"We've Got Trouble in CyberCity:"

A Quantitative Analysis of Online Faculty Stressors and Implications for the post-COVID-19 Classroom

Presented to the Teaching, Colleges, and Community

2022 Conference:

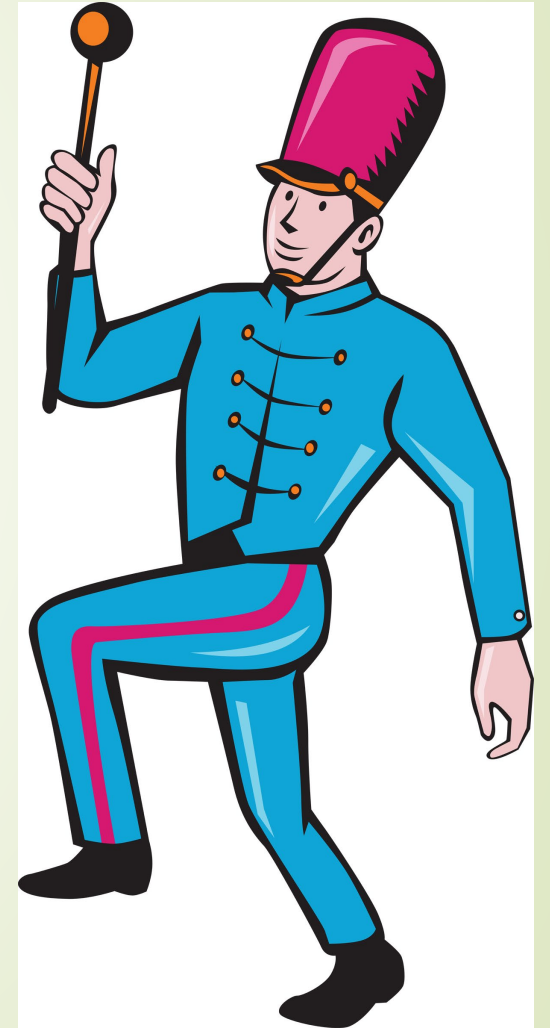"Making Waves – Innovations in Learning"

April 12-14, 2022

Presenters:

- Mary Dereshiwsky

- Danielle Babb

- Suzanne Minarcine

"We've Got Trouble in CyberCity..."

- "...with a Capital T,

- "and that rhymes with P,

- "and that stands for....

  Pandemic...??!!!"

- With appreciation to Meredith Willson, "The Music Man"

Research Procedures

- 30-item rating survey of adjunct faculty stressors

- Ideas for stressors from 2020 interviews conducted with online adjunct faculty

- Rating choices:

  --Extremely stressful,
  --Moderately stressful,
  --Slightly stressful,
  --Not at all stressful.

Research Procedures, con't.

- Disseminated survey via SurveyMonkey to:

  --Members of Dr. Babb's "Making A Living Teaching Online" Facebook Group

  --Dr. Babb's and Dr. Minarcine's Facebook pages

- Received 62 completed surveys

Research Procedures, con't.

- Grouped rating items into the following factors:

  --Student Readiness,

  --Student Communications,

  --Administrator Communications,

  --Teaching Load,

  --Teaching Expectations,

  --Other

- Added together rating percentages for:
  (Extremely stressful) + (Moderately Stressful)
  for each of the 30 rating items

- Ranked them in descending order

Factor #1: Student Readiness

Question	Percentage	Rank
Students' lack of readiness to learn in the online course environment.	66.13%	1 (tie)
Students' lack of adequate study skills to succeed in the course.	66.13%	1 (tie)
Students' lack of adequate technology skills to succeed in the course.	62.90%	2 (tie)
Students' primary focus on their grades at the expense of learning.	62.90%	2 (tie)

Factor #2: Student Communications

Question	Percentage	Rank
Students automatically escalating complaints to faculty supervisors without giving the faculty member a chance to address the issue.	67.74%	1
Dealing with students' excuses.	62.30%	2
Students' lateness in participating in discussions or submitting assignments.	58.07%	3
Students communicating disrespectfully by email, text, or telephone.	56.45%	4
Students' unrealistic expectations regarding speed of instructor response to emails, texts, or calls.	54.84%	5
Students making inflammatory posts in public forum posting areas.	48.39%	6
Students not making substantive on-topic discussion posts.	45.16%	7 (tie)
Too many disruptive students.	45.16%	7 (tie)

