Duquesne University
Center for Student Wellbeing

IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO COLLEGE STUDENT ISSUES AND CONCERNS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS, AND STUDENT FORMATION

IAN C. EDWARDS, PHD, LP
ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT WELLBEING
Rising Levels of Depression, Anxiety, and Suicidality over the past ten years (Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students).

80% of college presidents that were surveyed for the 2019 College Student Mental Health and Well-Being: A Survey of Presidents survey indicated that student mental health has become more of a priority on their campus than it was three years ago.

One president wrote, “Mental health has become a major issue for retention and the general well-being of our students . . . This is in my top three areas of improvement for my college.”
Roughly seven out of 10 presidents (72 percent) reported they had reallocated or identified additional funding to address the issue.

One president reported raising $15 million to build a “comprehensive student well-being building.”

Nearly one in three public and private nonprofit four-year presidents and one in five public two-year presidents reported hearing once a week or more about students struggling with mental health.
When asked for the top mental health concerns they hear about, three-quarters of presidents said anxiety (75 percent) and depression (74 percent).

90 percent of presidents agreed or strongly agreed that their staff is spending more time addressing these concerns than they did three years ago.
If given more resources, 58 percent of presidents said they would hire additional staff—mostly in the counseling center.

Over 80 percent of presidents indicated that student well-being is mentioned in their strategic plan, and over 40 percent of plans mention mental health specifically.

Since 2016, the percentage of students triaged at Duquesne has gone up 384%.
Pandemic-Related Presenting Concerns

- Economic Concerns
- Housing Issues
- Food Insecurities
- Increased Separation Anxiety
- Baseline Suicidal Ideation
- Overstimulation
- Distrust in their own happiness
- Increasing Anxiety about falling behind
- Differing attitudes toward COVID
Pandemic Related Presenting Concerns

- Increased Anxiety about social relationships
- Different levels of adjustment among roommates
- “Physically” but not “mentally” here
- Reduced stigma related to help seeking
- Alienation
- Increase in number of reported sexual assaults
- Pre-existing mental health conditions being exacerbated because of the pandemic
What can you do?

- Establish a Biopsychosocial Model for Care: PREVENTION through PROMOTION
- Establish a Formative Approach to Developing Students
- Develop and Promote a Wellbeing Culture
- Develop Student-Oriented Wellbeing/Wellness Clubs
- Wellbeing Courses and Seminars in the Classroom
- An Annual Week of Wellbeing
- Wellness/Wellbeing Days
- Wellbeing Coaching and Peer Education
- Utilization of mental health and wellbeing apps
- Promote Faculty and Staff Wellbeing