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Mental Health Matters:

Promoting Wellness for Success in College

Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

Student Success Summit

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Agenda

- Prevalence of students with mental health diagnoses on campus
- Barriers associated with success
- Roles of stakeholders to enhance campus culture
- Increased focus on executive functioning skills

Prevalence

- 85% of students stated that they were overwhelmed;
- 59% felt very lonely;
- 65% were very sad;
- 82% were emotionally exhausted;
- 50% felt hopeless;
- 34% stated that they were so depressed that they found it difficult to function;
- Nearly 20% of student respondents reported having a diagnosed psychiatric condition

Taken from National College Health Assessment conducted by the American College Health Association (ACHA-NCHA, 2016)

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What are the barriers for the general college student population?

What types of supports do students have?

Typical Barriers for College Students

- Adjustment to a new environment
- Self-regulation
 - Having fun vs academic demands
- Increased academic demands
- Increased access to drugs and alcohol
- Developing new relationships: intimate & friendships
- Determining strategies for greater success
- Managing course load
- Academic expectations
- Discovering academic strength & weaknesses
- Self care
 - Sleep, exercise, food, etc

General Campus Supports

- Tutors
- Labs: writing, computer, reading
- Professors
- Fellow students
- Coaches
- Academic advisors
- Clubs: academic, sports, & extramural
- Greek Life
- Friends
- Gym/ Sports
- RAs
- Health services
 - Psychological & physical health

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What are the specific barriers for college students with mental health conditions?

What are the specialized supports available to meet their unique needs?

Typical Barriers Specific to College Students with Psychiatric Conditions*

- Stigma
- Discrimination
- Disclosure
- Symptoms
 - Academic implications
- Side effects of medication
- Feelings of isolation
 - “The Only One”
- Lack of knowledge of available resources
- Management of multiple complex systems
- Additional financial burdens

**many are shared with other disability and disadvantaged groups on campus*

Academic Barriers Identified by College Students with Psychiatric Conditions

- Time management skills
- Maintaining organization
- Organizing information
- Taking notes
- Concentrating in class
- Prioritizing tasks
- Studying for exams
- Memorizing information
- Maintaining stamina
- Taking tests

Mullen-Gonzalez et al., 2011; Murphy, Mullen & Spagnolo, 2005

Specialized Campus Supports for College Students with Psychiatric Conditions

Office of Students with Disabilities

Counseling Services

Specialized Services

- Current services cannot meet the need as currently funded
- Services are under staffed to meet the growing number of students with mental health on campus
 - Counseling Services: 1 FTE per 1,000-1,500 undergraduate (per IACS recommendations)
 - Disability Services: very difficult to find anything published on this recommendation, but could be based on 11% of student population
- Often not specialized or trained in serious mental health conditions

Social & Academic Implications

- High academic attrition rate of this population
- Low rate of help seeking
- Repeated attempts at school
 - “burning” through financial aid
 - High loan default rates
 - Often results in unfinished course work/ degree pursuits
- Truncated social & human capital development
- Lowest graduation rate of any disability group
- Significant financial loss for academic institutions

Suicide: The Gravest Implication

- There are more than 1,000 suicides on college campuses per year.
 - between .5 and 7.5 per 100,000 among college students.
- Second-leading cause of death among college students.
- One in 10 college students has made a plan for suicide.
- Suicidal thoughts, plans, and attempts are higher among adults aged 18 to 25 than those over the age of 26.
- College students have lifetime thoughts of attempting suicide
 - 5 percent of graduate students and
 - 18 percent of undergraduates.

<http://www.emorycaresforyou.emory.edu/resources/suicidestatistics.html>

Summary & Implications

- Students face many barriers as they transition into college settings.
- College students who have or develop mental health conditions on campus have unique challenges that are often not addressed comprehensively by campus resources.
 - Very few resources
- Current specialized services are not adequately staffed or trained to meet the needs of those with mental health conditions.
- College students with mental health conditions have the highest attrition rate of any disability group.
- Devastating long-term social and vocational implications of college attrition.
- College students with depression are the highest risk for suicide.

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Promoting Student Success:

Engaging Critical Campus Stakeholders

Campus Culture

Administration

Faculty

Staff

Campus Culture

- Mental health is a continuum
- Promote discussion on campus
 - Loneliness & isolation
- Develop peer support services
 - Campaigns
 - Warm lines
 - Assertive outreach to populations at risk
- Advertise CAPS
- Market Disability Services to those with “invisible” conditions
- Create a culture of discussion
- Destigmatize mental health

Administration

- Prioritize mental health and wellness as a campus-wide priority
- Allocation of adequate financial resources to support initiatives and programs to enhance services for students with psychiatric conditions
 - Additional training for Disability Services staff
 - Services specifically targeting cognitive functioning
- Implement policies that promote help-seeking & reduce barriers to service & treatment
- Mental health parity
- Implement communication plans for families to increase awareness of services and promote discussion
- Send the message that student wellness is everyone's job, not just CAPS

Faculty

- Enhance knowledge of campus resources targeting:
 - Wellness
 - Mental health services
 - Student groups
 - Academic Resources
 - Specialized programs
- Teaching faculty: recognizing when a student is struggling
- Academic Advisors: asking about mental health during advisement
- Be flexible, but maintain academic rigor
- Enhance knowledge of academic accommodations and assistive technology

