Welcome, everybody, to the next session,

"How To Cope: Addressing Student Concerns."

I'm very excited to have

Sherri Restauri and Kate Sonka here with me today

to take a deep dive into this topic.

Quick reminder for you guys.

Please submit your questions

through the live Q&A feature

here in Zoom, and we'll

address those at the end of the session.

We are featuring

Verbit's live integration with Zoom today.

This enables you to view

a live transcript throughout the session.

To enable the transcript,

you would just click the arrow next to the CC button on

the bottom menu bar, and then

click ''View full transcript."

During our time together today,

we will have some brief introductions

and we'll move right into the heart of

the presentations with a focus

on the psychological component and

digital accessibility aspect of

addressing student concerns and needs.

It's my pleasure then to turn it over to Sherri and Kate,

if you guys would like to introduce yourselves.

Thank you so much, Misty.

Thank you, everybody, who is here to join us today.

My name is Sherri Restauri.

I'm the Senior Executive Director

for the Coastal Office of Online Learning.

As I just mentioned in

the chat, I'm in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. And, Kate?

Hey, everybody, thanks for joining us today.

I am the Assistant Director of

Academic Technology for the College

of Arts and Letters at Michigan State University,

and I'm located in Lansing. Welcome.

Thank you.

All right. I'll just give a brief introduction

before Sherri and Kate dive in.

I'm Misty Cobb, Senior Customer

Success Manager at Verbit.

It's my pleasure to be here

today to moderate the session.

Sherri and Kate, if you guys will take it away.

Thank you. We have just a few slides

pulled together for you to share some of the information,

and I wanted to start with a quote that came

out in March of 2020.

Much like many of you,

my institution at Coastal Carolina University,

during the spring semester, was going through

a remote transition to online learning for

many faculty and students who weren't

quite prepared for that transition.

This particular quote, I have

used and I have shared with colleagues,

administration, faculty,

students, staff over and over again.

It comes from a colleague and

friend of mine, Karen Costa,

and there's an article that's called "The Top Five

Tips for Academic Continuity." Karen's quote is,

''We're operating in the real, not the ideal.''

I feel that really frames the rest of

my information that I have to share with

you in these few brief moments,

because everything that we're doing is based on trying to

serve our students, and our faculty, and

our colleagues to the best of our ability,

though in many circumstances of

the spring, it is not in the ideal way.

Going into the fall, we had more time to prepare.

I think that's one of the things that is

a serious transition for us between spring

remote teaching and now.

All of us should be in a better position to be

able to serve our students,

our staff, and our faculty going into the fall term.

Let's go on to the next slide.

I want to briefly share with

you some research that has come out

that is specifically focused on what

helps our students to be most successful.

If you follow instructional design theory,

her course design is

a major consideration in terms of student success,

as are the different types of technologies.

But something you may not have heard

specifically, is the research that's come out over

the last four years. Since the spring 2020

semester, there is a heavy focus on

emotional and psycho-social needs of

students, as a predictor of

their success in their online learning environment.

The star that you see there on your screen that says

''Student Agency'' is a major consideration,

and I'm going to talk a little bit more

about that in just a moment.

We have a poll that we're going to

share with you that we'd like for

you to take. Just take opportunity to address

these questions that we're going to share with you.

Would Verbit mind please sharing that?

Thank you so much. We're going to give

you ten seconds, if you could read that,

and I also read it aloud to you.

The poll says, ''Which of the following are you most

concerned about going into the fall semester?

Please select all that apply."

Just select any of those that you

think, as a faculty staff member,

instructional designer, is of

most concern to you as you're going forward.

Five more seconds. All right,

let's close our poll and show our poll results.

Thank you very much.

As you can see with the distribution,

the predominant responses that people

selected the most here are their health,

are other people's health,

are social interaction concerns, and living situations

and remote work concerns.

I actually also mirror those.

You can also see

some of the ones that are a little bit

lower, and the lowest in the categories as well,

finances, and if I can

learn all the tools that I need to teach.

Thank you very much for completing those.

I share that poll

because we briefly talk about

the idea of student agency

What that means is giving students,

giving users, and learners

an opportunity to express themselves, and making

the decision to purposely pivot

our courses in a way

that we're addressing their psycho-social needs.

