

CAMPUS

Few classes will be cut next semester, says VP of Academic Development

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Rumors have been spreading through UPEI this week saying any class with 10 or less students would be cut next semester.

This has left a lot of nervous students wondering if they will be able to get the credits they need, or if they will fall victim to a cancelled class should it not meet the magic number.

Danielle Cull, a fourth year biology student, is worried she will have to take courses next year to gain her degree if any of her courses are cancelled.

"I graduate in May, and if one of these courses were cancelled, I may be forced to remain here for another year, because most of the other fourth year biology courses are full."

Cull also said the university can not afford to cut any classes, as there are so few to choose from already.

"The course selection, in my opinion, isn't all that great to begin with. If they begin to cancel the courses that they do offer, the school will become less appealing, and people will not be compelled to attend"

Vianne Timmons, The Vice President of Academic Development at UPEI, address these concerns and assures students classes would not be arbitrarily cut if they had less than 10 students.

Timmons said new guidelines, which were made recently, are meant to bring consistency. Professors who teach a class with less than 10 students will simply have to provide justification as to why it should continue.

The university is trying to manage the university better and to provide a structure, in which courses would or wouldn't be cancelled, said Timmons. She said some classes are meant to be small, such performance-orientated classes and directed studies, which are more about one-on-one learning.

"We have many classes with under 10, and all or many would be easily justified"

Even so, Cull wanted to know why students weren't informed of the changes.

"It was a decision made by the university that can seriously affect their students academic future," she said.

Timmons said students weren't notified because courses are cancelled all the time, and that the new measures are quite similar to what has been done in the past.

"I think it's a little much ado about nothing."

She thinks very few classes will be cancelled as a result of the new measures.

Decisions on whether to cut classes will be made by the respective dean, with consultation by the chairs and department heads.

In the end, cuts should affect very few students, and each department will work with the students to find alternate courses to accommodate those students. It will not hinder a student's education, said Timmons.

"They may not get a course they were hoping to get into, but it will not affect students' ability to graduate, it will not prevent them to progress through their degree in a timely fashion."

Timmons said implementing a more consistent procedure will actually help students who are affected by cancelled classes.

"This way, there's a date so students will have ample time to find other courses."

The consultation between deans and departments will begin in early November, but it's not clear how long the process will take.

Timmons also said she wasn't sure when students will be informed about whether their class made the cut.

"They will know as soon as we do."

Managing Stress Today for a Brighter Future

Beth Lassaline
Contributor

Contrary to popular belief, people need a certain level of stress in their lives. The optimum level of stress is unique to each individual. What may be relaxing to some people, may be stressful to somebody else.

UPEI's psychiatrist, Dr. Heather Keizer, explains the different measures of stress.

"Too much stress causes burnout, too little stress causes rust out". In order to be successful in school and in your personal life, a certain degree of stress is needed for motivation. When an individual experiences as sudden stressor such as a breakup or increased work load they can become distressed. Also, if you are not properly managing your daily stressors they too can manifest itself into distress. Distress is what can interfere with your day-to-day activities and prevent you from performing at your peak.

Chemically, when an individual becomes stressed their brain is mass producing Cortizol. The body reacts to the Cortizol by producing serotonin. These chemical imbalances cause people to feel anxiety. The way each person experiences anxiety is again, unique to the individual. Dr. Keizer explains that some people may experience an increased sense of worry, performance anxiety, or lack of sleep. Many new students who are adjusting to the large work loads will experience weight loss or gain weight, the common freshmen fifteen. Other students begin to experiment with drugs and alcohol, which can lead to addiction and greater later on in life.

During mid-terms and exams, students need to be aware of how they are handling their anxieties as it can affect how they are learning and preparing for their tests. Dr. Keizer says that "anxiety interferes in the memory process, particularly with registration." Anxiety can impact how much information you can absorb, process and recall when needed. When you are overly distressed, it is harder to retain new information and people can experience loss of memory or even experience memory blanks.

UPEI Student services counselor Mike Connolly, BA, Med, says that there is "a definite correlation between health and stress" Chronic unrelieved stress can eventually lead to lower immune resistance to common colds and bugs, insomnia, various skin irritations and in time, can also lead to depression.

What is important is to learn early on how to manage your daily stressors as well as learning how to cope with sudden stressful triggers. Connolly says "an effective person has lots of different ways to cope with life's stressors"

Maintaining a regular routine is the best preventative care in managing daily stress. It is important that you get enough sleep, eat nutritious, balanced meals and most importantly, exercise regularly. Mike Connolly says that if exercise was able to be prescribed as medicine, it would be the most common and widespread treatment prescribed.

Some other tips to help students manage their stress are, effective time management to help avoid procrastination, deep breathing relaxation exercises, like yoga or meditation, laughing, walking, or taking a short break from school work. Try to drink alcohol and caffeine in moderation and try to utilize your non formal support systems like friends and family who will let you vent your stresses. It is also important for students to have realistic expectations of themselves and their capabilities. If you are still experiencing stress and are looking for some formal help, student services is located on the 2nd floor of the Murphy building and offers free counseling to any student in need. The counselors, like Mike Connolly, provide academic as well as personal counseling, and if needed can make referrals to the school's psychiatrist Dr. Keizer.