

## *Motion for Altering ReST Training for First-Years at Colby*

**Purpose:** Freshman at Colby are required to complete certain courses and mandatory sessions to acquire wellness credits for the year. The achievement of the wellness credits is supposed to teach students how to manage stress, talk about their emotions, and navigate their first year of college. The ReST, or Resiliency Skills Training, in particular, is meant to aid students in stress-management and give them tips on how to do so. But instead, the set-up of the ReST program is proving to cause more stress in first-years, the opposite of its intended purpose. This motion aims to suggest to the college some vital changes to the ReST program to make sure freshmen can get the most out of this training.

**The What:** This motion would recommend to the college three major changes in the ReST program. One is curriculum-based, in that we want to replace the video reflections done after the four in-person meetings with something more effective. These video reflections were tedious and often involved watching more than one hour of content, an assignment which caused much more stress than necessary in students. Through talking to students, we found that the real benefit came from the conversations students had with one another, so we propose altering this virtual component to something like a discussion board instead, if getting rid of the completely is not an option.

The other change is one that is structure-based. The ReST meetings themselves often conflicted with a lot of students' other activities, such as sports practices, meetings with professors, etc. Students also almost always found the meetings inconveniently placed at night the day before a big test, especially during midterms week. Taking up almost two hours of a student's time the night before a test is the opposite of de-stressing, which is the whole purpose of this program. We propose that ReST facilitators are required to offer flexibility in the scheduling of these meetings, such as by sending out surveys with different possible meeting times. This way, students can have at least some say in when these meetings are, reducing stress overall.

Finally, we propose asking teachers to refrain from assigning after-class activities during those first two months of school, particularly for first-year students, so they can participate in ReST with the mindset that would allow for them to get the most out of it. This way students would have less stress when attending these meetings.

**The How:** In order to make these changes to the ReST program, support from the Student Government Association is vital, as we serve as the student voice. So, the first step is to pass these changes as a motion. After this, we would take our ideas up to the deans, as well as people such as Katie Barlow, to get their final approval for these changes to be implemented for next year's ReST sessions.

**Strengths and Importance:** The wellness credit requirement for freshmen is meant to relieve students of stress and teach them healthy ways to cope with anxiety and the new college environment. Therefore, it is imperative that these changes are made, so students can actually learn these valuable skills. These changes will also create a stronger sense of community within first-years as it allows for them to engage deeper and more meaningfully with their peers in these ReST groups.

**Possible Risk Areas:** One possible risk area is the fact that some professors may decide not to follow the proposal to not assign required after class meetings and activities. While this may be the case, even some professors participating would help student stress.

**Intuition and Questions Already Addressed:**

How useful are these specific changes?

When consulting other first-years about their specific ReST experiences, there were major consistencies in their concerns with the program. That is why these specific changes were chosen to be pursued as opposed to others. After talking with Katie Barlow, who runs this program, it was found that these were also the changes that they had identified as real problems with the effectiveness of these sessions.

Will these changes actually be implemented?

In preparation for this motion, as said before, we met with Katie Barlow. Through doing so, we discovered a lot of positive feedback to the ideas presented in the motion. Katie Barlow was, in fact, the one who suggested the third change (professors and after-class activities). She mentioned that they were very aware of these problems and had come to similar conclusions about the changes that needed to be made.

**Administration, Faculty, Staff, and Students Consulted:** We met with Katie Barlow to discuss our initial ideas for the motion, and ran our final change proposals by her. We also generally consulted fellow first-year students to see if this was a motion worth pursuing, and after finding similar concerns, started working on it.

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