

Issue: Juggling School Responsibilities with Work-Family Responsibilities

Many non-traditional students, including many T.E.A.C.H. scholarship recipients, experience higher levels of work-family or work-school conflict. Individuals have multiple demands such as work, children and other family responsibilities that [constrain their time and raise stress levels, especially for women](#). Many of these students also find higher education requires greater income, but with families to care for, work obligations and other demands, [students may be disadvantaged and unable to pay for courses in a timely manner](#). Furthermore, research has also shown that students with more work responsibilities may be [unable to fully attend and participate in class](#), which negatively affects their success in college.

Promising Practices

1. Offer online tests, quizzes and assignments with more flexible deadlines, helping students complete work at their convenience. By offering online tests, quizzes and assignments, professors and colleges help alleviate the consequences that come from being forced to find time to complete assignments on campus or other locations. Both Dr. Martha Evans, an Assistant Professor and Campus Liaison at Ohio University (evansm5@ohio.edu), and Dr. Sharron Cuthbertson, Assistant Professor and Coordinator at Florida Gateway College (sharron.cuthbertson@fgc.edu), grant students flexibility in assignments and tests so they can complete work at their own convenience without restricting time spent with their family or at work. In addition, this flexibility reduces text anxiety; anxiety can increase work-family-school conflict, which can spill over into the quality of interactions a student has with their family, coworkers/supervisors and children in their classrooms. Patsy Yager, an Early Childhood Education Instructor at Western Nebraska Community College (yagerp@wncc.edu), opens up assignments early so students can plan their time accordingly, especially if they have other demands.
2. Encourage constant communication between students and teachers. Often, issues arise with juggling work-family-school responsibilities because teachers do not know students may have outside responsibilities and may be struggling with those competing demands. Many non-traditional students would like [professors to better understand the stressors and obstacles uniquely faced by these students](#). Encouraging constant communication up front and throughout programs is vital for student success, because it alleviates potential burdens and increases the connection between individuals, faculty and other students.
3. Hold regular, extended and non-traditional office hours for students with responsibilities that prevent them from getting help at traditional times or locations. [Interaction with faculty members helps bolster student success](#), but if non-traditional students have other pressing family-work demands, they may be unable to participate in that faculty-student interaction. As a result, holding office hours during non-normal times or in more accessible locations may increase the number and quality of those faculty-student interactions. Patsy Yager (contact information listed in first strategy) holds regular office hours and by-appointment office hours to meet the needs of all her students, especially those that cannot attend regular office hours. Holding virtual office hours is also an option.
4. Create an atmosphere of inclusion and connection by creating spaces dedicated to non-traditional students and holding events where students can gather with similar individuals. [Research shows that spaces like this bolster a sense of belonging, which is vital for student success in college, and increase](#)

[networking opportunities](#). Furthermore, incorporating families into these spaces (through child care and family activities) reduces the disconnection between the roles non-traditional students have to fulfill.

If you know of any promising strategies to address this barrier and would like to share, please contact Judy Leinbach at judyl@teachecnationalcenter.org.



T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center is a division of Child Care Services Association
PO Box 901, Chapel Hill, NC 27514 919-967-3272 www.teachecnationalcenter.org

