PHYSICAL DISTANCING
NOT SOCIAL DISTANCING

Continued social interaction and building a sense of community is critical. Work to shift the mindset to "physical distancing" not "social distancing."

▶ **When "meeting" with students – use zoom or other virtual face-to-face options whenever possible. The 2nd preferred option is speaking over the phone, and least preferred option is email.**

Our goal is to continue to make students' experiences with K-State as personal as possible. The may look a little different than it has in the past, but small efforts can make a big impact in helping students feel connected.

Treat a meeting—Zoom, phone, or otherwise—as close to what a meeting would look/feel like in real life. If there are documents to share, things to look at etc., these should be made available to students either through screen sharing or email. Make it AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE to an actual meeting.

▶ **Encourage social interaction in courses, clubs and organizations.**

Virtual club meetings, group projects, online "face to face" discussions, etc. are easy ways to keep the social aspect going!

Ie. Virtual student lounges, lunch rooms, group socials, etc.

▶ **Be mindful and respectful of students' mental health and willing to talk openly about it in your classes, organizations and advising meetings.**

Students are process and grieving the loss of milestones, social connectedness, on-campus projects, hands on learning, receptions, recognitions, etc. – in addition to new challenges they may face at home, change of residence and general uncertainty, etc. Seek genuine conversations, be open and encourage their openness – seek to avoid the standard "good. And you?".

Acknowledging and addressing the current status, stresses, anxieties and concerns of our students helps students to process and feel connected to peers, professors and resources. Practice empathy. Then practice empathy more.

Encourage students to monitor their social media use and news consumption – while great for connectivity, it is also a source of anxiety and stress as bad news is shared and seems to "pile up". What feeds and sources are helping them to feel engaged? What feeds and sources are increasing their anxiety and stress?

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▶ **Remind students to engage in healthy self-care.**

Encourage students to spend time outdoors, be physically active, engage socially (virtually, of course), eat healthy and reach out to K-State resources for assistance.

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Some questions to get the conversations going. (via K-State Counseling Services)
   1. *How much class are you attending? %*
   2. *Are you keeping up with homework/assignments*
   3. *How are you socializing with others?*
   4. *How is work going (if have a job)?*

**K-State Counseling Services- https://www.k-state.edu/counseling/
Student Access Center - https://www.k-state.edu/accesscenter/
College of Ag Deans – Don Boggs, dboggs@ksu.edu, Shannon Washburn, sgw@ksu.edu,
Zelia Wiley, zwiley@ksu.edu, Sandy Klein, sandy@ksu.edu**

▶ **Prospective student support**

Recognizing the current stresses of our prospective students is also key – being straightforward that we know they are coping with changes to their plans (missing graduations, proms, senior "lasts", etc.) and that when they are ready to ask questions and talk about K-State we will be here happy to assist.

▶ **Peer support**

The same "physical distancing" not "social distancing" applies for colleagues and peers. Faculty and staff feeling informed, connected and impowered is essential in maintaining a health working and learning environment.

Regular communication within departments sharing updates, virtual "lunch rooms", break-out discussion groups to share best practices, successes and challenges, etc. help everyone best serve students, the K-State Community and beyond.

Summary
   1. Work to keep things as "normal" as possible.
   2. Seek innovative ways to build social connectivity
   3. Engage in meaningful conversations regarding mental health.