

The Suffolk Law Chill Zone

This semester, in an attempt to help students feel less isolated and to generally support their well-being in a time when gyms are closed and group activities are limited, we created an online repository of live exercise classes (kick-boxing, yoga, barre), cooking demonstrations, movies and other activities (ASL class, book club, karaoke). Some of the classes were conducted by outside contractors and others have been taught by tapping the secret talents of faculty and students. The goal was to create a one-stop shop of content and community activities that appeals to a wide range of students. We specifically stayed away from using terms like “stress management” and “well-being”, as our experience is that programs with these labels tend to attract only a sub-set of the student body, most of whom are already among the converted. Instead, we wanted this wellness initiative to feel like a virtual student center where students can blow off steam, connect and participate in activities.

We enlisted a small group of upper-class students to help with the ideas and the assistance of the law librarians to add content such as the movies. We conducted a school-wide survey to solicit ideas and have raffles off and on to help drive students to the Chill Zone, which is essentially a learning management system (Blackboard) class with our entire student body added as students of the “course”.

Some of our programs have been more popular than others and we continue to experiment with the mix of offerings. Our challenge now is to calibrate the Chill Zone for the return to a more “normal” academic year in 2021-2022. We are currently thinking of ways to transfer some of the activities to physical spaces, while keeping others online to make them accessible to as many students as possible.