Factor #3: Administrator Communications

Question	Percentage	Rank
Faculty supervisors who perceive adjunct faculty as disposable and easily replaceable.	82.26%	1
No explanation provided by faculty supervisors for reduced or no teaching assignment in an upcoming term.	80.64%	2
Faculty supervisors who do not provide adequate support with student concerns.	69.36%	3
Administrative monitoring of instructor participation.	59.02%	4
Faculty supervisors who do not return calls or reply to emails promptly when the faculty member needs help with something.	56.45%	5
Faculty supervisors whose communications are too terse.	48.38%	6

Factor #4: Teaching Load

Question	Percentage	Rank
Having to wait too long to find out teaching assignment in coming term.	70.96%	1
Not getting the desired total number of courses to teach.	67.74%	2
Not getting the desired type(s) or topic(s) of courses to teach.	46.77%	3

Factor #5: Teaching Expectations

| Question	Percentage	Rank
Getting insufficient time to set up assigned classes before the term starts.	75.81%	1
Class sizes are too large.	64.52%	2
Requirement to hold live class sessions.	56.45%	3
Grading deadlines are too tight.	40.32%	4
Being required to teach a "canned" pre-set course instead of being able to add own course content	27.86%	5
Class sizes are too small.	20.97%	6

Factor #6: Other

| Question	Percentage	Rank
Inadequate technology support.	47.54%	1
Inadequate professional development opportunities.	38.71%	2

The COVID Connection:

Student and Faculty Stress Triggers

- Sudden transition to online learning

- Sudden transition to working at home

- Parents with children learning at home

- Health concerns of family members

- Increased financial worries
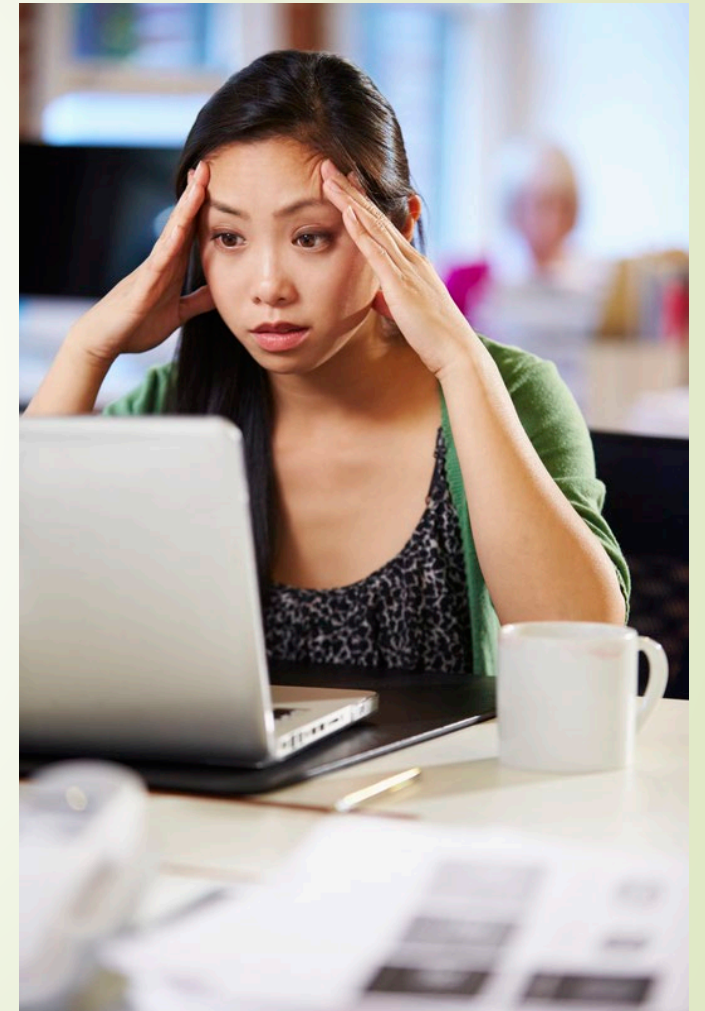
Impact of Stress Triggers
on Students

