



CULTIVATING CONNECTION IN UNPRECEDENTED TIMES THROUGH VIRTUAL SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

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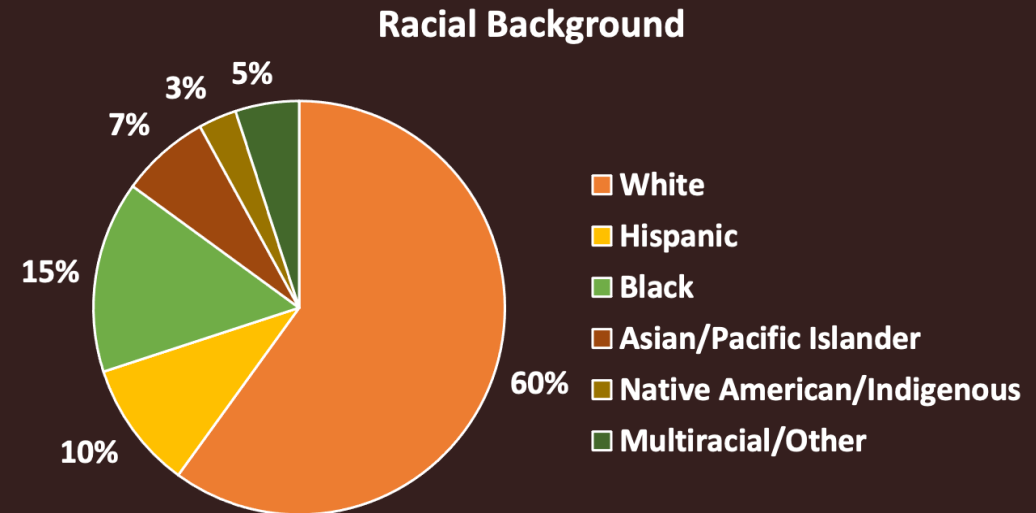
APPLE VALLEY
UNIVERSITY

- Public, research university in the mid-South with a history in the land-grant tradition
- ~25,000 students
- 20% live on-campus
- 20:1 Student-to-faculty ratio
- 90% acceptance rate
- 25% out-of-state

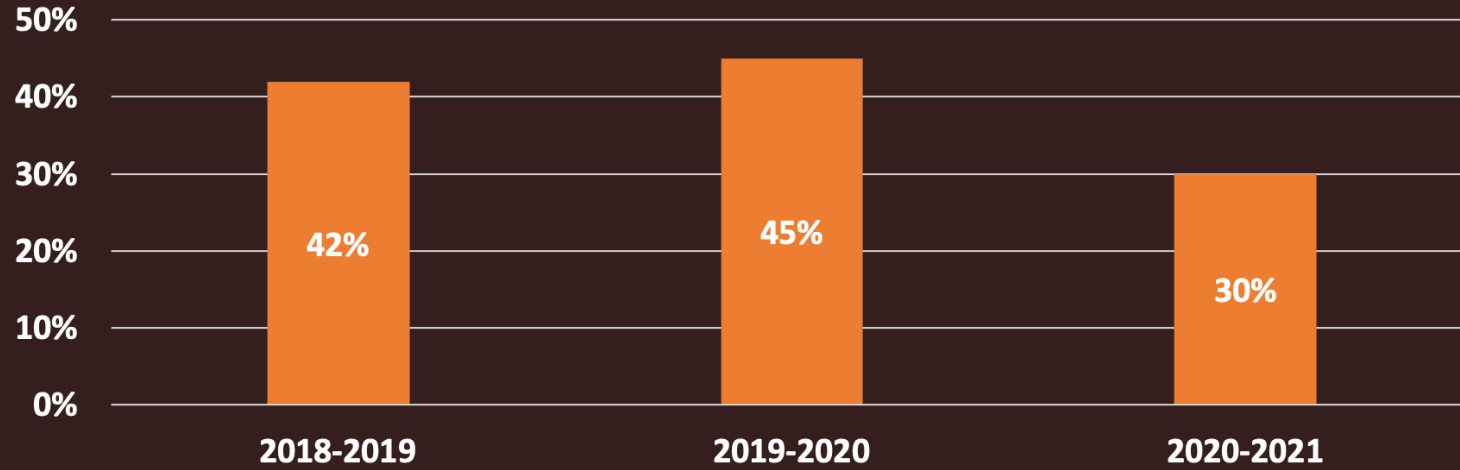


Home of the
Fighting Farmers!

