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to WILLIAMS-ALL

Dear Williams Community,

As we look forward to the spring semester, we want to remind you about the shape of the semester and the addition of 3 Health Days into the academic calendar. As you know, the faculty voted on a revised schedule for the spring that included a later start to the semester and the removal of our traditional 2-week spring break. Both changes were made in the hope of reducing COVID transmission and protecting the campus community.

With the late start and the lack of our typical spring break, the spring academic calendar is much more compact than usual. Given this, the faculty opted to include 3 Health Days (Wednesday, April 21, Thursday, April 22, and Friday May 7) in order to provide space for our community to take a break, take a breath, and rejuvenate themselves -- in body, mind and spirit -- during the semester.

A group of faculty, students and staff met last week to discuss our hopes for what the Health Days might provide. We concluded that these days should be -- above all else -- an opportunity for students to take a break from their traditional academic responsibilities, and to immerse themselves in whatever activities bring them relaxation, rejuvenation, and (hopefully) joy. It is important to note that the Health Days are not campus holidays. There will be no academic classes, but our offices, programs and facilities remain open and operational. This means that students can use the library, fitness center, IWS, Health Center, and other facilities if they choose.

Because these Health Days are new to our academic calendar, our working group has developed a set of suggestions for faculty and students that we hope will help the community make the most of this opportunity.

Suggestions for faculty:

- Make note of the 3 Health Days and include them in your syllabus. Highlighting the dates in your syllabus will signal to students that these days are important, and built into the larger structure of your curricular arc. If you are so inclined, you might also consider emailing your students prior to the health day to remind them to use it in ways that will be restorative for them.
- Whenever possible, try to avoid exams or assignment deadlines for the 24 hour period immediately following a Health Day. This will help empower students to use the Health Day as an opportunity for restoration, rather than as a typical work day.
- If possible, try to avoid introducing a new assignment immediately before a Health Day; instead, consider introducing the assignment a bit earlier, or after the Health Day.
- In the overall spirit of promoting wellness and self-care, take a holistic view of your syllabus. Are the assignments and exams as balanced as they can be across the

semester? Are there any particularly intensive periods that could be adjusted to allow for a more consistent arc of work?

Suggestions for students

- The best way to ensure that you can protect your Health Days is to plan ahead. At the very beginning of the semester, take a look at all of your course syllabi and strategize. Take stock of all of your due dates and develop a proactive plan so that you don't find yourself scrambling and having no choice but to use the Health Days to catch up on incomplete work. If you have lengthy assignments that span over weeks, pace yourself in advance so that you can opt not to work on those tasks during the Health Days if that is your preference.
- Keep in mind that restoration means something different to everyone. Your Health Day doesn't need to follow any prescribed schedule. Some students will choose to sleep a lot; some will look for solitude; some will seek out connection with others; some might even opt to do some classwork. All choices are ok!
- We want students to find their own unique ways to take advantage of their Health Days - after all, you are the best judge of what you need. We hope to offer some modest programming (stay tuned for details), but for the most part, these Health Days will be unscheduled and free for you to design your own experience.

Please do take some time in advance to ensure that you and maximize the effectiveness of our Health Days.

All best wishes,

Marlene Sandstrom, Professor of Psychology and Dean of the College
Safa Zaki, Professor of Psychology and Dean of Faculty
Sara Dubow, Professor of History and Associate Dean of Faculty
Corinna Campbell, Professor of Music and Chair of the Calendar & Scheduling Committee
Roger Kittleson, Professor of History and Chair of the Committee on Academic Affairs
Tiku Majumder, Professor Physics and Chair of the Faculty Steering Committee

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