--Readiness to learn

--Study skills

--"Excuses"

--Tendency to escalate complaints
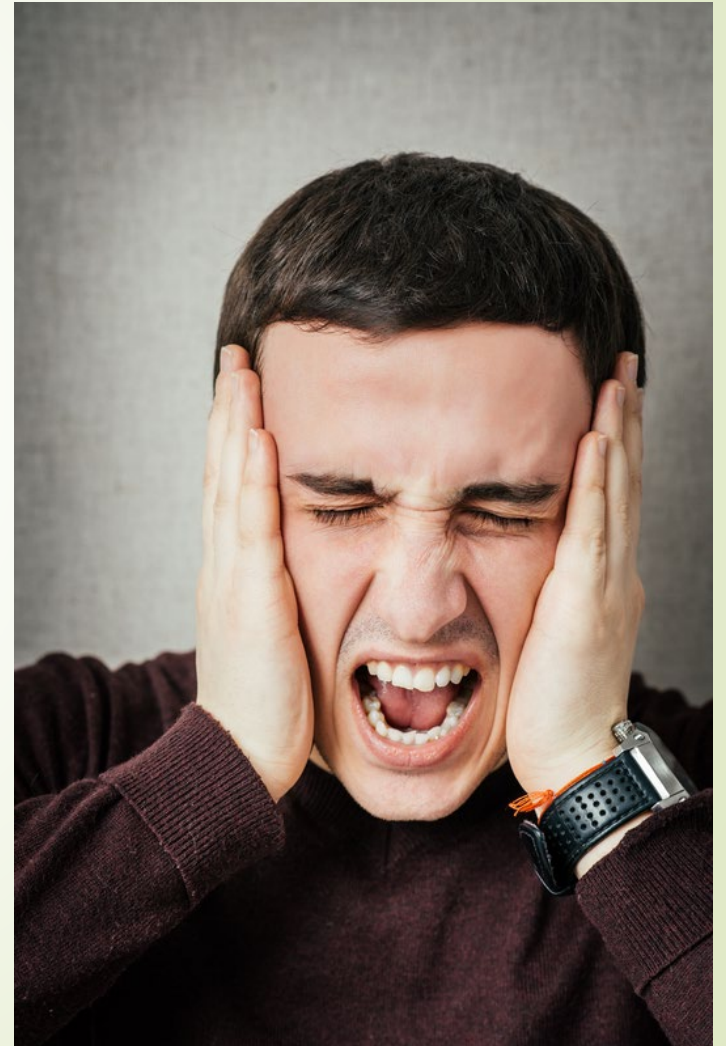
Impact of COVID on Administrators

- Sudden transition to online teaching

- Financial pressures to reduce costs

- Larger class sizes

- Consolidation and cancellation of some online courses

- Uncertainty of planning ahead causing last-minute changes

Impact of Stress Triggers
on Faculty

- Concerns about adequate teaching load

- Concerns about adequate course set-up time

- Concerns about larger class sizes

- Concerns about unprepared students

- Concerns about student escalation of complaints to "bosses"

