

building healthy campus communities



Key Findings From the 2020
Active Minds Healthy Campus Award

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A Call to Change the Narrative of Student Mental Health

Dear Colleagues:

Colleges and universities are called upon to prepare students to succeed in a complex and ever-changing world. Health and well-being are essential for student engagement, retention, and success. As such, health is integral to the core business of institutions of higher education. Too often, student health becomes a public conversation only following tragedy, and headlines focus on where schools are falling short. Furthermore, when success in campus health is celebrated, mental health is often ignored.

Student mental health is a growing issue on college and university campuses. National data sources, including the Healthy Minds Study, show a high and rising prevalence of depression, anxiety, eating disorders, suicidality, and other concerns in student populations over the past decade. Approximately one in three students meet criteria for a clinically significant mental health problem. This translates to nearly 7 million students nationwide.

Researchers are still examining potential contributing factors to the rising prevalence of mental health issues. While the causes are less clear, the solutions are better known: campus policies and systems that provide comprehensive, campus-wide support to students; more resources for wellbeing and mental health; a culture of support and care; and individuals in all corners of the campus community equipped and ready to support struggling students.

Students can benefit from the unique opportunity for campus-wide public health initiatives at colleges and universities. Most campuses are integrated communities with substantial staff and organizational resources that can be leveraged to positively impact entire student populations. Indeed, campuses prioritizing student mental health are directly impacting student wellbeing and also seeing positive returns, given that student mental health is a significant factor for many other important outcomes, including academic performance and retention and future workplace productivity.

It's time we change the narrative – from one that focuses on the challenges before us to one that champions the institutions that are addressing student mental health head-on, collaboratively, and with a preventative, public health approach. Through the Healthy Campus Award, Active Minds is promoting a proactive focus on all aspects of student wellness and looks forward to recognizing leadership, innovation, collaboration, and excellence emerging from U.S. colleges and universities.

Let's work together to build healthy campus communities that prioritize mental health alongside physical health.



Alison Malmon
Founder and Executive Director
Active Minds

Healthy Campus Framework and Recommendations

Active Minds' Approach to Building Healthy Campuses

Active Minds' Healthy Campus Award Framework, developed in alignment with existing evidence-based frameworks in the field, is inspired by nine underlying principles for improving health, equity, and well-being among students. The work of building a healthy campus can be done anywhere – including small and large schools, colleges in rural and urban communities, minority-serving institutions (MSIs), schools with many resources to draw on, and schools with few resources to draw on. The Framework provides numerous entry points for all types of institutions to get involved.

1

Prioritize a Collective Strategic Approach

Building a healthy campus community requires a comprehensive, strategic approach that ties healthy campus efforts with the mission and values of the university and engages a multidisciplinary network of stakeholders from all levels of the institution.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Explicitly address “student mental health” in the university’s strategic plan and mission and values.
- Increase funds, staff, and time devoted to preventative, proactive efforts to address student mental health.
- Ensure positive, frequent messaging and communication regarding student mental health from the highest level of college/university leadership to the campus community.

Great Example: The University of Richmond’s new strategic plan.

2

Define Health Broadly and Pursue it Comprehensively

There is no health without mental health. Building a healthy campus community means prioritizing mental health alongside physical health and using diverse strategies to address the multiple factors that influence health.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Focus on supporting student wellbeing in the built environment (public spaces, academic buildings, residence halls, green spaces, etc.)
- Explore models for integrating and/or coordinating health, counseling, and other wellness services.
- Pursue health collectively, strategically, and comprehensively across departments and schools. Communicate wellness initiatives to students with university branding, colors, culture, and/or lingo (i.e. "Healthy Carolina" and "Be Well, Be a Duck.>").

Great Example: *The University of Arizona's shared electronic health record system and universal mental health screenings.*

3

Commit to Sustainable Systems Changes and Policy-Oriented Long-Term Solutions

Creating a healthy campus community means making thoughtful and deliberate policy, programmatic, environmental, and systems changes focused on identified community priorities, with a goal of sustaining the impact of these changes over time.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Examine procedures for disclosure of mental health issues and the provision of reasonable accommodations; provide clear communication about available support during campus tours and admissions; and provide clear, centralized procedures for leaves of absence (i.e. financial implications, expectations for return, and wraparound care).
- Embed positive mental health concepts into curriculum, student orientations, and the first year experience.
- Institutionalize wellness responsibilities into staff positions.

Great Example: *Santa Monica College's centralized management and delivery under a single Director of Health and Wellbeing, and its embedded mental health clinicians.*

4

Cultivate a Deep Commitment to Equal Opportunities for Health

Creating a healthy campus community means working to address gaps in opportunity that tend to disproportionately and negatively affect certain populations, such as ethnic minorities, those with limited English skills, those with lesser income, and/or those with marginalized sexual orientations or gender identities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Provide specialist services for student sub-populations determined to be at higher risk, and train front-line staff and faculty members in cultural competency.
- Work across departments to address intersectional issues (i.e. food/housing insecurity, transportation, financial concerns).
- Create and fund supportive communities and affinity groups for students with marginalized identities on campuses. Collaborate with students impacted by these issues as equal partners in the work and in all stages of planning.

