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Mental Health and Higher Education

1/3 of college freshman screen positive for a mental health disorder (Auerbach et al., 2018)

Counseling center utilization grew five times faster than enrollment between 2009-2015 with long wait times to see trained staff (Education Advisory Board, 2021)

80% of faculty are directly addressing student mental health and well-being needs, which have only worsened since Covid-19 (Lipson et al., 2021).

Growing healthy campus initiatives to address mental health and well-being as a top priority (Amaya et al., 2019; Chessman & Morgan, 2019; Goss et al., 2010; Travia et al., 2019.)

The more marginalized identities that a student has, the lower their well-being tends to be (Brocato et al., 2021)
Beyond Gatekeepers

Especially if trained to do so, we faculty members should shift our mind-sets and become much more a part of students’ network of mental health care, writes Krista Speicher Sarraf.

By Krista Speicher Sarraf // October 25, 2021

When I was a graduate student, my generalized anxiety settled into an onerous depression. I did not tell anyone at the university until a professor passed around index cards in class and instructed, “Write down anything you’d like me to know.” I took a deep breath and wrote that I was exhausted and having trouble concentrating. Then I handed in the card.

And then, silence. My professor never acknowledged my note. Perhaps understandably so – many students are exhausted and have trouble concentrating, and for many, that’s not a sign of a larger problem.

Even so, the silence hurt. I felt embarrassed and exposed.
Prevention at UHS
**Intervention & Prevention**

- **Intervention:** Medical and Mental Health Services
  a. Treat and serve individual health concerns “downstream”

- **UHS Prevention & Campus Health Initiatives (Healthy Campus, Violence Prevention)**
  a. Address “upstream” causes of health concerns by influencing policies, structures, pedagogies and environments that affect entire populations
Teaching for Well-Being
Teaching for Well-Being

- Okanagan Charter (2015):
  a. To embed health into all aspects of campus culture, across the administration, operations and academic mandates.
  b. To lead health promotion action and collaboration locally and globally

- Creating conditions for well-being to occur in learning environments.

Source: Simon Fraser University
SURVEY DATA

- AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct
- National College Health Assessment (NCHA)
- Alcohol Data
  - Color of Drinking
- Healthy Minds Study
“I also really like or appreciate having professors note, and I have seen this until by of noting willingness to make accommodations or be flexible around this like assignment due dates and things, regardless of whether students have formal accommodations through the Mcburney Center.”

“At any time in the Semester, I really, really appreciate that from professors like or doing like discussion boards where they'll have 10 opportunities and you need to do, six of them, or something those are really, really useful. And I think I appreciate those in kind of a universal design way where it isn't necessarily because of some major crisis where you're having. A mental breakdown or a death in the family, but it can be kind of just an everyday this was a really busy week I can't handle it and it normalize that fluctuating capacity, instead of having to be a crisis in order to get some flexibility we we build that into our structure more naturally and I appreciate that a lot.”
“I definitely take notice if the Prof specifically recommends or offers themselves as a resource… as opposed to just linking you to outside resources, so when I read something that just says we have mental health services that feels kind of more like a throwaway to me, but when I read a professor saying, I care about your well being and i'm here, if you want to talk and we have these services that feels more personal to me.”

“I had one professor, in particular, who realized kind of midway through the Semester that no one was really doing the reading because we just didn't have capacity. And she had an really intentional conversation with us about okay i'm going to pare down. I'm going to assign less and in exchange i'm going to assign things I really think will be valuable to us, so you can you kind of meet me halfway and instead of assigning 12 readings all assign three but actually do those three, and that was a really, really helpful.”
Flexibility

Providing students with some flexibility and control over their learning experiences helps them feel empowered and supported, contributing to their well-being.

Suggestions:

- Offer students the option to choose their “best two out of three” for assignments or quizzes
- Offer students choice in assignments and opportunities to set their own deadlines or percentage of final grade for assignments
- Seek feedback from students throughout the semester which can be done through web-survey or an anonymous in-class comment card
- Use interactive tools or other polling software (e.g. iClicker, Mentimeter, Poll Everywhere, Sli.do) to promote class input and participation
- Support students in being active participants during instruction. If students begin talking about an interesting or relevant topic and/or need further explanation than anticipated, see if this is an opportunity to be flexible by incorporating it as part of the lesson which may mean moving slightly away from the initial plan
- Consider providing students with lecture notes or power point slides ahead of class, and providing lecture recordings (particularly helpful for English as an Additional Language students whereby they have more opportunities to work through the rate of speech during lectures)
- Incorporate principles of Universal Design for Learning to help accommodate different learning styles.
- Consider arts-based and non-dominant forms of assessing learning outcomes, including re-storying, photo essays, performance, reflective writing, etc.
- Consider using Open Textbooks (online texts that are free, adaptable and a flexible alternative to traditional text books).
Healthy Academics Toolkit

- The Healthy Academics Toolkit is designed as a data-driven tool to support a shift in policies and practices in academic contexts across campus, including classrooms, research labs, and advising offices.

