

BUILDING COMMUNITY AND SUPPORT IN PANDEMIC TIMES (AND BEYOND)

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The target audience for this presentation is graduate students. However, I hope that the tips and frameworks I share here are helpful for faculty, and others beyond academia.

I draw on several sources for this presentation including: my personal lived experience, the National Center for Faculty Diversity and Development, and Harvard's Academic Resource Center.

A word about format. I will provide you with frameworks and information. I encourage you to do the guided activities in this presentation. You can do the activities with folks in our Department, or other people or groups you trust.

COMPASSION

We are living through a pandemic. It's OK to not feel OK. Be kind to yourself. And be kind to those around you.

The pandemic has been a shock to our lives.

The life and work flow that we had just a month ago is
no longer.

You are not alone.

THE MANY ROLES WE HAVE

As graduate students, we have several different jobs.

We are students, researchers, teachers, advisors, and
mentors.

And we are also parents, partners, caregivers,
community members, and more.

EDUCATORS

Graduate students are key points of contact – or intermediaries – between undergraduate students and 'the university'.

Graduate students are currently on the frontlines of providing an education for undergraduate students.

And. Graduate students are also on the frontlines of providing mentorship and care.

**Learn about the home environment and circumstances
that your students are facing.**

HOME + STUDY ENVIRONMENTS

Do your students have:

- Access to high-speed, reliable internet
- A study space
- Quiet space

Your students might need help with:

- Developing new study habits
- Creating 'study' spaces in their home contexts
- Negotiating with families boundaries for studying

HOME + FAMILY CONTEXT

Your students may live in neighborhoods:

- **Close to coronavirus hotspots**
- **Far from hospitals or clinics**
- **Grocery stores are low on goods**

Your students may have family members who:

- **Are “essential” workers**
- **Are still working in high-risk jobs**
- **Have lost their jobs**
- **Don’t get paid leave**
- **Don’t have health insurance**
- **Are struggling to pay rent**
- **Don’t have citizenship**

Be sensitive to the home environments and circumstances that your students are facing.

GETTING THE SUPPORT THAT WE NEED

So as graduate students with many roles, we need a diverse set of supports to be well and to succeed.

Especially in these pandemic times.

A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT



National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity

The National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity breaks down support needs into different component parts.

Here, I have adapted their framework.

Network of Advisors, Mentors, Sponsors, Collaborators

SUBSTANTIVE
FEEDBACK

PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

SPONSORSHIP

EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL,
MENTAL HEALTH
SUPPORT

ACCESS TO
OPPORTUNITIES



INTELLECTUAL
COMMUNITY

ACCOUNTABILITY
(FOR THE THINGS THAT MATTER)

ROLE MODELS

Network of Advisors, Mentors, Sponsors, Collaborators

SUBSTANTIVE FEEDBACK

People who seriously engage with your ideas

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

People who help you learn the formal/informal 'rules of the game'

SPONSORSHIP

People who write letters of recommendation or
'put in a good word for you'

EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

People who help or support your well-being

ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES

Who is letting you know about or including you in
opportunities?



INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY

People who share and nurture your intellectual
ideas

ACCOUNTABILITY (FOR THE THINGS THAT MATTER)

People or systems that keep you accountable (for important things,
especially in areas with weak accountability structures: like
writing, health and well-being)

ROLE MODELS

People who are doing things the way you aspire to to them

By categorizing supports into these different component parts, we can take better inventory of our support system.

We also notice other important things.

Like, we can't rely on one single person, group, or team to provide us with all the support we need.

We notice that different people and groups provide us with different support.

We also notice some overlaps. People might provide us with more than one type of support.

It takes a village.

Who is providing you with support in your life?

SUBSTANTIVE
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INTELLECTUAL
COMMUNITY

ACCOUNTABILITY
(FOR THE THINGS THAT MATTER)

ROLE MODELS

Let's talk about a few of these.

EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL + MENTAL
HEALTH SUPPORT

EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, + MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Above all other needs we must prioritize emotional, physical, and mental health wellbeing.



EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, + MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Think about your physical health. Are you in pain? Are you moving your body? Are you staying hydrated?



EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, + MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Think about your emotional and mental health. How do you feel? Can you name your emotions?

All of your emotions are valid.



EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, + MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

How are you taking care of your physical, emotional, mental health, and or spiritual well-being?



EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, + MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

You don't have to do it alone.

Among others, mental health professionals can be of support.



EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, + MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Who do you trust to speak about your well-being?



EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, + MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

1. Reflect on the current support you have. (3 mins)
2. Are you lacking the support you need in this area? (2 mins + discussion)
3. Reflect on what has prevented you from getting the support you need, or how you can get more of it. (2 mins + discussion)
4. Brainstorm ways you can move towards getting this support. (3 mins + discussion)
5. Take a concrete step toward getting the support you need! (volunteer accountability partner)

CREATE A CARE PLAN

CREATE A CARE PLAN

1. Set up a call/video chat with people you trust. This can be one person or a small group.
2. Review these slides and talk about your needs. How can y'all support each other?
3. Create a care plan or an emergency care plan.
4. Here are some questions to ask your support system:
 1. How can you best support me?
 2. How can I best support you?
 3. How can we support each other?
5. Here are some elements you can include in your plan: Who can you call or contact if you experience any of the following?
 - Experience coronavirus symptoms
 - Have a panic attack
 - Have trouble staying active
 - Need emergency child care
 - Experience a racist attack

HYDRATION BREAK

SUBSTANTIVE FEEDBACK

SUBSTANTIVE FEEDBACK

We need a lot of substantive feedback throughout the PhD journey.



SUBSTANTIVE FEEDBACK

As early-stage graduate students, we need thoughtful engagement with our brewing ideas.

As prospectus writers, we need experts to help us design and frame our projects.

As dissertation writers, we need serious engagement with our research and writing.



SUBSTANTIVE FEEDBACK

Who is providing you with substantive feedback on your research, writing, or other work?



SUBSTANTIVE FEEDBACK

1. Reflect on the current support you have. (3 mins)
2. Are you lacking the support you need in this area? (2 mins + discussion)
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ACCOUNTABILITY

ACCOUNTABILITY

Think about the different roles in your life.

Student. Researcher. Teacher. Parent. Partner. Family
Member. Community Member. And more.



ACCOUNTABILITY

What are you accountable for?

Who are you accountable to?



ACCOUNTABILITY

Who is holding you accountable to your goals?

How are you holding yourself accountable to your goals?



ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Reflect on the current support you have. (3 mins)
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ARC

ACADEMIC RESOURCE CENTER
at Harvard University

The Harvard Academic Resource Center provides graduate students with many services.

I will highlight some resource that can help keep you accountable to your research, writing, and teaching.

ACCOUNTABILITY


Tailored calendars, weekly, and daily work schedules
are tools to help keep you accountable.

ACCOUNTABILITY: A SEMESTER PLAN CAN HELP

The ARC offers a “bird’s eye calendar.”

A bird’s eye calendar is a great tool for making a semester plan.

BIRD'S EYE VIEW—SPRING 2020



WEEK	SUN	MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT
MAR 22	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
MAR 29	29	30	31	APR 1	2	3	4
APRIL 5	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
APRIL 12	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
APRIL 19	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
APRIL 26	26	27	28	29	30	MAY 1	2
MAY 3	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
MAY 10	10	11	12	13	14	15	16

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APRIL 26	26	27	28	29	30	MAY 1	2
MAY 3	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
MAY 10	10	11	12	13	14	15	16


ACCOUNTABILITY: A SEMESTER PLAN CAN HELP

Include your key deadlines and major dates.

These can be work + personal-related deadlines/events.

You can then backwards plan from key deadlines, to help you plan the work distribution across weeks.

BIRD'S EYE VIEW—SPRING 2020



WEEK	SUN	MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT
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ACCOUNTABILITY: A SEMESTER PLAN CAN HELP

The ARC offers workshops and worksheets to help you make your own bird's eye calendar.

Check out their website. You'll find a worksheet titled the "Steps for Making a Bird's Eye Plan."