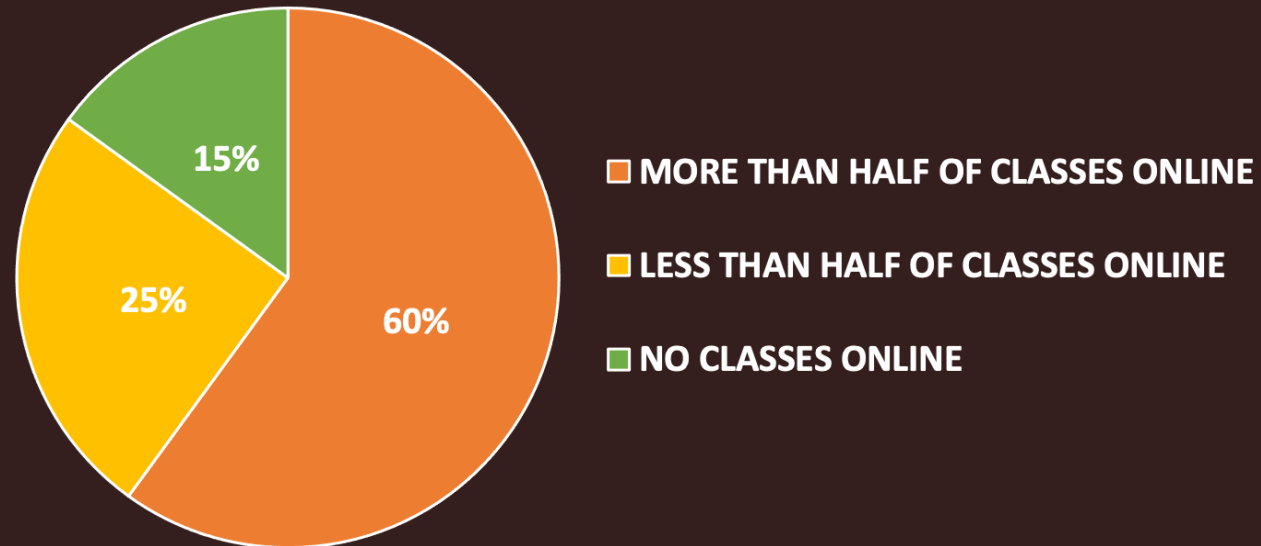
- Located in Apple Valley, TX
 - ~48,000 people
 - Predominately white
 - Rural - agriculturally based
 - "College Town"
 - Reflected in language, local organizations, public artifacts, and local alumni population (Almond, 2020)