Let's look at the next slide. Psycho-social

is a combination of social considerations,

such as being able to interact

and engage with your students,

and psychological variables, such as are they alone?

Do they feel like they're disconnected?

Do they feel like they've

gotten to know their classmates,

and they've gotten to know their faculty members?

The question that you're seeing in front of

you is a specific question that says,

''What impacts our students after COVID-19

from psychological and social perspectives?''

The research that's coming out, that started

to pour in after March, April,

and May from the beginning of

the spring semester is that students are showing

a negative outcome from

the remote swap to

teaching in the environment that we went through.

25 percent, in fact,

are already showing symptoms of mild, moderate,

and severe anxiety and/or depression

because of being remote and not feeling

interconnected to their faculty members

and also to their fellow colleagues.

Some of the other items that are lumped into

psycho-social variables are a concern about

living alone and no longer having

remote access, having

only remote access to their colleagues,

having an unsteady income because of

the impacts of COVID-19, and not being able

to continue their education, and that also

flowing into delayed academic progress.

So let's look at the next slide. I want

to share with you something, a tip

that I shared with all of my faculty members.

We've been going through extensive training over

the summer term, and we have hundreds of faculty,

over 800, have gone through required trainings now

in order to learn best practices,

such as these tips I have for you here.

The best practice, if I had to summarize

all best practices across the board,

is simply to ask your students.

You need to reach out to the students.

The poll that I just shared with you is

a very similar poll to the one that I also have

devised and have shared with all of my faculty to

administer during what we call week zero.

We open our classes for the fall term a week early

In fact, they opened at 7:00 a.m. this morning.

We use that as an opportunity to

ask students how they're feeling,

how they feel about being shown on camera,

how they feel about

technology, and what types of

synchronicity are going to

meet their psycho-social needs.

I have a graphic here that you're

welcome to take a look at after the presentation.

It's one that I've been sharing with

my own faculty to explain the benefits as well as

the downfalls of requiring

synchronicity, and requiring people

to be face to face on camera.

Let's look at the next slide

so you can see an example of a specific survey

I administered in my own class in the spring semester.

I administered this during week zero,

three weeks into March during 2020.

As you see, very similar to

the responses you shared with us.

These are the types of responses

our students also are sharing.

This was a pivotal decision maker

in order for me to determine,

are they more concerned about technology?

Are they more concerned about finances?

As you can see in front of you,

Are they more concerned about

other people's health? And other types of variables.

This type of survey has

absolutely been instrumental to

us serving the needs of our students.

It's not as much about course design,

but it's focused on meeting those learners' need.

I did want to share with you how important that

particular personal data for

my own campus, for our faculty,

and making sure that the students are feeling heard.

That concept we learned earlier of student agency,

simply asking them a question is pivotal.

This incorporated their engagement into those responses.

Let's look at the final question.

This is a two-question survey.

The question, as you can see, has a limited response.

I asked them specifically, "If you had to

describe how you feel going into next week,"

that's when we were returning

from COVID being out for two weeks,

"What one word or phrase would you use?"

I have also used this exact same survey

opening up for week zero this week,

and all of my faculty are

using something very similar as well.

It would be something, "How are you feeling

going into the fall semester?

What one word or phrase can you use?"

It's a very good way for

you to not have to read through multiple paragraphs,

but to give you an opportunity to see how

they feel, and to make adjustments to your course,

such as either increasing or

decreasing the number of virtual office hours,

directing them to counseling services,

providing student advising, and other types of support.

So I did want to make sure to

give you guys the opportunity to see that this

has been a fantastic opportunity to really

solicit the different types of

feedback from our students, to pivot,

to make adjustments to the types of

technology that we're using as well.

All right, next slide. The final item

that I have for you specifically, is to try to

encompass the psychosocial consideration

of what we call holistic and humanistic learning.

So thinking about students, not just as a learner in

which we have to design very strong classes,

because that's important,

but also to holistically look at them as a human,

just like you are when you

answered the poll and you shared with

us the types of concerns that you predominantly have.

