



## SYSTEM WEBINAR SUMMARY (MAY 2022): SUCCESS IS CENTERED IN MENTAL HEALTH

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The webinar was held during Mental Health Awareness Week, and focused on the importance of providing a continuum of support to address the varied mental health needs of students. The webinar included college presenters sharing student-centered strategies for developing support services, and a panel of students describing their challenges and needs.

### What is the Mental Health Challenge Colleges are Facing?

- Before the pandemic, 25% of CCC students had a diagnosable mental illness; 40% of them did not seek help. Many more students experienced mental health issues.
- Health and wellness support was identified as a primary need during the Fall 2021 student listening tour, particularly mental health services due to anxiety and depression. Recent [research](#) has confirmed the negative impact of the pandemic on mental health, especially among those with past experiences of trauma.
- New ongoing funding of \$30 million per year for mental health services will not fully address the need, as those funds are targeted to students with diagnosable illnesses and amount to \$67 per student.
- Colleges must look “upstream” of the problem to prevention and early intervention, and work to remove structural barriers that contribute to students’ stress and exacerbate their mental health symptoms.
- Guided Pathways implementation is part of the solution, with its focus on eliminating student friction points. It is a framework to interrogate and dismantle existing structures that impede student success, and to provide a support ecosystem that shifts burdens from students to institutions, recognizing a continuum of mental health needs across our student population.

### How Do Students Describe Problems with Finding Support?

- There are insufficient counselors and other student services staff to address the wide variety of student types and their different needs, and available staff often do not represent the diversity of student backgrounds and experiences.
- It is difficult for students to understand and navigate the variety of programs and services colleges offer, and to overcome the stigma that is often associated with seeking help.
- Students struggle to gain a sense of belonging, and need more proactive efforts from colleges to access the supports they need to overcome a variety of obstacles.

## How Can the College Environment Exacerbate the Issues?

- Racial microaggressions can affect the mental health of students of color, including:
  - *Microassaults*, or conscious, deliberate, and explicit attacks—verbal and nonverbal—meant to denigrate or hurt someone (e.g., use of racial slurs, display of negative images);
  - *Microinsults*, often unconscious and subtle racial slights or comments that may seem innocuous but are belittling to a person of color (e.g., mistaking a person of color for a service worker); and
  - *Microinvalidations*, or comments and behaviors that can exclude or invalidate people’s thoughts, feelings, or life experiences (e.g., asking an Asian American where they are really from implies they are a foreigner).
- Encountering such microaggressions in the classroom and elsewhere on campus negatively affects the educational experience, psychological health, and academic success of students of color.
- Colleges can minimize racial microaggressions by promoting health and wellness; creating policies that target the mental health of students of color; conducting trainings to cultivate awareness of the problem; and developing a positive racial climate that is inclusive and reflects a commitment to pluralism, including curricula that reflect the experiences of people of color.

## How Can Colleges Develop an Inclusive Ecosystem of Student Supports?

- Examine health data in the context of students’ race, ethnicity, and gender.
- Collaborate with community organizations to better understand the conditions your students are facing, and to expand students’ options to access support.
- Take a multi-disciplinary and holistic approach, embedding mental health concerns across your programs and services, including in the classroom.
- Establish wellness as an institutional value that is part of everyone’s daily work.
- Embed trainings into staff meetings and flex activities.
- Promote a healthy campus climate that is culturally responsive, trauma informed, and student centered, through offering safe spaces for students, hiring professionals who can understand and connect with your students, bringing teams together to discuss ideas for improving the campus climate, and having a crisis intervention toolkit.
- Available resources include [CCC Health & Wellness](#), [Wellness Central](#), [JED Foundation](#), [Active Minds](#), [QPR Institute](#), [Mental Health First Aid](#), and [SAMHSA](#).
- The Vision Resource Center has professional development modules to support cultural competence and address implicit bias (log in to access).