% of Students Involved in One or More Registered Student Organizations



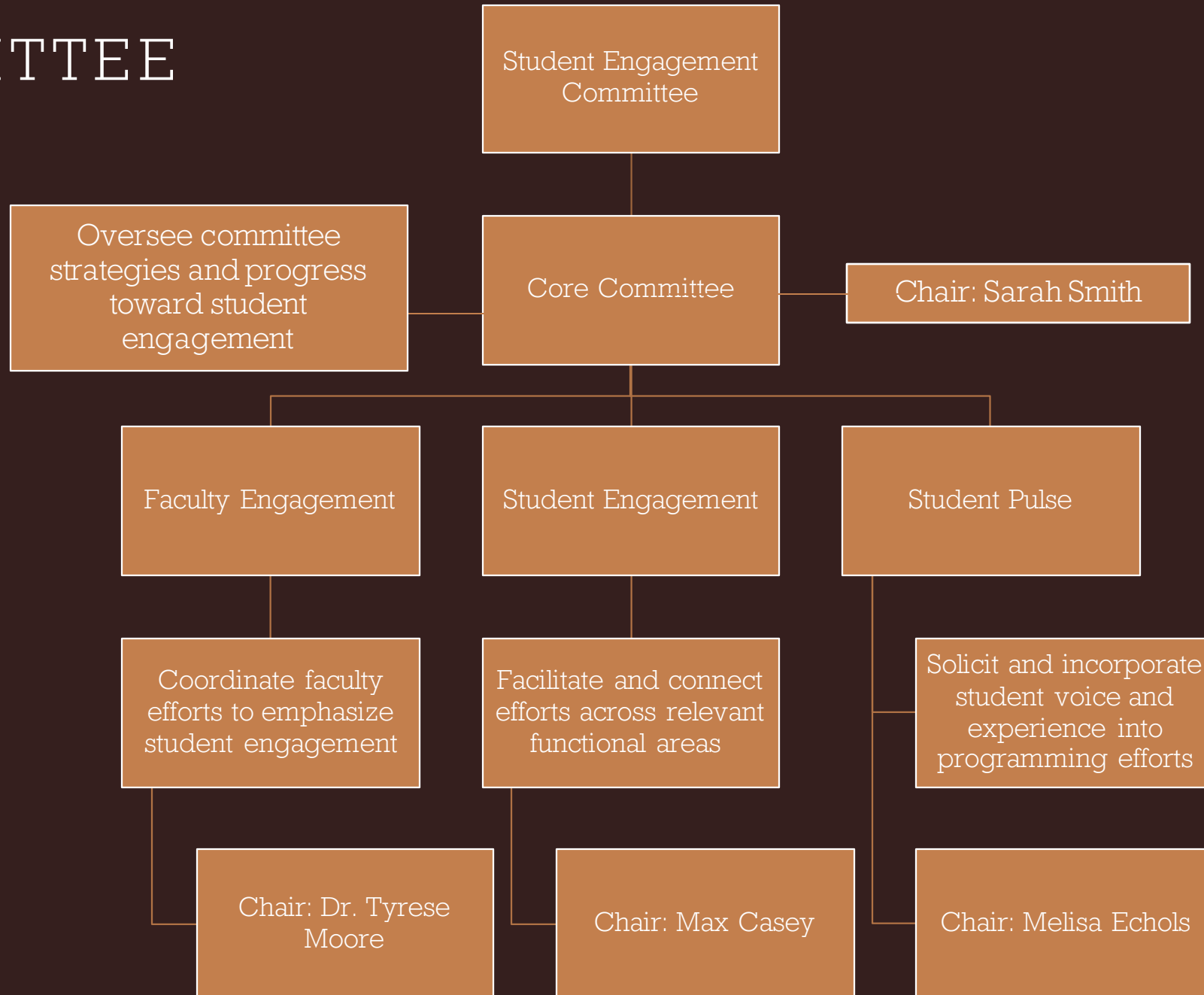
AVU Students: Fall 2021 Courses



BACKGROUND ISSUES

- Old vs. Young Disparity – Impact on Professional Relationship
 - Disparity in experience between Max and Sarah suggests a generational gap.
 - Members of prior generations (Baby Boomers and Generation X) view young professionals stereotypically (Raymer et al., 2017).
 - Comments such as "You are known as the queen of social media" suggest that Max views Sarah through a stereotypical lens of younger generations.
- Attitude Toward Mental Health
 - Max's treatment of mental health suggests it is a secondary concern compared to student engagement.
 - Creating social engagement "is tough, but key. And then there's their mental health"
 - Student engagement efforts can positively impact mental health (Boulton et al., 2019).
 - This finding frames the importance of the current project, in that efforts to effectively engage students can also address and improve student mental health.
- Addressing Student Needs
 - According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), an individual's physiological and safety needs must be cared for.
 - 61% of students at four-year institutions face either homelessness or housing or food insecurity (AACU, 2019).
 - Overall number of reported on-campus crimes increased by 8% from 2014-2017 (US Department of Education, 2020)
 - Before we can address a student's psychological or self-fulfillment needs, we must first ensure that student's basic needs are met.
- Attitude Toward the Problem
 - Is this an issue of crisis management? Or are we approaching with the intent to improve student engagement and experience? To improve the best practices of the field?

COMMITTEE



COMMITTEE PLANS

- Committee will convene March 2021
 - Student Engagement Committee will meet monthly
 - Core Committee will meet weekly
 - Proceedings will be made available to entire committee
 - Sub-committees will meet bi-weekly
 - Report due to Core Committee after each meeting

Student Engagement Committee Monthly Meetings	
Monday, March 1	1:00pm
Monday, April 5	1:00pm
Monday, May 3	1:00pm
Monday, June 7	1:00pm
Monday, July 5	1:00pm
Monday, July 19*	1:00pm
Monday, August 2	1:00pm
Monday, August 16*	1:00pm
Monday, September 6	1:00pm
Monday, October 4	1:00pm
Monday, November 1	1:00pm
Monday, December 6	1:00pm

CORE COMMITTEE

Oversee committee strategies and progress toward student engagement

Ensure that programming engages and centers student voices and experiences

Connect social justice, leadership, and technology to engender innovative student engagement

Campus Activities

- Sarah Smith
- Chair: Core Committee

Dean of Academics

- Dr. Tyrese Moore
- Chair: Faculty Engagement

Dean of Students

- Max Casey
- Chair: Student Engagement

Student Advocate

- Melisa Echols
- Chair: Student Pulse

Institutional Diversity

- Dr. Ann Shin

Office of Disability Services

- Dr. Gemma Poke

Residence Life

- Dr. Noel Clinton

Leadership Institute

- Dr. Jessee Taylor

Technology Advocate

- Jason Kirkley

FACULTY ENGAGEMENT

Review current state
of student
engagement in
classroom and
learning environments