Your students actually have those as well.

Doing something as simple as a two-question poll

and making small adjustments

like increasing the number of

virtual office hours, has

already started to be proven through research to

significantly improve their satisfaction,

their engagement, and their success.

I do encourage you to

consider doing such small things as opening classes

early, and also doing

student polls in order

to assess psychosocial considerations.

I'm going to hand this off

to Kate now. Thank you very much.

Great. Thanks, Sherry. Hello everybody.

Tied into what Sherry

has been talking about, is thinking about accessibility.

If you are new to accessibility,

this is a conversation,

a practice around making

sure that the course content we're

creating is accessible to our students with disabilities.

What we know and what many of

you have probably experienced,

is when we take some of these actions and practices,

it positively can impact many or all of our students.

Very specifically though, there's

a few things that I want to touch on today.

The first is accessibility in these strange times.

I think Sherry has really laid the groundwork there

in thinking about what our students are experiencing,

but I really want to dive into that.

The first thing I have up on the screen is

regularly check in with your students, which I think,

tied into Sherry's point about

ask what's going on, how can we support?

Or how can I as an instructor support you

best in these moments?

And just really opening up those lines of communication

is very important for our students.

The next thing that you'll probably find,

if you haven't already,

is that disability accommodation requests

will probably change.

What we saw, and perhaps some

of you experienced this in the spring,

students who maybe didn't have

necessarily any accommodation requests

before the semester,

or at the start of the semester,

once everything went to

a virtual environment. Students started realizing,

"I'm going to need accommodations in these areas

where maybe I didn't before

in a face-to-face environment."

This can happen and does happen.

Perhaps some of you have experienced that

in the process of being in new environments

or just general stressors,

life stressors, tied to

a lot of what Sherry said around anxiety,

depression. That will affect students in your courses.

That is something to just keep an awareness about.

Then this is crucial,

maintaining open communication with

your disability services office.

We have great partners here at

Michigan State in our disability services office.

They are wonderful sources of

knowledge resources for being

able to support questions that you have as they come up.

Then I'm sure some of you have

been practicing this and hearing this,

but extending grace to our students and to ourselves.

Even though this has been going on since March, I mean,

fall is going to be unlike

something any of us have experienced.

So understanding that as

long as we're communicating with each other,

understanding that things are going to change,

and extending grace in those moments can

really help us to get through whatever this is.

Next slide, please, Misty.

Great. Just to give you an actual hard point of data,

in talking with our disability services office

at Michigan State University,

they saw a 9.8 percent increase in students who were

registered with their office from May 2019 to May 2020.

I think that really can illustrate the fact

that this is having an impact on our students,

and perhaps you're seeing

similar things on your campuses.

To the next slide.

If you haven't seen this before,

I'm going to describe it

from the inclusive design toolkit

that Microsoft puts out.

As Sherry mentioned, these slides will

be shared out so you'll be able to get to this link.

Also, if you just Google

"Inclusive design at Microsoft," you will get there.

But I think one of the important things

that we have talked about in terms of

thinking about students who are

experiencing maybe what aren't perceivable disabilities,

so anxiety, depression, chronic illness,

those sorts of disabilities.

We have to consider that there are

different situations that students find themselves in.

I think that this graphic that Microsoft created

really helps put that into context.

I'm going to describe it really quickly so that

everyone knows what's up on the screen.

There's three columns: permanent,

temporary and situational, and there's four rows:

touch, see, hear, and speak.

In each of these little boxes,

there is an illustration of some type of disability,

an example of a type of disability.

I'm going to read it across quickly.

In the touch row for permanent one arm,

temporary arm injury and situational new parents,

what this is saying is that at any moment in time,

any of us can enter into

the disability community in

a permanent way. For example, one arm,

in a temporary way,

maybe you have an arm injury, you've broke your arm,

and eventually it will heal, and you won't necessarily

be in this space or situational.

They use new parent as a way to say,

perhaps you're holding a baby in one arm and you're

trying to open the door to your house,

or you're trying to answer an e-mail,

or you're trying to do something, and you

only have use of one arm in that moment.

How does that impact your ability

to do whatever you're trying to do?

