



Graduate Student Work/ Life Balance

Council of Graduate Schools Annual Meeting

Nashville, TN

December 5, 2019

GradWell: *Be Well to Do Well*

Council of Graduate Schools

December, 2019

Presented by:

Tammi Vacha-Haase
Dean of the Graduate College
Professor of Psychology





- **Public university**
- **Begin offering Master's degrees in 1970 and in 2001 offered our first PhD**
- **3,200 graduate students**
- **13 Doctoral programs and 70 Master's programs**
- **Centralized Graduate College**



BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

GradWell

be well, to do well

<https://www.boisestate.edu/healthservices/gradwell/>



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Through this initiative we collectively acknowledge that graduate school is stressful and often threatens a person's mental health. We want to open the door to conversations about the importance of self-care, learn specific actions to promote mental health and wellness, and destigmatize asking for help. We want faculty and staff across the university to understand their role as key players in their students mental health, and at the end of the day have a mutual understanding that in order for students to do their absolute best, they have to feel supported, acknowledged, appreciated, balanced, and well.

Create a culture
of wellness in
graduate
education

Knowledge
Awareness
Skill



Knowledge

- **What is wellness?**
- **What are specific threats to wellness?**
- **How is wellness improved?**





Personal Awareness

- **What type of value do you place on the concept of wellness?**
- **What assumptions, beliefs, and biases do you have about wellness for graduate students?**
- **How important is wellness as a priority and focal point of the graduate school experience?**





Skill

- **When it's clear someone's well-being is at risk, what actions can be taken to support and intervene?**
- **What actions can you take to create a culture of well-being in graduate education across the institution?**



Simple Approach to Support



- Prevent
- Normalize
- Notice
- Ask
- Refer

Based on David Gooblar & Barry Schreier (The Chronicle, 2018)



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BroncoFit model



Wellness
=
Balance



Phase 1 Objectives

- Increase awareness of need and GradWell Initiative
 - Create website
 - Social media campaign
- Training workshops for faculty and staff
- Inserts in syllabi and program handbooks
- Update campus-wide mental health handbooks w/ graduate student page
- “Don’t Cancel that Class”
- Wellbeing, semester reading & discussion group
- Individual and group therapy for graduate students

healthservices.boisestate.edu/gradwell





Phase 2 Objectives

- Increase faculty involvement
 - Hire faculty member as GradWell Director
 - Offer targeted training for faculty
- Provide monthly themed wellness workshops for students
- Expand group support options for graduate students

healthservices.boisestate.edu/gradwell





Phase 3 Objectives

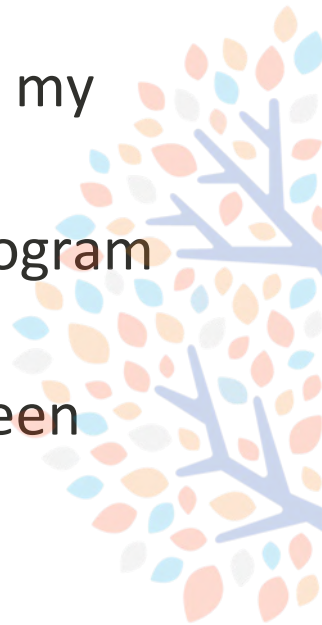
- Identify needs of faculty in regard to supporting graduate student well-being
- Increase ongoing systematic communication with faculty and students
- Implement peer mentoring for students
- Proactive team targeted interventions with identified graduate programs
- Continue to explore outcome measures

healthservices.boisestate.edu/gradwell



Outcome Measures

- Campus awareness
- Number of attendees/use of services
- Faculty satisfaction survey (knowledge/awareness/skill)
- Climate survey for all enrolled graduate students
 - The faculty in my department or program care about my mental health and well-being
 - The administrators and staff in my department or program care about my mental health and well-being
 - (PHQ2) Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following:
 - Little interest or pleasure in doing things
 - Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless
- Dean of Students: Number of situations of concern





