


Assessing College Student Mental Health & Well-being

Implications for Campus Support and Promising Practice

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QR code: slides and project details handout.

Audience:
 Go to [Menti.com](https://www.menti.com)
 Enter 7782 4565
 and reply to poll

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What Brings You to This Session?

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What Brings Us Here?

- Mental health of college students - a growing public policy concern
- Increasing numbers of students experiencing mental health problems
- Surge in demand for counseling and support services
- Many students do not seek help due to barriers such as stigma or lack of awareness of services


Assessment & Research Questions

1. What do we know about students' mental health & well-being concerns? Their perceptions of support and interventions?
2. What are colleges and universities offering? What is effective?


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Student Mental Health & Well-being 2023-24


About half of bachelor's degree seeking students **feel emotional stress** frequently. Emotional stress is a broad term meaning stress from personal mental health problems, and from coursework or from worries about paying for college.



Therapy dogs help students cope with the stress of college life



Student government leaders at Illinois State University **petitioned for legislation** to allow university students to take five mental health days, paralleling existing laws for K-12 learners. Legislators hope to pass the bill in 2024. - Dec. 19, 2023



15%
 Students who enthusiastically approve of wellness class offerings on their campuses

Inside Higher Education, Student Voice survey, 2023

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Research demonstrates the importance of enhanced student well-being to positive student and institutional outcomes:

- Strong social well-being helps students manage stress (Altaher & Runnerstrom, 2018)
- Prevention and treatment of mental health issues leads to increased retention and academic success (Eisenberg, et al., 2009)
- Curricular and co-curricular mindfulness-based interventions lead to reduced distress and increased positive effects on depressive symptoms (Dvorakova, et al., 2018; Terrell, et al., 2023)




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Research Brings us Together

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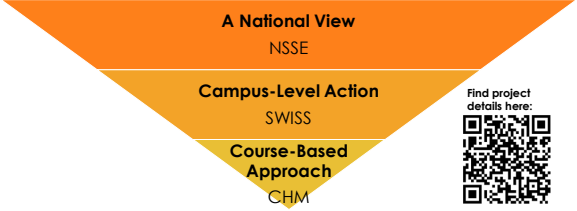
Tony Chambers
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Center for Healthy Minds (CHM)
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A Multi-level Approach

The perspectives we'll share today:




Find project details here:



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A National View: NSSE

- Nearly 34,000 responses from first-year and fourth-year students at 60 colleges and universities across the United States in 2023.
- An optional item set, *Mental Health & Well-Being*, assesses
 - Perceptions of emotional, psychological, and social wellness difficulties
 - Sources of support for mental health and well-being
 - Perceptions and awareness of campus wellness resources
 - Examples of ways that institutions have supported students' mental health and well-being




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A National View: NSSE

Nearly half of first-year students experienced notable difficulty (5-6 on 6pt. scale) with mental or emotional exhaustion


45%

First-year students




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NSSE Results




Over 50% of students don't know how to get help with the following:

- Housing insecurity
- Emergency financial situation
- Lack of care for dependents
- Sleep difficulties



73% overall report difficulty with mental health during the school year. Some are more strongly affected than others:

- Students with lower grades
- First-generation students
- Students with disabilities
- Students who identify as women or nonbinary+
- Students in the LGBTQ+ community




Students identify the following as ways that their institutions support their mental health and well-being:

- Institutional outreach to promote awareness of services
- Faculty (±)
- Specific resources
 - Counseling services (±)
 - Events
 - Student health & wellness services

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Campus-level Action: SWISS

- Individual student assessments**
 - Engagement, mental & physical health, well-being, interactions across difference
- Institutional climate assessments**
 - Diversity, equity & inclusion, sexual misconduct
- Institutional climate for well-being....**



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SWISS Results

25,000+
student responses

30
institutions

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SWISS Results

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SWISS Results

Areas of Strength

- Support for setting goals & pursuing academic interests
- Finding personal values, meaning, & purpose
- Spaces & accessibility