Great Example: Denison University's LGBTQ training and international students support services.

5

Provide Quality, Responsive, Accessible Clinical Services

Supporting a healthy campus community means that, while a school strives to move students toward health, it serves the clinical needs of those students facing mental and physical illness, as well. Clinical services should adhere to national standards of excellence and be available via accessible locations, times, and timelines.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Integrate mental health screenings into all clinical and wellness services and explore screening students at pre-admissions and through self-paced online platforms.
- Provide dedicated mental health support options for students after traditional hours for counseling services and on weekends (i.e. call lines, resource lists, peer support).
- Adhere to national standards of excellence and be available via accessible locations, times, and timelines.

Great Example: Skidmore College's robust suite of wellness services, and 24/7 mental health emergency on-call system.

6

Champion Student Voices

Students know students. They turn to each other when struggling with health and model their behaviors and attitudes after their peers'. They are experts in the best programming, strategies, messaging, and approaches to engage students and create a campus culture and climate that fosters mental health, physical health, and well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Institutionalize a process for receiving feedback and input from students on an ongoing basis and provide formal speaking and voting rights to students on relevant boards and committees.
- Engage in strategic partnerships with students from the very beginning and in all stages of the process, not only in the research and planning stages.
- Activate and coordinate efforts among campus-wide student leadership and share information and findings transparently with the student body.

Great Example: Santa Monica College placing student voices central in new initiatives, plus its new peer coaching model and student care teams.

7

Secure and Make the Most of Available Resources

Building a healthy campus community means being creative in the face of limited budgets and adopting an enterprising spirit towards health improvement. This includes a critical examination of existing and potential health investments, with an eye toward minimizing waste and maximizing value.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Focus on prevention (i.e., mindfulness, resiliency, success coaching).
- Build and leverage relationships with key campus partners (i.e. communications office for marketing/branding, or research office for assessing wellness).
- Measure and report results to the community. Allow findings to guide future programming and policy work.

Great Example: The University of Arizona's utilization of outcome data to ensure effectiveness and increase transparency and collaboration.

8

Address Emerging Issues or Opportunities in the Field of Student Wellness in Innovative, Unique Ways

Leading healthy campuses anticipate emerging issues related to the mental and physical needs of students, and address them in innovative and creative ways through technology, unique programs, or partnerships.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Implement innovative service delivery models (i.e. triage systems, use of technology, predictive analytics) to ensure students receive the right treatment at the right time.
- Tie wellness and inclusion efforts together to respond to changing diversity and student needs on campus.
- Engage in partnerships on and beyond campus to ensure wraparound and comprehensive care for students.

Great Example: The University of Richmond's embedded first-year wellness education requirement.

9

Measure Results and Share Progress to Continuously Motivate, Guide, and Focus Action

Shaping a healthy campus community requires data-driven measures and outcomes. It means a commitment to quality and impact in both process and outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Prioritize efforts based on national and local data sources, program participation data, and service utilization.
- Communicate findings regularly to the campus community and leadership.
- Dedicate a staff position or coordinate across departments to ensure assessment of wellness indicators.
- Match program participation and/or mental health outcomes data with persistence and graduation rates to make the financial case for outreach effort.

Great Example: Denison University's tracking of wellbeing trends in students' aggregated health inventories, utilization of services, and direct student engagement.

The Healthy Campus Award

The Active Minds Healthy Campus Award recognizes colleges and universities that are leading the way in prioritizing student health. It recognizes schools that provide access to quality healthcare and champions institutions that not only serve students' physical health but give equal priority and investment to mental health. Established in 2016, this prestigious award is now in its fourth year and has elevated the work of 16 campuses.

Colleges and universities are crucial partners in improving the health, resilience, and well-being of young adults. The 2020 winners of the Healthy Campus Award serve as models for the impact institutions can have through prioritizing a culture on campus that promotes and protects both the physical and mental health of its students.

