known for being biased against those perceived as "others"—as is well documented for women, people of color, nonbinary faculty, faculty with disabilities, etc.). Peer observations of teaching, reviews of teaching materials and graded assignments, and out-of-class pedagogical initiatives will provide you with a much more robust understanding of what we bring to our teaching.

### 10. Expect your academic leaders and especially the institution's office of diversity and inclusion to include academic immigrants as part of their mandate.

Upper administration and especially DEI offices (where they exist) should address our immigrant members in ways patterned after those designed for other minoritized faculty groups in diversity training, policies, and outreach messaging. Some of us are people of color but not defined as "historically marginalized groups" (i.e., Afro-Americans, Latinx, and Native Americans), and some of us are not people of color at all. We are a heterogeneous group, just like LGBTQIA+ communities. All of us require the attention and resources of upper administration.

In practicing inclusive strategies, such as those presented here, we hope that the common question we are regularly faced with—"Where are you from?"—will become an expression of your acknowledgment of our value and contributions to our institutions, rather than a comment on our peculiarity, oddity, strangeness, even uniqueness.

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Lemish, D. (2022, May). Academic immigrants in DEI discussions: Another blind spot. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 54*(3), 51–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2022.2054200 (open access)

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# Well-Being and Well-Thinking: How to Stay Healthy in Academia

**By Seena Haines, Jenny A. Van Amburgh, and Susan M. Stein**

Resilience is about growing both personally and professionally when we face difficult situations. It is about coming out the other side as a stronger or more prepared person rather than bouncing back to the status quo. We know that our brains are highly adaptive; we can create new patterns of thinking and acting, yet we need to purposefully practice to make those patterns stick. The brain has neuroplasticity and can rewire itself with consistent practice, persistence, and training—even when we face life's most difficult challenges.

It can help to think of taking care of ourselves as akin to the routine maintenance that supports a car's longevity, high performance, and efficiency. As regards our mental and physical well-being, we sometimes forget to watch for the signs to slow down, to get "into the shop." In this analogy, we share some guidance toward well-being and well-thinking to promote resilience in your "dream car."

## Checking under the hood

Take the opportunity to self-assess and "check under the hood" to gauge your resiliency. In life, you may reach a time in life known as the fertile void (McDargh, 2014). This is a threshold to something new, a growth opportunity. It can happen after a major event, when you may feel you don't know what to do next. In this time, hold onto this "space" and listen: Seek support from your pit crew (crew of support and nurturing) to aid you in decision-making and to provide encouragement. Complete a resiliency inventory to self-assess where you are right now, at this point in time. It might benefit you to routinely check your resiliency gauge—just as you perform regular maintenance on your car. Consider investing about 10 minutes to complete an inventory and perhaps sharing it with an accountability partner, coach, or trusted colleague for additional value.

Here are two examples of instruments to consider a self-assessment to help evaluate areas that may need growth and development:

- How Resilient Are You? (A quiz)
- Your Personal Resiliency Quotient (RQ) Assessment

## Maintenance plan

In addition to checking your resiliency gauge, it is important to have a maintenance plan for the other components of developing your resiliency well-being. Just as a car needs four wheels to move forward, you will need four skills to grow your resilient life: *adaptability, agility, laugh-ability,* and *alignment*. These make up the core components of your maintenance plan.

- **Adaptability**: A change in thinking and feeling, reframing what is possible rather than impossible. Knowing what you can control and what is out of our control.
- **Agility**: Your ability to move quickly, which includes your thinking. Creating multiple actions and solutions while avoiding analysis by paralysis—overanalyzing to the point you can't move forward. In your body, action can take the form of physical needs (nutrition, hydration, sleep, and exercise). Remember the importance of sleep hygiene, which is the best step in clearing your mind and unleashing the power of creativity and innovation.
- **Laugh-ability**: Your playtime. Think about "FISH!," a philosophy created by Luden, Paul, and Christensen (2000) based on their observations at the Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle. They encourage people to play, to make others' days, to be present with each individual, to choose their attitudes, and to avoid adopting a persona.
- **Alignment**: To remain standing through your sturdy foundation. Your personal mission statement, your why in life (your core values), your why for your career, and your sense of purpose and a higher calling. Alignment can help guide your adaptability.