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GradWell

Be Well to Do Well

~ Thank You ~





Work-Life Balance Programming at Carolina

Suzanne E. Barbour, Dean
CGS 2019 Winter meeting



UNC- Chapel Hill (Carolina) Statistics

- Flagship university in the UNC system
- >8,200 graduate students (28% of student body)
- >80 programs offering >160 degrees
- Carnegie Classification: Highest Research Activity
 - Top 5 research university in the U.S. (1st in behavioral/ social sciences)
 - 14th in NIH funding (7th among public universities)





Carolina Wellness Guiding Values

- Research and assessment, both qualitative & quantitative, guide our services and practice.
- Wellness is holistic and comprised of eight connected dimensions of well-being.
- Wellness is a journey, not a destination, formed by individuals' life experiences and identities.
- Everyone should be able to reach their fullest potential, be well and thrive.
- Environment and culture influence health and well-being,
- Everyone in the Carolina community plays a role in creating a well campus environment.
- Partnership and collaboration are essential in creating a healthy campus.
- Access to health and wellness resources is integral to personal success and well-being.
- Health & wellness directly impact academic success.

Work-Life Balance Programming



- Community building
 - Targeted newsletters
 - Affinity and empowerment groups
- Wellness programming
- Wellness Coaches



Wellness Coaches

- Counselors who provide individualized guidance and assessment
- Embedded in some units
 - Law
 - Dental School
 - Medical School (Biological & Biomedical Sciences Program; BBSP)
- Help students to navigate 8 dimensions of wellness

Eight Dimensions of Wellness



Diversity & Student Success Programming



Graduate Student Wellness Programming



- Stress & Resilience Part 1
- Introduction to the Enneagram
- Stress & Resilience Part 2
- Enneagram Centers
- Enneagram Directions of Stress and Growth
- Communication Hits and Misses
- Navigating Conflict
- Healthy Relationships Outside of Work/Academia
- Listening to Your Body
- Mindfulness Meditation

Meaning Making for Graduate Students

- Introduction to Meaning Making: What are my Values?
 - Past - Exploration of my Identity: Who am I and where am I from?
 - Present - Resiliency and Joy: How does graduate school fit into my life's purpose?
 - Future - Hopes and Dreams: What are my plans after the Master's or Doctoral degree?





Community Building



Carolina Graduate Student F1RSTS



- Orientation activities that specifically address acclimating to academic culture
- Understanding mentor/mentee relationship dynamics
- Learning to ask for help around the university
- Learning to say “no”/ time management in academia
- Adopting the professional or academic persona
- Communicating your academic training to family and friends
- Learning to ask questions you assume everyone already knows
- Understanding funding basics
- Maintaining your wellness while in graduate school
- Tapping into and creating informal support networks
- First-generation faculty panel discussion
- First-Gen Fridays—social networking events
- Student Advisory Board

Proud to be a First Forward Advisory Institution



**THE GRADUATE
SCHOOL**

Key Partnerships



- Student Wellness (Student Affairs)
- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Wellness Coaches

Diversity & Student Success Programming



Carolina Diversity & Student Success Team

Co-Directors

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QUESTIONS????

Vacation Policy for PhD Students at Boston University

Daniel Kleinman, Associate Provost for Graduate



Boston University Office of the Provost



PhD Education at BU



Full-funding Model since 2013

64 PhD Programs

Over 2200 PhD Students

5.7 Years for Median Time to Degree

Source: Academic Data Warehouse

Work-Life Balance



Extended workdays (more than 50-hours/ week) associated with cardiovascular disease



As workday increases from 8 up to 16 hours exponential increase in accidents



Deteriorating performance on psycho-physiological tests and injuries associated with very long shifts



Graduate students more than six times as likely as general population to experience depression and anxiety

Stipends and “Work”

- Stipends typically for 20 hours of “work”
- Hard to distinguish work for pay from education
- Advisors sometimes have unrealistic expectations for hours “working”