Cultivate best
educational practices
for student
engagement in
learning spaces

Investigate innovative
opportunities and
current national
trends

Dean of Academics

- Dr. Tyrese Moore
- Chair

Institute for Teaching and Learning Excellence

- Dr. Gina Dickey

Faculty Council Representative

- Dr. Jay Santellana

Academic College Representatives

- College of Arts & Sciences
 - Dr. Claire Shawn
- College of Business
 - Dr. Matthew Quick
- College of Education & Human Sciences
 - Dr. Halee Mitchell
- College of Nursing
 - Dr. Lazelle Mitchell
- College of Agriculture
 - Dr. Luke Stockett

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Review current state of student engagement across university and coordinate united efforts

Cultivate best practices for student engagement in co-curricular spaces

Investigate innovative opportunities and current national trends

Dean of Students

- Max Casey
- Chair

Assistant Director of Admissions

- Montavius Gerard

New Student Programs

- Maggie Forbes

Director of Academic Advising

- Red Hollard

Assistant Director of Career Services

- Brandee Manning

Student Union Representative

- K.K. Broussard

Student Health and Wellness

- Clark Myles
- Fitness
- Dr. Sydney Massey
- University Health Center

Chamber of Commerce

- Abby Fox

TEXAS Grant Foundation

- Bryson Jackson

STUDENT PULSE

Represent student
voices and suggestions
for programming
efforts

Deliver student
experiences within
spheres of influence

Investigate innovative
opportunities and
current national
trends

Center for Campus Life

- Melisa Echols
- Chair

Student Government Association Representative

- Jadin Wolf

Student Activities Board Representative

- Bryanna Rosman

Interfraternity Council Representative

- Matthew Nickel

Panhellenic Council Representative

- Hope Rodriguez

First Year Students

- 3 first year students
- Selected through an interview process

IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTS

Strange and Banning (2001) Four Environmental Perspectives (Schuh et al., 2017, pp. 240-241)

- *Physical Environments (buildings, residence halls, physical layout of campus)*
- *Organizational Environments (rules/norms communicated through an environment)*
- *Constructed Environments (based on lived experiences of members of the environment)*
- *Human Aggregate Environments (environment transmitted through people, characteristics of people make up characteristics of environment)*

Lewin's Interactionist Perspective

- *Students make meaning from their interactions and experiences with their environment (Schuh et al., 2017, pp. 46-47).*

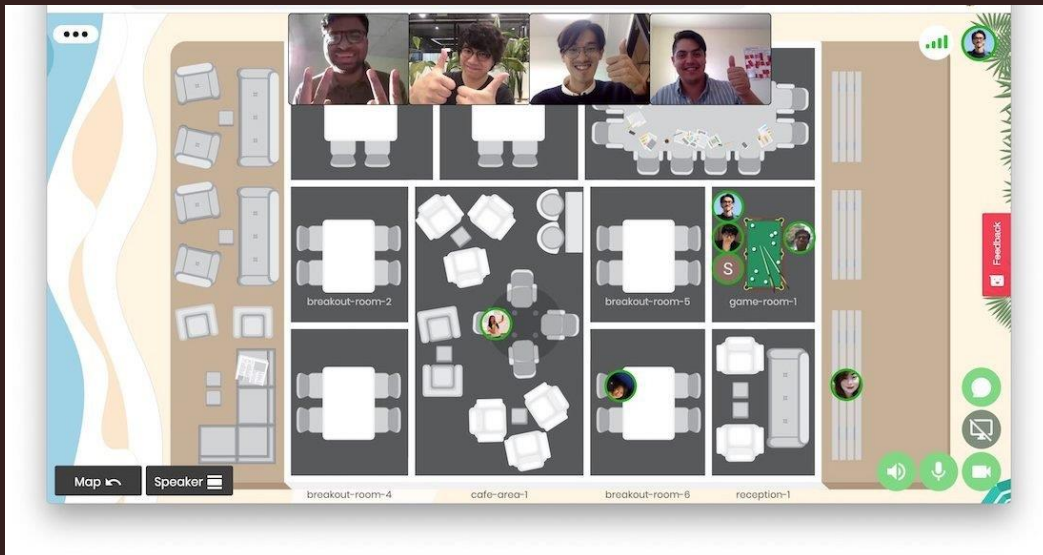
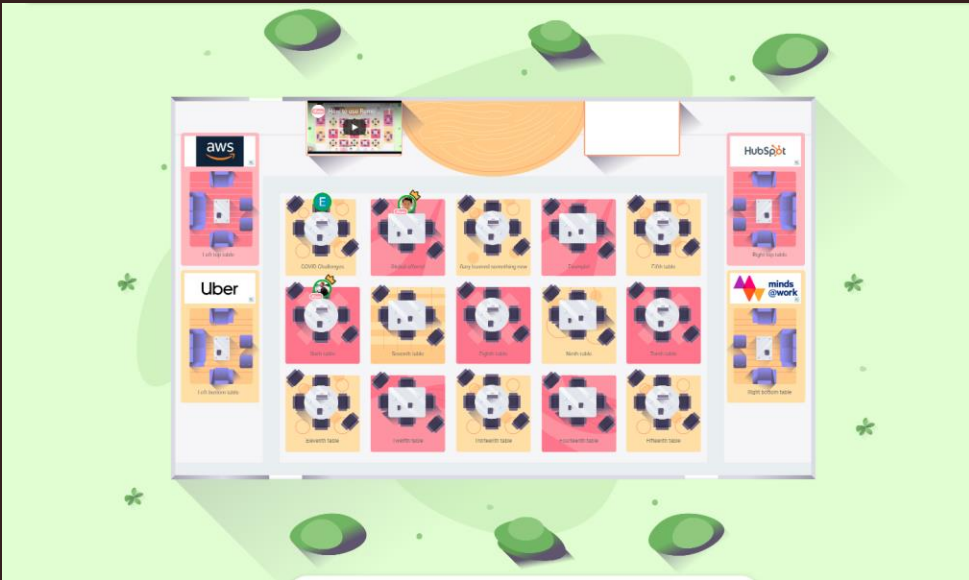
Tinto's Interactionalist Theory

