

What to Do Tonight: Preparing for the Return to Class

This week, instructors will be resuming their classes after the tragic events on August 28. Below are recommendations for immediate steps to take ahead of the first class meeting.

Communicating with Students

Prepare and distribute a brief email indicating your support and plans for the next class meeting. This will give students a clear understanding of what to expect. Consider including:

- An acknowledgement of the events
- Review of available resources
- Review of syllabus and plan moving forward
- Timeline for returning to instructional content

Sample Email Language: General*

“Dear Students,

I am writing to you with a heavy heart. I want to extend my sincere concern for you, your friends, and your family as we all cope with the tragic news this week. I have been thinking about our class and of each of you as I process the many thoughts and feelings I’m experiencing. We are just beginning to build our community this semester, but I hope you will find these new connections a source of support in the coming weeks.

We all process and experience such news in different ways depending on our histories and our current situations. My hope is you will grant yourself compassion knowing there is no right way to feel and respond. Whatever helps you to feel supported, connected, and safe is what is needed most. Please know that I care very much about you, and if you are feeling in need of support, I am available with a listening ear. I encourage you to reach out to one another to check in. The following resources are available to you:

- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) are available to any students who need to speak with a mental health provider. CAPS can be reached via 919-966-3658 or caps@unc.edu.
- A University hotline is available for the entire Carolina community at 919-918-1999.
- The University’s website, unc.edu, will continue to share information about this tragic event as it becomes available, along with mental health resources.

As we prepare to return to the classroom, I look forward to being together soon. During our next class meeting, we will dedicate time to processing our grief together, although this discussion will be optional for those who are not ready to share their feelings with others. I am holding you in my thoughts.”

* Adapted with permission from: [Strategies for Supporting Our Students](#) by Carolyn Schuyler at the University of Virginia

Additional Language for Courses that Sheltered Together

“Being together in such frightening circumstances on Monday was certainly not the way we planned or hoped to begin our semester, but I hope you will find these new connections a source of support in the coming weeks.”

Additional Language if You Are Ready to Share Updates to the Syllabus

I am adjusting some of our course deadlines and policies to provide needed flexibility for us all as we cope. I ask that you extend patience and grace to me and to your classmates in adopting the following changes:

- *[Indicate course policy changes]*