Policy Process



Importance of
Associate Dean
in College of Arts
and Sciences in
this case



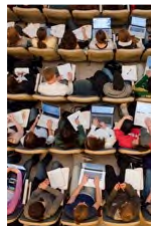
GAPP



Graduate
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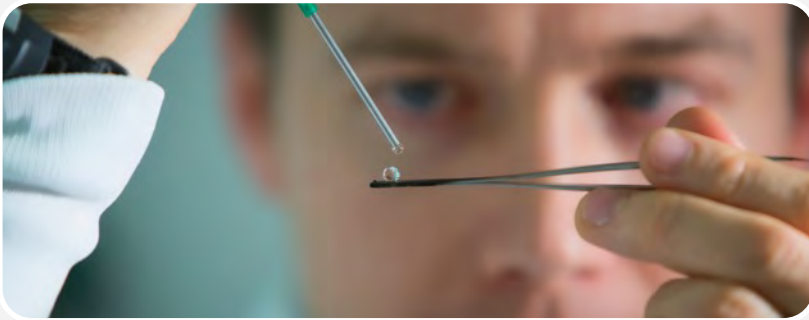


University
Council



Implementation

Vacation Policy



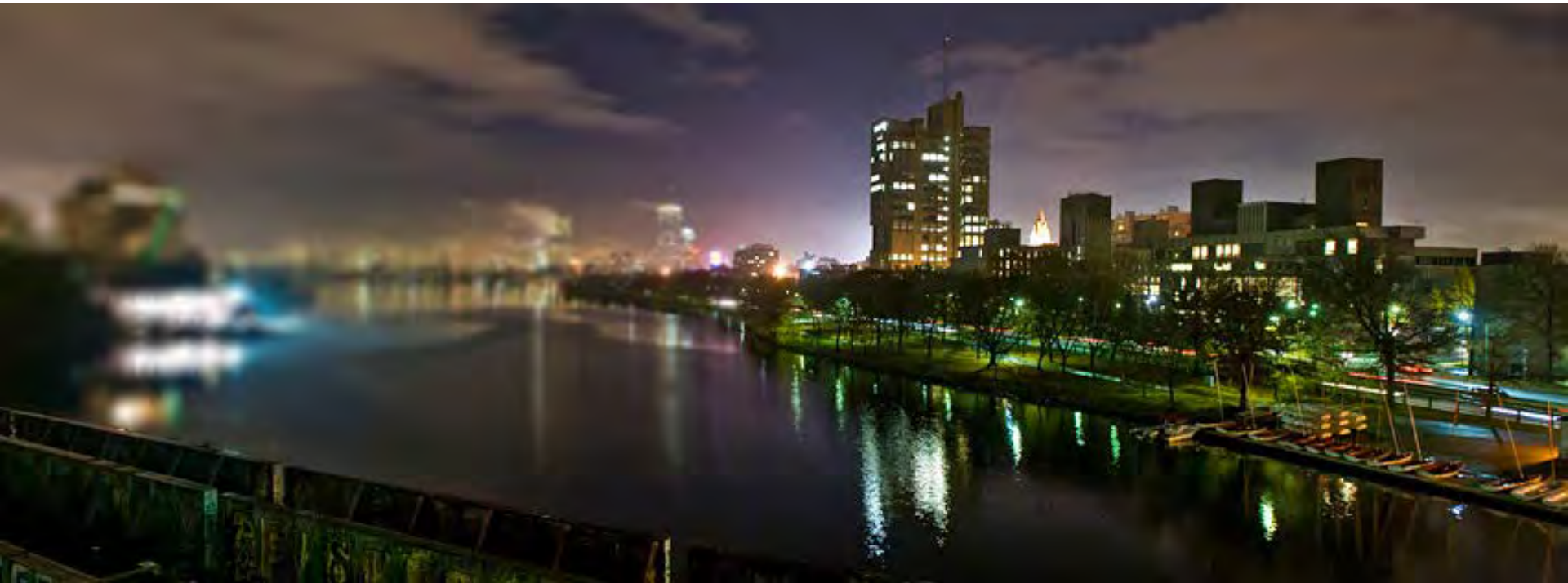
Students with 12-month stipends entitled to 2 weeks of vacation



Proration for 9-month appointments

Teaching fellows vacation cannot interfere with teaching obligations

Thank you





Discussion Questions

- What additional challenges surrounding graduate student work-life balance have you encountered at your institution?
- What barriers exist to addressing these challenges?
- What is one new initiative, existing or, that can address some of these challenges?