- *"Students whose social experiences in the institution...match with the student's social values display higher levels of social integration" (Schuh et al., 2017, p. 255).*

Knowing how crucial the environment is in
a student's development, how can we
provide environments to our students in
a new way?

REMO: AVU VIRTUAL STUDENT UNION

- Use Remo platform to create a 'virtual student union' for AVU students to use
 - Remo is an online platform where people "can enjoy human interactions in a virtual environment" (Remo.co, 2021)
 - Event organizers can create different floors, tables, and buildings to simulate in-person interactions in a completely virtual space



Photos from:

https://remo.co/?gclid=Cj0KCOiA962BBhCzARIsAlpWEL0MhIUBWA4kvhbVOPUOt3VaGtB6LVlbyZmla8cx5CafDq77xiVYN0aAilnEALw_wcB


AVU VIRTUAL STUDENT UNION

- ❑ Four Separate "Floors" in Remo Event
 - ❑ First Floor: Social Purposes (interest tables for students to visit and meet new people)
 - ❑ Second Floor: Administrative Purposes (Financial Aid, Bookstore, Advising, etc.)
 - ❑ Third Floor: Student Life Purposes (Student Activities, Greek Life, Multicultural Center, etc.)
 - ❑ Fourth Floor: Available for Student Organizations/Groups to Rent for Events
- ❑ Open 8:00am to 9:00pm Monday-Saturday
 - ❑ Business offices can build schedule for when they are available, thinking beyond 8-5 model. For example, Financial Aid might be available via Remo on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9:00am-1:00pm for students to visit.
- ❑ Free for students to register/attend, AVU will cover event costs
 - ❑ University committee can work to secure grants to cover Remo costs. (Ex: TEXAS Grant Foundation)
- ❑ Students who need accommodations can work with AVU Disability Services and AVU Technology Services
 - ❑ Examples: Live video captioning, loaned technology devices, etc.

VIRTUAL STUDENT UNION PROGRAMMING

- Welcome Week Events (See flyer)
- Ongoing Programming
 - *Wellness Wednesday*
 - *Movie Night Once a Month*
 - *Student Org. Fair Once a Month*
 - *Other events as they arise*

**welcome
week events**
AT THE AVU VIRTUAL
STUDENT UNION



MONDAY

Come try out Remo and our new Student Union! Technology specialists will be available to help you log in and figure out this new platform.

TUESDAY

Student Organization Fair: Each student organization at AVU will have a "table" for you to stop by, chat with, and learn more about how to get involved!

WEDNESDAY

Wellness Wednesday: Each "table" will have a different wellness activity for you to try! These will include things like meditation, mental health awareness, and physical challenges.

THURSDAY

Game Night: Each table will have a different game or activity. Take a study break and come meet new people while having some fun!

FRIDAY

Movie Night: AVU is hosting our first ever Virtual Movie Night at the Student Union--log in, pop some popcorn, and watch a fun movie from the comfort of your home.,

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS THAT SUPPORT STUDENT ENGAGEMENT & THE APPLE VALLEY ALMANAC



Challenge & Support (Sanford, 1966)

"Supports are buffers in the environment that help the student meet challenges to be successful" (Schuh et al., p. 35).

