

Well-being Guidelines on Meetings and Emails

Continuing our commitment to the Well-being Improvement Plan, we would like to share new guidelines, created by the Well-being Committee, and endorsed by the Dean's Council, aimed at protecting your time and improving your overall work experience and workplace well-being.

Since COVID and the development of our School's Strategic Plan BEYOND, we have been working to address well-being and resiliency through many avenues. While these strategies are helpful, through our School's Engagement survey and through the work of the Well-being Committee, we have heard suggestions and recommendations from many of you for areas of improvement. Current guidelines that have been implemented and will continue include:

1. **Email Etiquette:** Our guidance encourages sending emails only between **7:30 a.m. and 6 p.m., Monday through Friday**. Following this guideline has reduced email requests and conversations after hours and over the weekend. We also have in place no expectations to check email during off hours or during vacation or sick time. We suggest setting emails to "delay delivery" for the hours noted above. Emergencies that require immediate attention should be handled by text and/or phone calls.
2. **Meeting Etiquette:** Our guidance encourages everyone to be sensitive to scheduling standing internal meetings between the hours of 8 a.m. to 9 a.m., 12 p.m. to 1 p.m., and 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. Preserve these hours for people to catch-up, have a meal, or attend ad-hoc/external meetings. We've heard from some people who say this is an effective tool with the use of calendar holds.
3. **Zoom Fatigue and In-Person Meetings:** Zoom meetings are mentally exhausting for several physiologic reasons. For Zoom meetings, particularly in the afternoon, empower people to be off camera if they choose. Also consider holding in-person or call-in meetings, rather than Zoom meetings. This will help relieve some Zoom fatigue and also **encourage more in-person engagement and collaboration**.

In addition to the existing guidelines that will remain, the Well-being Committee is introducing a new recommendation as an enhancement to the existing meeting guidelines and aimed at protecting faculty and staff time to devote to work by incorporating designated "meeting-free times" at the end of the week. These strategies stem from feedback received from the School community and also align with the National Academy of Medicine 2022 National Plan for Well-being and a [recent article](#) in AJPE (2022) by Kennedy and colleagues. Both suggest that providing protected time to employees allows them to spend more time on meaningful professional activities and personal well-being. The authors also recommended that restricting meeting days and times can be a useful strategy in helping faculty with time management, and is an approach to reduce burnout while enhancing well-being and productivity in the workplace.

- **Protected Time through Meeting-Free Times. Starting June 1, 2023:** We will be implementing guidance for protected time and encourage all supervisors, faculty, and staff to protect 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. every second and fourth Friday of the month. The Well-being Committee asks that you designate this as a meeting-free time for **faculty and staff**. Keeping in the spirit of these core hours for protected time, please preserve these hours for people to catch-up at the end of the week or participate in meaningful professional or personal goals. We recognize that there may be classes or seminars during this time or other unavoidable conflicts may be present, and, in these cases, we ask individuals and supervisors to identify an alternative four-hour block throughout the week to ensure that each employee has protected, meeting-free time. The Well-being Committee will monitor the impact of the new protected time guidance through Fall 2023 and assess for any changes that may be warranted.
- **Meetings, in general:** We encourage you to conclude meetings 10 minutes before the hour to allow time for a break and to allow participants to prepare for the next meeting.

We'd also like to remind you about this semester's **student** well-being days. Graduate students should follow the well-being days outlined by the University and Pharm.D. students should follow those outlined by the School. You can find the well-being days for both groups in the academic calendar [here](#).

Sincerely,

Suzie Harris, on behalf of the Well-being Committee

SUZANNE C. HARRIS, Pharm.D., BCPP

Director of Well-being and Resilience

Associate Professor

Clinical Pharmacist Practitioner-Psychiatry

suzanne_harris@unc.edu | 919-843-6215