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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Active Minds and Association of College and University Educators Release Guide on Practical Approaches for Supporting Student Wellbeing and Mental Health

2020 guide provides best practices for college and university faculty to help them support students' mental health -- both in person and virtually

Washington, D.C. - Active Minds and the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) are pleased to announce a new resource designed to help college and university faculty support student wellbeing and mental health. [*Creating a Culture of Caring*](#), released this week, provides practical approaches that faculty members can implement in the everyday.

"Nearly seven million students nationwide are experiencing a clinically significant mental health problem," said Laura Horne, Chief Program Officer of Active Minds. "Our research shows faculty are a preferred resource - after friends and family or counseling centers - for students managing their mental health. While most are not clinicians, they can all play an essential role as helpers, and it is essential that they have the tools necessary to help establish a culture of mental health on college and university campuses."

The *Creating a Culture of Caring* guide emphasizes that faculty cannot be expected to replace the role of mental health professionals, but also suggests they can be prepared to take practical action to support struggling students. The report highlights four main recommendations to guide faculty:

- **Normalize the Need for Help**
Mental health issues are common, especially among college students. The number one thing that students say they value in a professor is approachability.
- **Actively Listen with Validate-Appreciate-and Refer (VAR)**
Struggling students can be supported through a show of compassion, with active listening and appropriate responses.
- **Embed Courses with Well-Being Practices**
Practical actions include: setting deadlines for assignments at a time of day that encourages students to get enough sleep; assigning self-care as a homework assignment; addressing major world news events that may impact students' mental health in class; and starting classes with a mindful moment or mediation.
- **Remember to Practice Your Own Self-Care**
Model the healthy behavior that you would like your students to cultivate!

“It’s a stressful time, and faculty are seeking guidance,” said Dr. Jonathan Gyurko, president and co-founder of ACUE. “Just as we moved quickly to help faculty make the transition online through a variety of open resources, we felt it important to advise faculty on ways they can support students’ mental wellbeing through practical approaches that are appropriate to their role as helpers, not clinicians, in a community of care. It’s been a pleasure to partner with Active Minds on this resource guide to help faculty, their students and institutions.”

While the guide was initially designed with a physical classroom environment in mind, many of the recommendations are already being put into practice by faculty in digital settings. With COVID-19 sending nearly all campus-based students and faculty home for remote teaching and learning, the potential for stress, anxiety, and depression are high -- both in students and in faculty members, themselves.

“Now more than ever, faculty need to have the tools and resources to best support the mental health of their students – but also themselves,” said Horne. “Both students and faculty are facing unprecedented challenges, with external factors putting major strains on their mental health. We hope that this guide gives faculty the resources needed to help themselves and their students through this difficult time.”

This resource was made possible by generous support from Peg’s Foundation. Explore the full guide here:

activeminds.org/faculty-guide.

About Active Minds: Active Minds is the nation’s premier nonprofit organization supporting mental health awareness and education for young adults. Active Minds has a presence on over 800 college, university, and high school campuses nationwide, and is powered by a robust Chapter Network, the nationally acclaimed Send Silence Packing® exhibit, and inspiring Active Minds Speakers. The organization is dedicated to ending the silence and changing the conversation about mental health for everyone. To learn more, visit www.activeminds.org.

About ACUE: The Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) is on a mission to ensure student success through quality instruction. In partnership with colleges, universities, higher education systems and associations, ACUE prepares and credentials faculty in the evidence-based teaching practices that improve student achievement and close equity gaps. Numerous and independently validated efficacy studies confirm that students are more engaged, learn more, and complete courses in greater numbers—more equitably with their peers—when taught by ACUE-credentialed faculty. ACUE’s online, cohort-based credentialing programs are delivered through institutional partnerships and open enrollment courses endorsed by the American Council on Education. To learn more, visit acue.org.

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