Students are being challenged in the sense that they are being encouraged to attend virtual events. Some may be out of their comfort zone (i.e, if they have never attended a virtual event in general, if they have never journaled in a group setting before, etc.)

Students are being supported in their efforts to get involved in virtual events or asynchronous meet-ups by being held accountable by one another and their faculty members.



Student Involvement Theory, (Astin, 1984)

"Engaging actively in the environment is a prerequisite for student learning and growth" (Schuh et al., p. 35).

Student affairs professionals play an active role in creating opportunities for students to engage. The virtual environment presents its own set of challenges in terms of getting students to interact with one another as they would on campus.

However, the Apple Valley Almanac is designed to increase student engagement and get students to attend virtual events on the REMO platform.



Critically Inclusive Pedagogy

"Critical-inclusive pedagogy (CIP) seeks to strengthen student learning and equip instructors with teaching approaches that build inclusive spaces for diverse students" (Hayes, 2016).

Creating virtual events with the intent to ensure that all students feel as though they are entering an inclusive and welcoming environment.

While programming events for the Apple Valley Almanac, we had to consider how we could provide accommodations for each event, as well as ensuring that these events are critically inclusive.



Culturally Relevant Leadership

"...I was primarily concerned with practical ways to improve teacher education in order to produce new generations of teachers who would bring an appreciation of their students' assets to their work in urban classrooms populated with African American students" (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

This idea translates to developing curriculum for student engagement initiatives because it allows the student affairs professional to look through the lens of the diverse college student in order to facilitate programming that enhances their growth and learning.

THE APPLE VALLEY ALMANAC

- ❖ The Apple Valley Almanac will serve as a tool to increase student engagement in the virtual Remo environment in hopes to increase student interaction through this virtual platform.
- ❖ All first-year students attending Apple Valley University will receive an Apple Valley Almanac via their applevalley.edu email as a part of their Welcome Weekend orientation at the beginning of the fall semester.
 - ❖ The Apple Valley Almanac will also be housed in the campus Learning Management System for all students to access.
 - ❖ Through the First Year Experience course, students will have the opportunity to work with their faculty partner to ensure that they are fulfilling checkpoints on the Almanac.
- ❖ As a built-in piece of the First Year Experience course, students will complete bi-weekly checkpoints with their instructor in class to ensure that they are attending events or asynchronous meetups in the REMO Student Union.
- ❖ Students who complete their Apple Valley Almanac enrolled in the First Year Experience course will receive a \$200 book scholarship to the Apple Valley University bookstore. Core committee will focus their efforts on applying for a grant to ensure students will receive this book scholarship.

APPLE VALLEY ALMANAC PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE SAMPLE

- Collaborating with other offices on campus allows students to make connections outside of their academic colleges and social circles.
- Intentional Programming:
 - Mindfulness Events: enhancing focus on mental health programming
 - Exercise Events: releasing endorphins & serotonin through exercise
 - Creativity Events: connecting with one another without staff & faculty present
 - Sporting Events: building community through tradition and school spirit
 - Trivia Events: cultivating new friendships through healthy competition

APPLE VALLEY UNIVERSITY DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

The Apple Valley Almanac

Use this tool as a schedule of events occurring in the REMO Student Union and to keep track of events you attend!

- Mindfulness Events ~ Dates TBD
 - Journaling Together *led by Department of Wellness*
 - Group Meditation *led by Dr. Lee in Psych Dept.*
- Exercise Events ~ Dates TBD
 - Sunrise Yoga *led by Group Fitness*
 - Zumba *led by Group Fitness*
- Unleash Your Creativity ~ Dates TBD
 - Virtual Concert *led by YOU! Students create the playlist & show each other their quarantine jams!*
- Watch Sports Together ~ Dates TBD
 - Apple Valley vs. Trinity College *sponsored by Athletics - all students who attend get a free t-shirt*
- Trivia Challenge ~ Dates TBD
 - Trivia Crack Tournament *led by Dr. Tyrese Moore*

Individuals who would like to request an accommodation to attend this event should contact Max Casey at 760-233-7654 or mcasey@applevalley.edu by the RSVP date.



MEETING GENERATION Z WHERE THEY ARE

- Recent studies suggest that the incoming generations of college students (Generation Z) are "digital natives" and utilize social media at their fingertips (Seemiller & Grace, 2016).
- Use of Learning Management Systems (ex. Canvas) to create a space for students to connect with each other and house the Apple Valley Almanac with submission spaces
- Importance of making interactive content, Gen Z students enjoy sharing their opinions in real time (Seemiller & Grace, 2016).