- It offers an interactive data visualization that allows academic staff to understand the unique needs of the student population(s) whom they serve, which is linked to specific strategies and resources for instructors (inclusive of both tenure and non-tenure track faculty, academic staff, and Tas) to proactively support the health and well-being of both undergraduate and graduate students.

https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/healthy-academics/
Suicide Prevention Training for Students, Faculty & Staff

- Supporting students requires knowledge about how to recognize and respond to signs of distress while also setting boundaries and knowing your limits. The training teaches how to intervene, prevent suicide, and support the mental health of UW-Madison students. This training does not offer immediate support to students in distress. Instead, it prepares members of our campus community to be better able to support students in the future.

https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/275497  (Faculty)
https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/173644  (Students)
Other Resources

Student of concern report

UHS Mental Health Services Consultations with Dr. Claire Barrett

Course Success Self-Review
University Health Services’s (UHS) Prevention and Health Campus Initiatives takes a policies, systems, and environmental change approach (PSE) to health equity. This approach is a process to examine how relationships, resources, environments, and policies create conditions for well-being and thriving. PSE approaches move beyond individual behavior change to address root causes of inequality.
Prevention: Promoting Protective Factors

- Sense of connectedness and belonging
- Help-seeking behaviors
- Self-care
- Academic and civic engagement
- Meaningful interactions with faculty
- Accessing available resources
- Early intervention
- Campus culture (e.g., low stigma, open dialogue about mental health)
1. Work to ensure our students’ emotional, cognitive, physical and interpersonal safety
2. Foster **trustworthiness and transparency** through connection and communication among students
3. Intentionally **facilitate peer support** and mutual self-help in our courses
4. Promote collaboration and mutuality by sharing power and decision making with our students
5. **Empower voice and choice** by identifying and helping build on student strengths
6. Pay attention to cultural, historical, racial, gender issues
Prevention: Balance Structure and Flexibility

Predictability:
- Establish a routine and maintain clear communication
  - Creates psychological safety
  - Allows for space to explain why and how decisions are made

Flexibility:
- Let go of “zero tolerance” policies
  - Utilize principles of universal design for learning
  - Have students develop their own daily and weekly study routines. Ask students about their daily/weekly self-care activities.
  - Consider opening class time together daily with a brief “mindful moment.”
UHS Resources

Our services

- 24-hour Crisis Support
- UHS Survivor Services: Mental Health
- Care Managers
- Group Counseling
- Couple/Partner Counseling
- Individual Counseling
- Alcohol and Other Drug Assessment
- Eating Disorders
- Outreach
- Who Can Use UHS
- Grief Resources
- Psychiatry
Student Medical Leave (New)

Student Medical Withdrawal Policy

Medical Withdrawal

What is a medical withdrawal?

Medical Withdrawals may be granted to students who experience a serious or unexpected physical or behavioral health condition; who may need to provide care to an immediate family member who is experiencing a serious or unexpected physical or behavioral health condition; or who have experienced the death of an immediate family member. Approval will be granted on a case-by-case basis.

Like other withdrawals, medical withdrawal results in the drop of all enrolled classes for the given term.
CASE STUDY

You teach a large lecture class with an upcoming final assignment that is worth 50% of the students’ grade for your course.

A number of students have already reached out to you asking for an extension on this assignment due to a variety of extenuating circumstances. How might you handle these requests for an extension - and perhaps the assignment overall?

What conditions for well-being might you be cultivating by using your chosen strategy?
Upcoming Initiatives

Spring 2022: Healthy Minds Study for students

Fall 2022: Faculty/Staff Wellness Survey

Ongoing:

- Documentation of Teaching for Well-Being in Practice
- Use the healthy academics toolkit to highlight exemplars of those creating conditions for well-being on the healthy academics toolkit
- Teaching for Well-Being Teaching Award
What for you is working (or not) in creating conditions for well-being in CALS

Questions?
Comments?
Thank you!

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