

To our California State University, East Bay Community,

We recognize the past several years have been emotionally and physically taxing, with many burdens that were placed upon our communities and so many losses. We have experienced change in every direction and aspect of our lives. Yet, as a community, we banded together and stood strong in serving our students and the California State University, East Bay community as a whole. We applaud the work and dedication of our administration, faculty, staff, and students have taken on despite the challenges we have all faced.

The environment we currently reside in continues to challenge our community in many ways. We have seen the struggle within our own health, financial burdens, and emotional stress. Both students and faculty continue to work through a time where support could be lacking. The values of grace and compassion are incredibly important as we navigate what it means to be an individual and a community in a global pandemic. As we move into the second half of the semester, we ask for your support in allowing students more grace and flexibility when it comes to their education. Just as we began the pandemic with understanding and generosity, we ask that we continue this philosophy even as we seem to be moving out of the pandemic and toward a more endemic stage of living with COVID-19.

To this end, we humbly urge faculty to remind their students often (plus a few more times) that students can reach out for an appointment or drop by office hours if they are encountering difficulties with meeting assignment deadlines or attending class meetings due to COVID-19 or other hardships. Midterms could also be a helpful time to reach out to students to acknowledge the added stresses people may be experiencing and encourage students to connect with their faculty, their advisors and each other.

There are often multiple paths open for a student to catch up if the student and faculty member can come together and talk about the situation. We acknowledge that this takes a good deal of faculty time and deeply appreciate faculty who have found ways to support students who have been sick or who have experienced other hardships. In Sarah's own experience, she has found that offering out-of-class make-up assignments to replace missed in-class work can be helpful. For example, when a student misses a required peer review assignment, Sarah suggests a SCAA appointment and a short summary of what the student learned during the appointment as a meaningful make-up assignment. She has also worked with individual students to develop "catch up plans," where new due dates are negotiated to provide students with a reasonable timeline to complete late assignments. Some professors offer flexible deadlines from the beginning of term or grade smaller weekly assignments at the end of the term so that students can take more time to complete assignments during certain times of the semester if they are encountering difficulties.

Other options that faculty might consider discussing with students who have missed many classes or assignments because of illness or other hardships include offering an [incomplete grade](#) in the course or letting the student know about the late drop or withdrawal process (forms available for students to launch on [MyCompass](#)). Please note that incompletes, late drops, or withdrawals can affect a student's financial aid or academic standing, so please refer the student to their advisor and their financial aid counselor if they are considering one of these options. To find their advisor, students can write to [whoismyadvisor@csueastbay.edu](mailto:whoismyadvisor@csueastbay.edu). For more information on financial aid impacts on incompletes, late drops and withdrawals, students can write to [finaid@csueastbay.edu](mailto:finaid@csueastbay.edu).

To students, we encourage you to let your professors know when you are experiencing an illness or other hardship that is impacting your success in a class. We know it can be intimidating to reach out to a professor when you are experiencing difficulties, but more often than not, your professors will be able to help. If you are not getting a timely response from your professor, you can reach out to the department chair for assistance.

We understand the impact of these past few years on our personal lives, academic careers, and our overall community. We invite and encourage you all to remember the purpose of our community: to welcome and support a diverse student body that will apply their education to a more meaningful life. We must incorporate a sense of humanity and compassion within our curriculum in order to achieve this mission.

*In Solidarity,*

Sarah Nielsen (Academic Senate Chair)

Anjelica de Leon (Associated Students Incorporated President/CEO)