

## **ADVISING SNAPSHOT**

### **November 2021 Edition**

#### **Early Alerts Indicate Increase in Class Absences**

Has it felt like students are missing more classes this year than in the past? According to data from Early Alerts, they are indeed! The Early Alerts that were issued with *Class Attendance* as a reason increased from 337 in Fall 2020 to 692 this fall. While many of the absences may be excused for legitimate reasons, this does not alleviate the fact that helping students get caught up can become a burden for instructors and students.

We had high hopes for this year to be a return to “normal,” but that is not how most of us feel. Students report that they feel like course expectations are higher than they were last year. Assignments are more challenging than they expected, and deadlines are tight. After a year and a half of online learning with some standards relaxed due to the Pandemic, they are struggling to get back into the face-to-face modality. Test taking in the classroom environment is one of the frequently mentioned difficult shifts.

Faculty and instructors are frustrated with the number of students missing lectures and exam days that seek various ways to get caught up. One instructor reported that one fourth of their 40 seat class missed an exam, and the students need various make-up times which is much more work for the instructor. There also is concern that students are not as well prepared as they have been in the past which is requiring more time teaching the basics. Multiple months of online learning that may have been less rigorous by design or due to unusual circumstances, could validate this perception.

Thank you to everyone who submitted Early Alerts this year. The total number of alerts submitted was 3153 which is similar to last year. Students have been seeking help, so hopefully many of them will be able to improve their grades for a successful semester. While our world clearly has not returned to pre-COVID ‘normal,’ we can continue to encourage students with our own stories and messages from our alumni that say their education gave them the foundation they needed for a thriving life.

**Excerpt from "CETL: Crisis in Student Success" (campus email sent 11/11/21)**  
**...in case you missed it!**

Everyone is talking about how much students seem to be struggling this semester. Especially, the students! UARC Advisors talk to students every day who share they feel stressed, overwhelmed, and unable to keep up. As a result, they say their mental health is taking a hit. They aren't sleeping, feel anxious, are unable to focus, and feel badly about themselves. The problems they describe are not new but have a new level of intensity. The students seem to lack the capacity and strategies to cope. While they were as eager as us to be "back in-person," they were not prepared for the tidal wave of expectations that would come with it.

For the last year and a half students were given a lot of grace, concessions, flexibility – whatever you want to call it. While it might seem to us like they developed a lot of bad habits in a short amount of time, we must remember that many our first- and second-year students were just beginning to learn how to study, manage time, make independent decisions, and keep track of things on their own when Covid hit. Then everything changed and they didn't learn these things in the same way as in the past. Now they are at a university that is trying to "get back to normal," but they aren't prepared for our normal to the same extent as past students. We are going to need to ease them into our expectations and provide a lot of support and grace along the way.

And, yes, we too are stressed, overwhelmed and unable to keep up ourselves. So, what can we do? Maybe the only thing we can do is make sure students understand that we care, that needing help is just a normal part of college, and that we want to help them connect to that help.

Common Concerns and Referrals:

- Absences – We worry that students are taking advantage of the current circumstances and missing class for no good reason. Yet, we've told students not to go to class if they are symptomatic. Given this last message students are receiving, showing as much grace as possible during this time would assist students with legitimate reasons for missing class. In talking to students, we've heard that they appreciate when instructors ask them what's going on and really listen. And just a reminder that the care you're giving students at this moment has a real impact on their success. Showing you care can improve their attendance in your class. Helping them find resources to overcome their challenges can aid in their retention.
- Mental Health – when a student expresses, or you suspect anxiety, depression, or another mental health concern – refer to the [Counseling Center](#)
- Low Scores/Late or Missing Assignments
  - When a student doesn't know how to study, manage time, or get things done on time – refer to the [Reading and Study Skills Center](#)
  - When a student doesn't understand the material, is not doing well on tests/quizzes/assignments, can't figure out Canvas – refer to the [Center for Academic Resources](#)
  - Keep in mind – students don't understand how grading works, even if you put it in the syllabus. Talk frequently and in detail about your expectations, how final grades are calculated, and how to recover if they've not done well to this point. This information is essential to their success.

- Financial Concerns – refer to [Financial Aid](#)
  - Student doesn't understand when/how/what to register for spring – refer to *PALs in the UARC*
  - Student is questioning if they need to drop a class or withdraw for the semester – refer to [UARC](#) or [Dean of Students](#)
  - Student is lonely, doesn't know anyone, hasn't found anything they enjoy on campus – refer to the [Student Leadership and Involvement Center](#)
  - Not sure what the problem is or how to help? Talk to your Dean, Chair, UARC Advising Liaison, Dean of Students, etc. Just reach out. *Someone will help you too.*
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