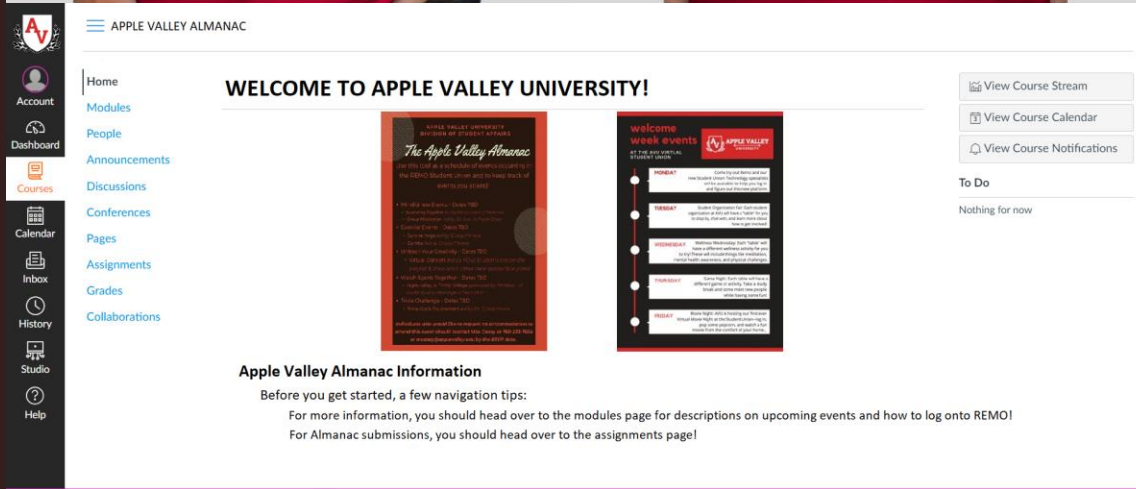


CROSS-CAMPUS PARTNERSHIPS

- Orientation: Give a presentation at orientation sessions and orientation leader (OL) promotion within their small groups
- Residence Life: Partner with residential assistants (RAs) to encourage students to go, even taking groups of students during Welcome Week
- Student Organizations: Push for their involvement with the Welcome Week & creation of template for students to use as flyers
- Office of Disability Services: Work with them to ensure all promotional material is accessible and inclusive (for example, captioning for videos)
- Academic Affairs: Create a statement to send to all faculty to include on their syllabi
- Other prominent departments on campus: promotion and Instagram live takeovers

FACULTY EXPERIENCE

- Training on virtual platforms over the summer
- Support faculty in efforts to challenge 8-5 normative model
- What does the faculty role look like?
 - Engage students as partners through bi-weekly check-in meetings
 - Include support statement for students who lack virtual access in syllabi
 - Highlight involvement opportunities through Remo and AV Almanac



SOCIAL MEDIA PLAN: MONTHS BEFORE

- March & April: Create Twitter, Instagram (IG), Facebook & TikTok accounts, and develop trend ideas. Additionally, create LMS page; graphics for Apple Valley Almanac and Welcome Week
- May – July: Develop GroupMe's for students to get connected and share with OLs, promotes groups going together to kickoff week, connect with student organizations to sign up their groups for Welcome Week, ask groups to follow Instagram and Twitter for updates
- June – August: Post 3 videos a week:
 - 1: Mindful Mondays with mental health activities such as building your own stress ball, Q&A about places to destress on campus, end with a giveaway
 - 2: Highlight Apple Valley Almanac on Canvas and how to access it + additional information on Welcome Week
 - 3: Giveaways (Free T-shirts, Hoodies, etc.) WITH a tag 2 friends you know that are going to AVU for a chance to win!; also promote twitter account for additional giveaways and #'s to show us how excited you are (take pics with giveaway).

SOCIAL MEDIA PLAN: WEEK OF

- Every day of the week, post an Instagram Poll asking what type of giveaways they want for the next day! Every day at noon, tune into an IG Live for a special giveaway!
- Each day, post a picture of the event and what plans are for the day
- On any particular day, use polls to dictate where the IG goes (Which tables they want to visit, etc.)
- Utilize TikTok tags and short videos to advertise tables for student organizations