I'm going to read through the rest of the rows now.

For see, for permanent we have blind,

temporary is cataracts, situational is distracted driver.

For hear we have deaf,

temporary is ear infection, and situational is bartender.

Then for speak for permanent we have non-verbal,

temporary is laryngitis, and situational as heavy accent.

We don't have enough time to dive into whether

you think these examples are great, or

you could come up with other examples,

but I hope what you take away from this,

because I do have personal beefs with some of these,

but I think the important thing to take away

from this is that as we're

considering our classrooms for this fall,

and our colleagues, how are we making sure that

we're paying attention to

different and varying needs of our students?

Hopefully that's the takeaway you can

get from there. We'll go on the next slide.

We have some approachable accessibility quick tips.

If you'll just tab through those,

Misty, and they'll appear.

We have text contrast, textiles,

heading styles, list styles,

alt text, and closed captioning.

Again, you'll have access to

this so you can really dive into it,

but what we've provided here are essentially

six items that if you're able

to work this into your course content, it

can have a really good and positive impact

on how students are perceiving your content.

Text contrast is using

high contrast to ensure text stands out.

Text styles that you're not using just color for meaning.

Heading styles so that you're using

things like Heading 1, Heading 2.

For content organization, list styles,

you're using built-in bullet and numbering systems.

Alt text, you're describing the images, graphs,

or charts that you have in

your course content, and then captioning,

so that you're providing captioning on

videos that you're providing in your classroom.

I know this is a super-fast description of these,

but employing any of

these in your course can really

have a positive impact for your students.

Then we'll go to the next one.

Likewise, Misty, if you want to tab through.

Thinking more broadly about teaching considerations

you can make for

a more accessible environment

in a lecture-based situation,

employing the use of transcripts and captioning.

There are built-in captioning

available on Google slides and PowerPoint.

Of course, there's third-party companies

that can do this work.

You can assign a rotating student

to take notes for the class, rather

than all students trying to pay

attention to what's going on in

a synchronous moment versus asynchronous.

Perhaps you assign that on a weekly basis,

so that one student is really focused on it.

Others can be focused on other aspects of the class.

Then, of course, this question

of asynchronous versus synchronous,

we've all been in this space for a while,

but considering why are you

making the choices you're making,

and what impact might that have on your students.

From a discussion-based standpoint,

always identifying who is speaking,

especially in these sorts of environments.

Hey, this is Kate from Michigan State, yada, yada,

so that if students either can't see who's talking or

just so they know who to assign that voice to,

that is very helpful.

Obviously, taking advantage of discussion boards as a way

to engage in some asynchronous discussion.

You could even consider assigning

students points for lecture notes or participation,

if you don't already,

as a way to help students obviously pay attention,

but also understand that they have a lot going on.

But if they can engage in that way,

that can be very helpful.

Then assessment as always,

considering high versus low stakes,

and what does that look like for

your course, can really have an impact on your students.

Then for you, considering

the time spent grading on a screen,

and so I'm sure some of you

experienced that in the spring,

but how much time are you spending on the screen,

and how much are you

assigning that you're going to have to grade later?

Then we'll go into the last slide here.

If you haven't already seen this,

it's a very helpful framing mechanism

for what you want to do in your course.

Again, we have a link to this actual article

from our colleague, Daniel Stanford, at DePaul.

But thinking about things like

high bandwidth, or thinking

about bandwidth versus immediacy,

meaning how immediate does

a response need to be from a student.

On a high bandwidth, low immediacy,

that's going to be things like video or audio,

where students are going to have to be using bandwidth,

but maybe they don't have to engage in the moment.

A high bandwidth and high immediacy.

That's like what we're doing right now,

a video conference and audio conference.

We're using a lot of bandwidth and

I'm looking for feedback in the moment.

In a low immediacy,

low bandwidth environment, that could

be discussion boards, emails, readings,

things that students don't necessarily

have to reply to in the moment,

and don't require a lot of bandwidth if

that is an issue for them.

Then finally, a high immediacy, low bandwidth,

something like a collaborative document

like Google Docs or

group chat and messaging, slack,

something to that effect, Microsoft Teams, etc.