## Ways to fuel your tank

It is important to learn what gives you energy and what drains it. We've all had days when we leave work smiling, energized, and feeling on top of the world; what makes those days so positive? It is possible that we have positive interactions with our colleagues, are able to laugh and laugh a lot, celebrate someone's success, or feel valued in the work we do. And yet we've also had days when we wish we could hit the reset button—whether because we don't feel valued, there is unnecessary tension or drama, or we are unable to work to our fullest on account of leadership or management actions.

Our energy comes from what psychologists Salvatore Maddie and Suzanne Kobasa call *psychological hardiness* (McDargh, 2014). Their research states that there are three ways you can practice to improve your emotional and physical energy: *commitment* (living your *why*),

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*control* (knowing what you can manage and change), and *challenge* (being willing to handle what ends up in your workspace). Positive and negative emotions can co-occur. Research indicates that individuals who have a daily ratio of three positive emotional experiences to one negative emotional experience are more likely than those with lower ratios to be resilient and successfully reintegrate (Fredrickson, 2001).

Apply these concepts and be purposeful as you develop your personal and professional resiliency by identifying your energy boosters and drainers. Identify those activities or situations that fuel your tank, commit to keep them coming, and celebrate them. And when you identify energy drainers, challenge and reframe them. Maybe all you can control is your reaction to them—and that takes training in learning to let them go. Keep practicing these three so you can keep your tank full.

### The autobahn–road of life

Ashley Good (n.d.), founder and CEO of Fail Forward, believes that our relationship with failure can either unlock our full potential or keep us from ever realizing it. Have the courage to try and the resilience to fail. While failing may seem daunting because of how we define ourselves, it doesn't need to be that way. Perspective is key. By embracing failure and setting yourself up to win no matter what, you pave the way for your success.

To summarize, just as a car needs four wheels to move forward, you need four skills to grow your resilient life: adaptability, agility, laugh-ability and alignment. It truly is a combination of all four resiliency skills that will aid you in bouncing back. Adaptability helps you reframe situations and challenges as you work toward solutions. Agility keeps you nimble and helps you avoid potholes. Laugh-ability brings you energy in difficult times. Alignment helps you stay true to yourself—your purpose, your why. All these are relevant on and off road. We wish for you a long, adventurous, and successful journey.

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To the extent that you can, make recruiting fun and social. Model best behaviors yourself. Create a social networking opportunity out of the recruiting event. Cast your faculty in the best light when you introduce them to others.

### Visibility

Having laid the foundation for clarity about identity and outcomes, you are ready to make your program more visible. Focus your efforts on these pillars of visibility:

Faculty should engage in activities related to the relevance of your degrees for undergraduates. These might be applied uses of skills like those students acquire in the program or dissemination of research. Publicize these as a model for students who would choose your degree. For example, if a professor publishes the translation of a literary work, ask them to give a talk for undergraduates about translation both in the literary realm and in other fields.

Your students are your best ambassadors. Share their successes as they occur. Examples of student successes you can share are research conference presentations, receipt of an internship or scholarship, or recognition on a national exam in the field. When students engage in service learning and create projects relevant to the community, publicize these. Create a student ambassador program and endow it with a small stipend from foundation funds to provide matching shirts and help compensate ambassadors for their time.

Sing the praises of graduates who are using skills gained in your program in their careers. You can write up a short alumni spotlight for the university newsletter, invite a panel of alumni to speak, or even simply like or repost the LinkedIn announcement of a graduate's promotion.

In this article, I have provided concrete ideas for the sequence of steps needed to build the foundation for a successful recruiting program. Engaging with your faculty on the components outlined here is likely to lead to quality dialogue and a fresh approach.

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