Staff

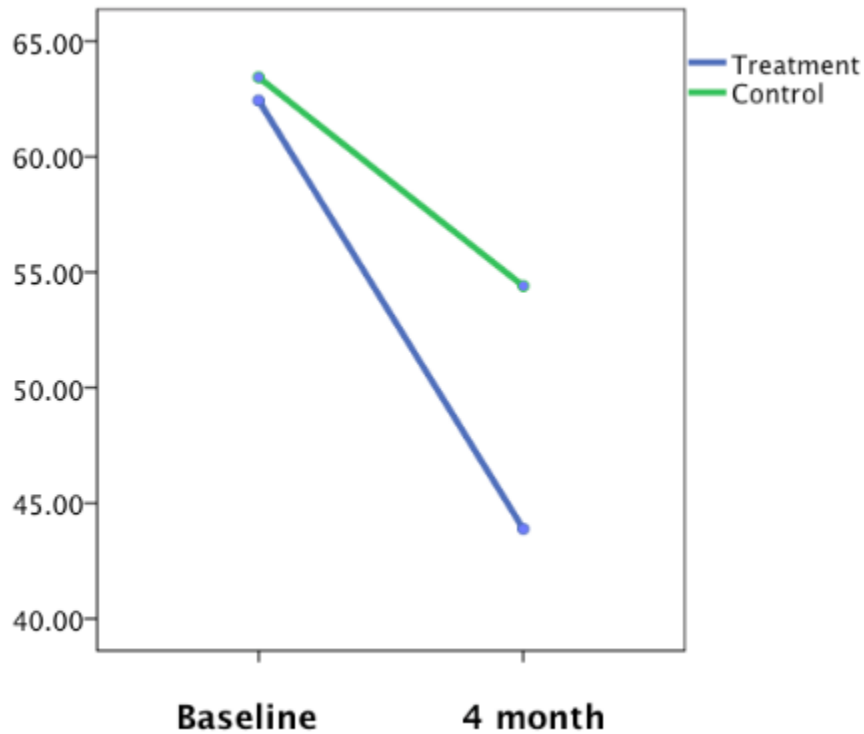
- “No Wrong Door” approach
- Athletics, Admissions, Bursar, Financial Aid, Student Services, CAPS, Disability Services...everyone
- Create partnerships
 - E.g. Pair Mental Health campaigns with Athletics (enhance access to students & importance of messaging)
- Train all staff in recognizing and act if a student who struggling
- Act as a linking agent
 - Know the resources
 - Get students connected

Update & Innovate Support Services: Focus on Executive Functioning Skills

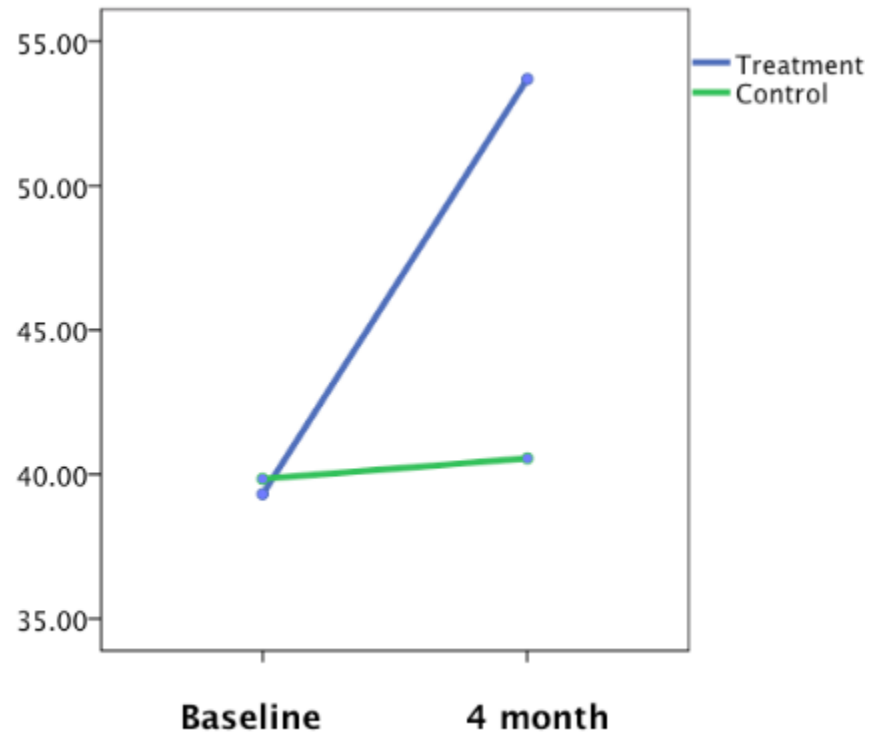
- Executive functioning skills are compromised in this age group and among those with mental health conditions
- Develop skills that are critical to academic success & later vocational success
 - Organization
 - Time management
 - Attention & Vigilance
 - Verbal Learning
 - Visual Learning
 - Working memory
 - Reasoning & Problem Solving
 - Speed of Processing

FAST: 12 week, manualized intervention

Cognitive Problems



Use of Cognitive Strategies



Summary

- Mental health and wellness is a campus-wide approach
- Services & systems should be developed to enhance the mental health of all students
 - Students with mental health conditions therefore also benefit
- Policies & procedures should support students with mental health conditions and make best attempt to keep students on campus
- Departments that are typically not active in mental health should be strategically aligned to partner to change campus climates
- Support Services on campus should use innovative, research-based interventions to enhance cognitive performance among those with mental health conditions.

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Questions & Comments
Thank you for coming!

Please contact me:

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