- Concerns about timely and transparent communication from bosses
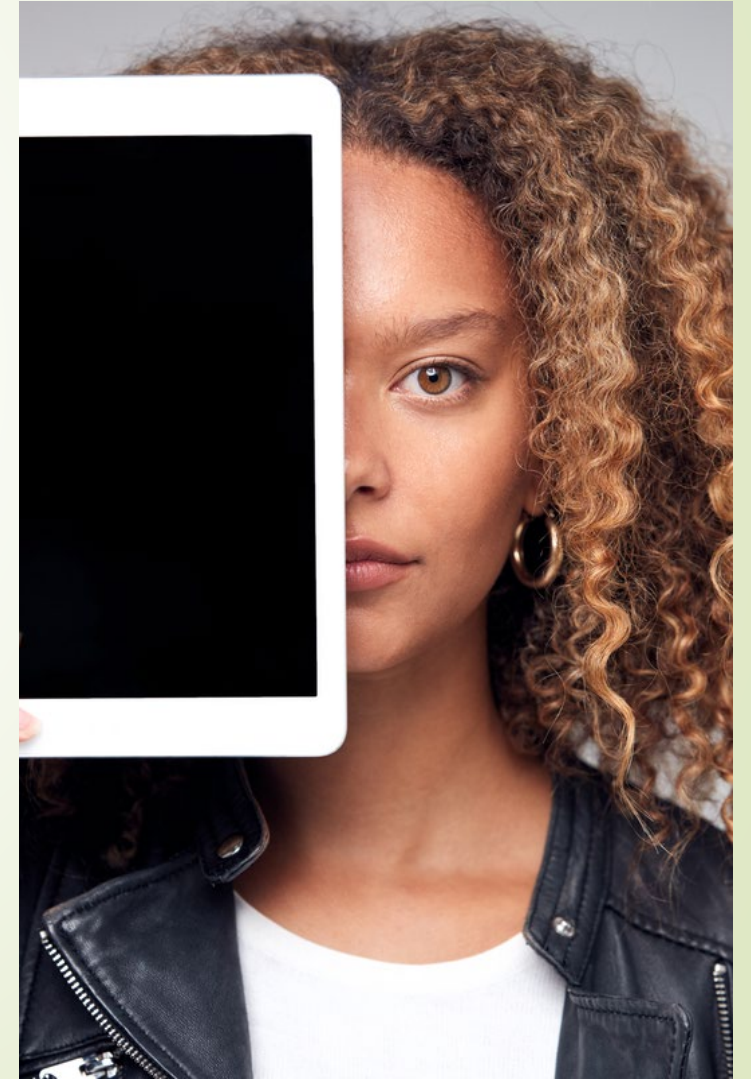
So…What's to Be Done…??

Administrators <u>Can</u> Help Reduce Faculty Stress

➡ **The** "**3 C's: Communication, Caring, and the Clock**:"

--Timely communication re: assigned teaching load

--Explain reasons for load reduction

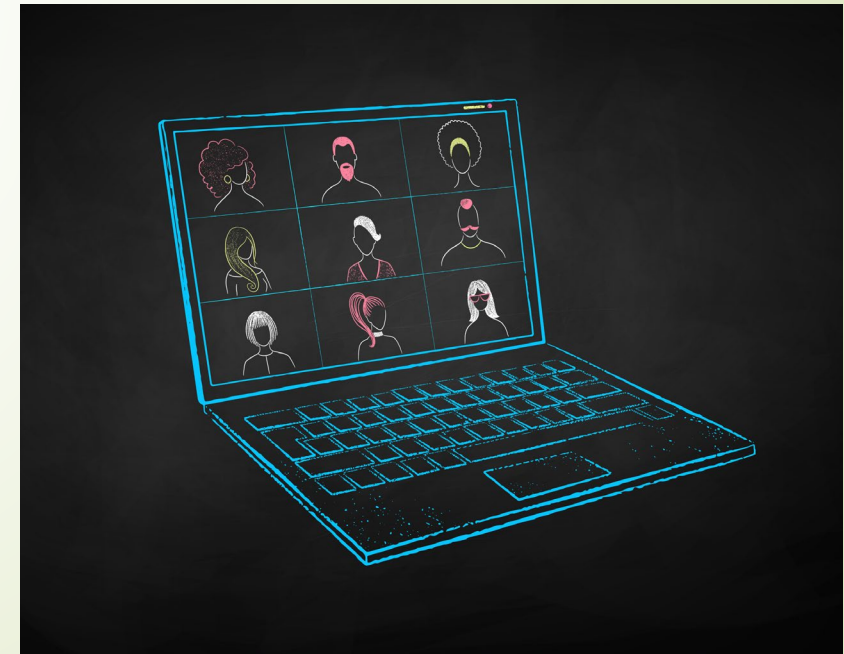--*Don't ghost faculty*!

Read Babb: *When A School Goes Dark:*

https://www.thebabbgroup.com/blog/from-the-founder/when-online-teaching-jobs-evaporate-a-school-going-dark.html

--"Show and tell" faculty they are valued

--Catch faculty "doing something right"

--Support faculty re: student concerns (don't just assume….)

--Allow faculty reasonable time expectations for course set-ups

Post-Pandemic Life:

"*Return to* Normal?"or "*New* Normal?"

- "Resilience is accepting your new reality, even if it's less good than the one you had before. You can fight it, you can do nothing but scream about what you've lost, or you can accept that and try to put together something that's good."

--Elizabeth Edwards