Areas of Opportunity

- Social connection in place of residence & affordable housing
- Dining (meets dietary needs, affordable, nutritious)
- Learning about self & interacting with diverse others
- Financial literacy

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SWISS Results

Areas of Opportunity

- **73%** report academic concerns as a stressor in their lives, **62%** report mental health as a stressor, and **53%** report financial concerns as a stressor
- Students are **least likely** to say they know where to go on campus for help if they're feeling isolated socially or if they are interested in better nutrition

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UW-Madison Center for Healthy Minds

A Course-based Approach: Research to Practice to Research

The Art and Science of Human Flourishing (ASHF)

- Course history and structure
- Evidence-based course framework
- Enrollment trends (2017-2023)
- Research and student outcomes
- Related programming: Student Flourishing Teaching Workshop, Healthy Minds on Campus student organization, Student Flourishing Ambassadors, Badger Belonging, etc.)

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the art and science of human flourishing

ASHF Origins


- Soaring rates of anxiety and depression on college campuses (*pre-pandemic*) provided motivation to create the course (2015-2017).
- UVA, Penn State University, UW-Madison collaborated to create the initial curriculum and ongoing research project.

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ASHF Course Structure






- Team taught – Integrates the Sciences and Humanities
- Meets Social Science or Humanities breadth requirement
- Combines lecture + experiential learning
 - Begin each class with mindfulness practice
 - Integrates Healthy Minds app (college student edition)
- 3 class meetings weekly:
 - 2 lectures with active learning + 1 small group discussion
- 14 small group sections (2023), including
 - 2 designated sections for under-represented students (optional)
 - 1 Honors section
- Reflective weekly journaling

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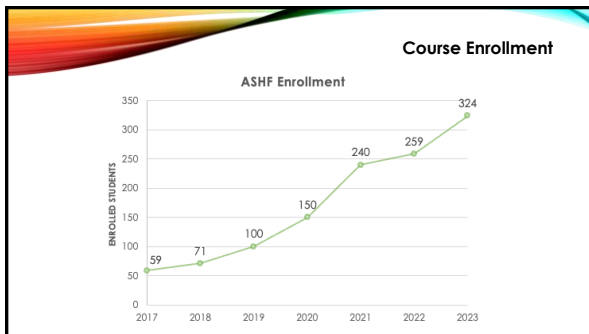


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Course Framework


 Foundations	 Awareness	 Connection	 Insight	 Integration
Flourishing	Focus	Interdependence	Identity	Courage
Transformation	Emotions	Compassion	Values	Community
Resilience	Mindfulness	Belonging	Gratitude	

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Compared to the control group, ASHF students experienced:




Greater compassion toward roommates




Increased ability to see other perspectives




More mindfulness, self-compassion, and sense of connection



Improvements in attention regulation



Decreases in anxiety



Decreases in depression

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UW-Madison Center for Healthy Minds

Annual Student Flourishing Teaching Workshop
June 24-27, 2024

Where: UW-Madison
Audience: Instructional + non-instructional staff committed to college student well-being
Registration: Opening in February

More info:
Studentflourishingteachingworkshop.org



Add yourself to our workshop email list!

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Bringing It All Together

- **NSSE & SWISS:**
 - affordable housing concerns; mental health concerns; awareness of resources available to them
- **CHM:**
 - decreased anxiety & depression; increased compassion for self & others; increased connection with others

Do you see your concerns mirrored or addressed in these levels?

Reflect on your own or with a neighbor: What might you take back to your institution at each level-national, campus or course?

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A Multi-level Approach

A National View
NSSE

What take aways or questions do you have at each of these levels?

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Please Share: What are you doing at these levels on your campus?

Multi-level Approach for Guiding Action

- What national data and information inform your mental health & well-being efforts?
- What campus data and information about student use of services are you paying attention to?
- What campus and course action have you taken? What is working and how do you know?

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What Do You Hope To See in Your Healthy & Flourishing Students?

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Thanks for Joining Us!



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