Steps to Making a Bird's Eye Plan

- Gather syllabi & other places your commitments are written
- On the bird's eye calendar,
 - List all exams, paper & project deadlines
 - Add weekly reaction papers, p-sets, quizzes, etc.
 - Block out days when work is unlikely (holidays, friends visiting, weddings, etc.)
- Add a plan
 - Create early deadlines for deliverables whenever possible
 - Space your deadlines apart
 - Starting at each of your new deadlines, plan the steps back to the beginning

More Planning Tips

- Rewrite **tomorrow's plan** the night before, with one "must do"
- **Make steps** active and specific
- Allow **2-3X more time** for projects than planned
- **Create routines**
 - Bedtime
 - Morning
 - Study
- Create **structure** (especially on "free" days)
- Be clear when you're "**on**" or "**off**" duty
 - Date night
 - Friends & family
 - Whatever

ACCOUNTABILITY: A WEEKLY + DAILY PLAN CAN HELP

Now that you have master plan, it is also helpful to have a weekly and daily schedule.

		Weekly Schedule				
		Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri
7	:00 am :30 am					
8	:00 am :30 am					
9	:00 am :30 am					
10	:00 am :30 am					
11	:00 pm :30 pm					
12	:00 pm :30 pm					
1	:00 pm :30 pm					
2	:00 pm :30 pm					
3	:00 pm :30 pm					
4	:00 pm :30 pm					
5	:00 pm :30 pm					
6	:00 pm :30 pm					
7	:00 pm :30 pm					
8	:00 pm :30 pm					

Weekly Schedule

		Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri
7	:00 am					
	:30 am					
8	:00 am					
	:30 am					
9	:00 am					
	:30 am					
10	:00 am					
	:30 am					
11	:00 pm					
	:30 pm					
12	:00 pm					
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1	:00 pm					
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3	:00 pm					
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4	:00 pm					
	:30 pm					
5	:00 pm					
	:30 pm					
6	:00 pm					
	:30 pm					
7	:00 pm					
	:30 pm					
8	:00 pm					
	:30 pm					

ACCOUNTABILITY: A WEEKLY + DAILY PLAN CAN HELP

Some tips:

1. Schedule your most important/difficult tasks early in the morning (or whenever you work best).
2. For your most intensive tasks, try organizing your work into periods of 30 to 45-minutes.
3. Writing or working in “bursts” can help keep you focused.

ACCOUNTABILITY: A WEEKLY + DAILY PLAN CAN HELP

Some more tips:

1. In addition to listing 'projects', also list specific tasks. Example: instead of saying "work on dissertation chapter" say "work on the first three paragraphs of my introduction chapter"
2. Things always take longer than you think. That's OK. No judgement. But do give yourself more time for completing tasks.

ACCOUNTABILITY: A WEEKLY + DAILY PLAN CAN HELP

Some more tips:

1. Include all key elements of your life. Block off time for lunch, walk with the bae, FaceTime with family, virtual happy hours with loved ones.
2. Consider the needs of those you live with. Have a conversation about sharing spaces. Will you take turns using the desk or the kitchen table?

SUPPORT GROUPS

SUPPORT GROUPS

We are in a pandemic.

Many of us are effectively locked in a room,
apartment, house. Our outside time is limited.

Many of us are far from family, friends, co-workers,
advisors, mentors, colleagues, and other forms of
support.

And it can feel lonely.

SUPPORT GROUPS

You are not alone.

SUPPORT GROUPS

There are groups that we can create or plug into.
These groups can help us meet some of our needs.

Are there any groups you can create/join to support you?

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COMMUNITY

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(FOR THE THINGS THAT MATTER)

ROLE MODELS

SUPPORT GROUPS: WORK/RESEARCH/WRITING

You can plug into existing accountability groups (like the Writing Oasis, or the ARC's Graduate Student Accountability Groups).

Or you can create your own group.

SUPPORT GROUPS: WORK/RESEARCH/WRITING

Some tips:

1. Experiment with which group works best for you.
2. Smaller works may work better than larger groups. Smaller groups allow for more intimate support. This way, the group can be invested in each other's success and well-being.
3. Experiment with format.
4. Some key elements can include: introductions, talk about goals the week, daily check-ins, encouraging emails or messages.

