DEAN'S DIGEST

"When we learn how to become resilient, we learn how to embrace the beautifully broad spectrum of the human experience"
— *Jaeda Dewalt*

Reopening ITU and navigating uncertainty

The Corona pandemic has not only been driving a globally shared need for action on a disease we know little about; it has also forced most of us to rethink our daily practices and navigate in this extreme state of uncertainty the past year. Hope increases as we are carefully opening of our society and of the ITU Campus, but we cannot control the pandemic, so we will still need to prepare for a reality where we "draw the map as we walk" for some time ahead. When it comes to how we learn, navigating uncertainty is highly impactful. Preparing students for careers (where most don't even exist yet because they haven't been created by the students that will occupy them☺), also means engaging them in learning experiences where they are faced with navigating uncertainty during their study. Instead of assuming full information and control, we should make the reopening a collective learning experience on navigating uncertainty. To do so successfully, resilience becomes an important skill for coping with the challenges ahead, for staying positive, and to learn new lessons from this unique situation.

Resilience is controlling what you can and let go of what you cannot control

Navigating uncertainty and complexity are human stressors that have become part of our work and study life in general. Such emotions result from our interpretations and explanations of the circumstances and we may not be able to control the process or decisions regarding Covid or any of the other unknowns showering our lives. However, we can control our response to what we are facing, which is valuable for our students to understand and learn.

Keeping a resilient practice will help us build a stronger foundation for dealing with uncertainty within ourselves, but also with students. ITU and external stakeholders recognize that a good education should enhance academic achievement as well as students' character and social and emotional competences, such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, collaboration, and responsible decision-making. Cultivating our social and emotional competences and well-being may be an important component in fulfilling this learning goal of navigating uncertainty. The pandemic and the waves of closing down and opening up provides us with a useful setting for exploring methods for promoting these skills among faculty, staff, and students.

Resilience is when we change the game for ourselves by being consciously aware of what is happening, being optimistic to understand and regulate emotions, and to see limitations and challenges as a form of useful feedback. If we can help our students holding a resilient approach, it is easier to navigate uncertainty and actively seek opportunities, take risks and explorative initiatives, which may lead to positive learning outcomes. Resilience can thus help us and our students get through the post-pandemic and even feel okay while in the midst of it. What we need at this moment is to do our best with the information we have and accepting that we don't need to have all the the answers yet. The reopening will be more smooth and pleasant if we keep focus on what we *can* control and take one step at a time. While many of us are working remotely it is important to be compassionate and work to connect with each other and build resilience through setting realistic expectations together. It can help us reduce stress, which improves wellbeing. So besides helping us navigating uncertainty, resilience can encourage us to practice a form of self-care and reducing the worry about what the uncertain future holds.

Stay cool, look forward, and keep navigating uncertainty in a resilient manner! See you soon at our next meeting.

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Inspirational material: Marold Wosnitza, Francisco Peixoto, Susan Beltman, Caroline F. Mansfield (2018) Resilience in Education: Concepts, Contexts and Connections https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-319-76690-4