

Click [here](#) to find Dr. Foster's previous emails related to teaching during the pandemic

Dear Colleagues,

Warm greetings and a belated Happy New Year. May we all find health, healing, wholeness, strength, and belief in a more just future this coming year.

In just over ten months, we have known a different world. We have known a world in which we have lost family, friends, and other loved ones. We have experienced assaults on health and on income and employment, housing and food, our own and others. We have known isolation and over-reliance on devices and deliveries to counter these crises. We have masked, gloved, washed and sanitized our hands. All this, and our world remains perilous.

And yet. We have taught and mentored students who share these experiences, often at greater intensity than ourselves. We have empathized while encouraging. We have continued to educate. Now we prepare to return, perhaps better prepared for remote teaching and yet most likely feeling the fatigue and discouragement that have been building despite our best efforts. I am with you. We can hold to our present while investing in transparency, containment, and meeting as strategies to accomplish our goals and as strategies for self-care.

It helps, doesn't it, in our own lives, when someone takes extra care in explaining expectations and providing context? When navigating unfamiliar healthcare systems, tax software, internet providers, and more, it's necessary to understand the structure, the terminology, and the typical processes that can make these interactions successful. Our students approach our courses with similar needs for **transparency**.

How does **transparency** work in our courses? From the simple inclusion of correct contact information (e.g., name, email address, times when messages will be checked and answered) to a visual explanation of the course's assignments and grading (think flowcharts, pyramids, pie charts) to a discussion board on policies and group agreements that invites students to ask questions and encourages instructors opportunities to revise as seems appropriate: transparency provides context, structure, language, and examples to help us work together with less frustration and more focus.

In terms of focus, let's remember that our students are also tired and likely to need more internal strength to process new information. In addition to transparency, we can **contain**. We can break our assignments and virtual sessions into smaller segments, using these to introduce content and to practice memory and skill objectives. Pacing our courses in these ways may lead to more frequent, shorter assignments and fewer large final projects and exams than we are used to. For those who weight their courses heavily towards the final proofs of exams and papers, please give yourself permission this term to **contain** your assignments in the service of the learning that can happen, in the service of meeting our students where and as they are.

Finally, what should and can be first is **meeting our students** in their present circumstances, hopes, and capacities. Whether synchronously or asynchronously, we can design moments for our students to let us know what they know so that we can help them develop their capacities into greater potentials, so that we can understand what limits and supports their full participation in learning, and so that we can applaud their dreams and perhaps amplify their future goals. We can meet our students in informal live and offline chats, in assigned free writing or creative activities, in team project-based learning, and much more. I encourage you to look at your syllabus for opportunities to make small (or large) adjustments that will invite you and your students to be better acquainted so that you can move through the term with greater confidence and anticipation.

Please check these sites for specific tips and resources that align with and support your teaching this spring:

- [John Jay Teaching and Learning Center](#)
- [John Jay Teaching and Learning Center Remote Teaching](#)
- [John Jay Teaching and Learning Center Teaching Resources](#)

Thank you for continuing to read, reflect, and discuss these emails. Let's keep connecting..

Sincerely,

Gina

### **This Week and Next! Upcoming Events**

#### **FACULTY RESILIENCE WEEK**

**Tuesday, January 19, 10:30 am – 12 pm ET**

#### ***Adapting With Resilience Through Character Strengths***

with Sadie Huang and Stephanie Simpson (Health & Physical Education)

RSVP: [https://doitapps2.jjay.cuny.edu/facultyWorkshop/login.php?tr\\_id=21](https://doitapps2.jjay.cuny.edu/facultyWorkshop/login.php?tr_id=21)

**Thursday, January 21, 10:30 am – 12 pm ET**

#### ***Understanding and Applying Mindfulness towards Resilience***

with Peggilee Wupperman (Psychology)

RSVP: [https://doitapps2.jjay.cuny.edu/facultyWorkshop/login.php?tr\\_id=21](https://doitapps2.jjay.cuny.edu/facultyWorkshop/login.php?tr_id=21)

#### **START-OF-THE-SEMESTER: OPEN SESSIONS WITH DOES**

**(your Department of Online Education and Support Team)**

**January 19, 2 pm ET:**

<https://jjay-cuny.zoom.us/j/89631128590?pwd=U2pWd1ErZE16Vi9oOFZiTlFFd0Zwdz09>

**January 21, 2 pm ET:**

<https://jjay-cuny.zoom.us/j/87831663925?pwd=Y2lyOEIYbVZ2c3orakx0RDBkZm4vdz09>

**FACULTY DEVELOPMENT DAY**

**Thursday, January 28, 9 am – 3 pm**

***Facing the Pandemic: Sharing Creative and Practical Choices***

RSVP: [https://doitapps2.jjay.cuny.edu/facultyWorkshop/login.php?tr\\_id=FDD21](https://doitapps2.jjay.cuny.edu/facultyWorkshop/login.php?tr_id=FDD21)