Things to keep in mind as

well as when you're thinking about this

synchronous versus asynchronous or

some of those other questions

can help you frame what mix do I need in my course?

I'll pause there. That was fast,

and we'll go to the last one,

which should be any questions.

Trying to leave a few minutes

for questions that anyone might have.

Thank you, Kate, Sherri.

Fantastic information. Tons to think on

and to peruse to see about actions that we can take.

A couple of questions for you guys.

You can each take it if you like.

What's your one or two best tips

that you can recommend for helping students to

decrease stress related to managing

digital learning during times like now with COVID-19?

I think probably, speaking from my perspective,

one of the first things that we

tell students is to try to make

a schedule and to stick with that schedule, just like us,

this faculty and staff.

When you're doing a full

remote digital learning experience,

those boundaries between

personal, and work, and school life get very blurred.

That's part of where a lot of the stress comes from.

I would say my number one tip

was probably to set up that schedule, and to

establish boundaries, and make sure that you

secure some kind of a key that says,

"This is when I'm done.

At five o'clock, my alarm goes off,

I walk away from my computer

at home, and I'm done working."

I think that's a major tip that works for everybody,

and in particular, it seems to be

helping our students. Kate?

Yeah, I'll leave it at that. I think that's great.

I love it. I need to take

that advice, Sherri, it's excellent.

Like everyone, I know I'm always pressed for time.

So if I only have a couple of minutes

that are available to me to

address the accessibility in my course,

what's the one thing that I should do?

Thanks for that question. I mentioned

in the slides the approachable accessibility tips,

things like text, high-contrast, alt text, etc.

Do yourself a favor, and you don't

have to remember all of those yourself.

If you're using something like Word documents,

there is a built-in accessibility checker,

same with PowerPoint, use that.

Because what that will do, if you click that,

it's a button, you click it

and it will give you a report.

It will call out things like, hey,

I see you have an image here but you

forgot alt text, do you want to add it?

You can do it right from there, or it will

give you step-by-step, here's how to do it.

Similar to things like,

I see you aren't using heading structures,

you're missing whatever it might be.

That's a really quick way for the software

to do the work for you and point out to you,

consider adding these things, please add these things.

If you're like, I don't know what that means,

it provides feedback on how to do that.

Truly, if we're all pressed for time, absolutely.

Using that built-in accessibility checker is huge

for doing the accessibility work

for you or at least guiding you through that process.

That would be my recommendation.

That's awesome, Kate.

Sherri, do you have anything to add?

Hands down, I totally agree with that.

At my campus, I don't know if this

is available to all of you guys,

but shout out to my favorite tool for accessibility,

which is Blackboard Ally.

We have Blackboard Ally

integrated with our learning management systems.

In addition to the native tools, such as Microsoft Word's

accessibility checker, we run

course level reports and we use those to modify, too.

So definitely, use the software, all software,

to save you a lot of time,

so that you don't have to do

manual work to identify the errors.

That's awesome. Audience. Any additional questions

from you guys? we would love to hear from you.

We'll take a couple of moments while we

wait to see if any of you have

questions to share with Kate

and Sherri. While we're waiting,

I do want to thank you, Sherri.

Thank you, Kate. Thank you for

your preparation and for sharing

your expertise with us today.

We are approaching time for the next session,

so we'll hang out just a couple of other moments,

to see if there are any additional questions.

Please do note, as Sherri

and Kate indicated earlier in the session,

we will be sharing recordings,

I will be distributing slides.

Kate and Sherri had been marvelous.

I'll just place this up on the screen for you.

They have gathered for you

a significant list of readings,

and I know that I will be marking some time down in

my own schedule to peruse

these and to expand my own learning.

So again, Kate, Sherri,

thank you for all of the work

that you have done to prepare this information.

Participants, thank you guys for being with us today.

We are so grateful that you have joined us.

With that, you can return to the agenda page,

and there'll be a link there to allow

you to join the next session.

Otherwise, I'll hang out here just for a couple of

moments to see how you guys are doing.

But make sure you close out, and you return to

the agenda page, and then join the next Zoom session.

Thanks, everybody. Outstanding session.

Thanks, guys.