**WHAT DO YOU WANT
TO SEE FOR
TOMORROW'S
GIVEAWAY?**

HOODIE/
SWEATSHIRT

T-SHIRT

FURTHER IMPLICATIONS & SUSTAINABILITY

- Continued focus on Mental Health for students, faculty, and staff
- Sustainable location for program management and coordination
- Intentional assessment of programs
- Integration of virtual programs for in-person campus (Spring 2022?)
- Careful consideration of limitations of programs and innovative solutions
 - Accessibility for individuals with disabilities
 - Access to reliable technology devices and Internet
 - Costs associated with programs



THANK YOU

With questions, please contact:

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ADDITIONAL MATERIALS:

CULTIVATING CONNECTION IN UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

THROUGH VIRTUAL SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

StudentAffairs.com Case Study: Oklahoma State University

Jansen Rouillard (Team Leader), Claire Leffingwell, Peter Nguyen, & Michele Criss

Impact of Generational Disparity on Professional Relationship

The disparity in experiences between Max and Sarah suggests a generational gap. While older generations are typically seen as less productive, non-innovative, and embedded in the status quo (Van der Heijden, 2002), younger generations are seen as productive, risk-taking innovators who are willing to break from the past (Sullivan, 1999). While Max seems to struggle with basic technology, Sarah seems prepared to embrace the innovation that virtual spaces can bring. While Max seems interested in bringing back the days of “late night philosophical chats,” Sarah hopes to break from tradition and investigate innovative engagement opportunities. Max also seems to shift the onus of productivity to Sarah in wanting her to take lead on the project. In this way, some of Max’s comments and attitudes toward Sarah make it seem as though Max tends to view Sarah more stereotypically in terms of her generation. Comments such as “You are known as the queen of social media” suggest that Max views Sarah through a stereotypical lens of younger generations; this also aligns with literature that members of prior generations (Baby Boomers and Generation X) view young professionals more stereotypically (Raymer et al., 2017). Literature also suggests that employees who work with colleagues from older generations (i.e. Max) report more negative older generation stereotypes, increased perceptions of age discrimination climate, and negative work-related attitudes and behaviors (Moore & Krause, 2021). In this way, Sarah may be more cognizant of Max’s behavior and attitudes, and may feel that Max is discriminatory towards her based on her age and his expectations. This has great potential to affect Sarah’s performance and satisfaction, as these factors are significantly affected by the demographic characteristics of their supervisor, the relational differences between employee and supervisor, and differences in their social identities (i.e., age, gender, etc.) (Campione, 2014). Comments such as “Do I have a choice?” suggest that Sarah may exhibit less job satisfaction based on her relational differences with Max, and their differences in age and gender. While generational disparity is not a presenting issue in the current scenario, its potential impact on the nature of committee relationships and Sarah’s productivity must be considered.

Attitude Toward Mental Health

Max’s attitudes toward and treatment of mental health suggests it is a secondary concern compared to student engagement. In their meeting, Max seems to focus on the key goal of creating social engagement, adding in mental health as an aside: “And then there’s their mental health.” This may be an indication of his generational status, as generational differences proved to be a significant point in one’s ability to identify mental illness (Avera, 2017). In this way, Max’s attitudes toward and treatment of mental illness may be an expression of his generation’s view of mental health. Members of the Baby Boomer and Generation X, such as Max, are more likely to report excellent mental health (Bethune, 2019), even as there was an increase in the use of mental health medication without formal treatment in the overall adult population between 2008-2013, particularly in Baby Boomers and Generation X with mental illnesses (Han et al., 2016). Even as data suggests a modest improvement in American’s attitudes toward mental

health treatment over the past decade, this improvement is most pronounced in younger generations with little change in older generations (Mojtabai, 2007). Mental illness is prevalent in all generations, but members of older generations, such as Max, seem to be less likely to recognize their issues as symptoms of mental illness. However, multiple empirical and statistical efforts suggest that mental health is a pressing and compelling modern issue, especially among the Gen Z students of modern college campuses. 91% of Generation Z adults report at least one symptom of mental health illness, but only 50% feel like they do enough to manage their mental health (Bethune, 2019). However, college campuses have engaged in multiple efforts to recognize and alleviate mental health, specifically through student social engagement efforts. Student social engagement efforts can positively impact mental health (Boulton et al., 2019). Findings such as these frame the importance of the current project, in that efforts to effectively engage students can also address and improve student mental health.

Remo Platform Overview

Remo is an online platform designed to be a space where people “can enjoy human interactions in a virtual environment” (Remo.co, 2021). Event organizers can create different floors, tables, and buildings to simulate in-person interactions in a completely virtual space. The Remo website describes it as “a visual top-down view, 2-D map comprised of interactive “rooms.”” (Remo.co, 2021). According to Remo developers, users experience “3x higher attendance rates, 25% increased leads, and 89% higher engagement” (Remo.co, 2021).

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