SUPPORT GROUPS: WORK/RESEARCH/WRITING

Some tips:

1. Build community, not just work check-in. Ask about how folks are doing, how are their families doing?
2. Finds ways to reward yourselves, as individuals and as a group. Perhaps schedule a happy hour.

SUPPORT GROUPS

1. Reflect on what groups you are currently a part of. (3 mins)
2. Do you wish you were a part of more groups? If so, for what purpose (work, work-out, mental-health, other) (2 mins + discussion)
3. Reflect on what has prevented you from getting the support you need, or how you can get more of it. (2 mins + discussion)
4. Brainstorm ways you can move towards getting this support. (3 mins + discussion)
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COMMUNICATION WITH FACULTY ADVISORS

COMMUNICATION WITH ADVISORS

This is a good time for advisors and advisees to check-in.

COMMUNICATION WITH ADVISORS

Advisors-advisees should talk about: updated deadlines, modified expectations, updated timelines, and plans for remaining in communication.



ICTR

UW Institute for Clinical and Translational Research

The University of Wisconsin-Madison's Institute for Clinical and Translational Research offers resources for how to create effective mentorship relationships.

You can use ICTR's Mentorship Agreement to help guide your conversations.



Mentorship Agreement Template

The purpose of this template is to assist you in documenting mutually agreed upon goals and parameters that will serve as the foundation for your mentoring relationships. While mentors and mentees may find mentorship agreements to be useful, they are optional. This template is expected to be altered to meet individual needs.

[1] **Goals** (what you hope to achieve as a result of this relationship; e.g., gain perspective relative to skills necessary for success in academia, explore new career opportunities/alternatives, obtain knowledge of organizational culture, networking, leadership skill development, etc.):

[2] **Steps to achieving goals** as stated above (e.g., meeting regularly, manuscripts/grants, collaborating on research projects, steps to achieving independence, etc.):

[3] **Meeting frequency** (frequency, duration, and location of meetings):

[4] **Confidentiality:** Any sensitive issues that we discuss will be held in the strictest of confidence. Issues that are off limits for discussion include:

[5] Plan for **evaluating relationship effectiveness** (e.g., bi-annual review of mentorship meeting minutes, goals, and outcomes/accomplishments):

[6] **Relationship termination clause:** In the event that either party finds the mentoring relationship unproductive and requests that it be terminated, we agree to honor that individual's decision without question or blame.

[7] **Duration:** This mentorship relationship will continue as long as both parties feel comfortable with its productivity or until: _____

Mentor's Signature _____ Mentee's Signature _____ Date _____



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Mentor's Signature _____ **Mentee's Signature** _____ **Date** _____

COMMUNICATION WITH ADVISORS

Note: One issue faculty can't accept confidentiality relates to Title IX harassment issues.

COMMUNICATION WITH ADVISORS

You can tailor this template to meet your needs.

It's OK if you don't want to use this document. You can use the prompts to guide your conversations with your advisors.

COMMUNICATION WITH ADVISORS

Develop agreement(s) with your advisor(s).

COMMUNICATION WITH ADVISORS

Remember, you may need different supports from different advisors or mentors.

Tailor your conversations accordingly.

OK TO COMMUNICATE SPECIAL CONCERNS

YOU HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO COMMUNICATE YOUR NEEDS

Not everyone has a safe "home" environment.

Not everyone has a stable internet connection.

Not everyone has a desk.

Not everyone has a reliable laptop.

YOU HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO COMMUNICATE YOUR NEEDS

Some of us or our loved ones loved have been or could be physically affected by coronavirus.

Some of us our our loved ones have been or could be economically affected by the pandemic.

Some of us our our loved ones have been or could be socially isolated.

**YOU HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO COMMUNICATE YOUR
NEEDS AND TO ASK FOR SUPPORT**

COMPASSION

I repeat.

We are living through a pandemic. It's OK to not feel OK. Be kind to yourself. And be kind to those around you.

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