The 2020 Healthy Campus Awardees are: **Denison University, Santa Monica College, Skidmore College, University of Arizona, and University of Richmond.**

This year's recipients represent a range of campuses that operate within varying contexts and challenges: rural, urban, commuter campuses, small, and large student bodies. Notably, Santa Monica – a community college located in West Los Angeles County that serves more than 30,000 students each year – scored the top marks among the 2020 Healthy Campus Award applicants. Together, the awardees demonstrate how institutions of all sizes and types can create healthy communities that allow every student the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

Recipients of the 2020 award are integrating innovative solutions into the fabric of their campuses that not only serve students' physical health, but also give equal priority and investment to mental health. Best practices include:

- Opportunities for student-led initiatives
- Community-campus partnerships
- Integration of wellness in strategic plans
- Strong efforts to break down health equity barriers
- Training for clinicians around LGBTQ+ issues
- Integration of physical and mental health services
- Wellness education requirement for all students
- Extensive use of strategic planning and data

Each Healthy Campus Award application goes through an extensive process as well as multiple layers of endorsements and interviews. Applicants are assessed across eight criteria, with winners chosen by a panel of prominent researchers and experts in health and higher education. The Healthy Campus Award is made possible through the generous support of Peg's Foundation.

Stories From The Field

Lessons Learned in Building Healthy Campus Communities

DENISON

DENISON UNIVERSITY'S HOLISTIC VISION OF WELLNESS

Denison University (Granville, Ohio) is a nationally ranked liberal arts college of about 2,300 students from all 50 states and 56 countries. Diverse in every way (economically, geographically, culturally, and politically), 20 percent of the student body are first-generation college students, 35 percent are non-White, and 17% are LGBTQ. As a fully residential college, this brings both opportunities and challenges. Denison students are academically strong, and campus culture reflects the drive for personal excellence.

A strong institutional commitment to the arts is evidenced by hundreds of student and faculty events each year. Denison also hosts accomplished professionals in science and politics, seasoned authors, visiting artists, and other scholars of note, creating an inspiring but sometimes overwhelming intellectual landscape. In addition to rigorous academics, students are active in more than 160 student organizations and 45 athletics programs (including 24 varsity D-III teams). The students express the desire for a culture of thriving, but many are hard-pressed to achieve this in day-to-day terms.

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“I believe deeply that liberal arts colleges should be focused on the health of our students. At its core, the goal of the liberal arts is to develop “whole people,” who are prepared to thrive in their personal, professional and civic lives. For this to happen, we need to help students develop the skills, values and habits of wellbeing.”

– Adam S. Weinberg, President, Denison University

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Measuring Results and Sharing Progress to Continuously Motivate, Guide, and Focus Action

Denison has an unusually strong commitment to, and capacity for, research and student engagement regarding the student experience. Regarding wellness, they track trends in students' aggregated health inventories, utilization of services, and direct student engagement through interviews and focus groups. They are especially proud of RED Corps, a team of students who design research and prototype solutions to problems identified by students. The students have contributed to the design of new public wellness spaces and are exploring ways to disrupt Denison's "culture of busyness."

Guided by data, Denison has sought to reduce barriers to students accessing mental health services and have amplified the frequency and caliber of our wellness messaging on campus increasing the percentage of students receiving information on how to help others in distress from less than half to 62 percent in recent years. They have achieved similar success in education on stress reduction (75 percent to 79 percent), suicide prevention (35 percent to 73 percent); and sleep difficulties (25 percent to 52 percent). These data demonstrate the effectiveness of their increase in educational initiatives around students' holistic health, 81% of students report that the campus climate encourages free and open discussions about mental and emotional health.

Cultivating a Deep Commitment to Equal Opportunities for Health

Given that Denison students represent the broadest array of backgrounds, identities, and experiences, the directors of the Offices of Gender & Sexuality, Multicultural Student Affairs, and International Student Services advocate and coordinate inclusion activities, informed by current institutional data, and working closely with wellness staff. Staff receive training in supporting LGBTQ students, resulting in more than 97% of the students using services feeling comfortable with their wellness center provider or clinician. For their international students, Denison provides support for visas; academic tutoring and language assistance; cultural acclimatization support; and housing, financial, and medical information.

Counseling services and wellness education are free for all students. Denison also offers free flu vaccinations for students with financial challenges, and their Red Thread Program offers microgrants for low income students with need for prescription medicines, winter clothing, co-curricular participation funds, and professional expenses.

Providing Quality, Responsive, Accessible Clinical Services

Denison's health and counseling clinicians are committed to outstanding primary and behavioral health care. That care also responds to the needs students express, such as extended clinical hours, "walk-in" counseling appointments, more on-line and community resources, and an electronic wellness portal that increases scheduling convenience and access to test results and other information. Integrating health and counseling through co-located offices, joint training, and a shared EHR system have facilitated coordination of care, a best practice. A cultural norm of their staff is to engage actively with new ideas in their disciplines to improve student outcomes. This has facilitated the introduction of complementary therapies, such as Reiki and massage therapy.

In the words of one Denison student, *"When I talk to my friends who go to other universities and colleges across the country, they always ask how school is going. When I speak to another Denisonian they always ask how I am doing. It was not until I came to Denison that I was equipped with the tools necessary to address my own mental health and engage in serving others who continue to struggle."*



SANTA MONICA COLLEGE: ENSURING STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH WRAPAROUND CARE

Santa Monica College (SMC) is a publicly supported community college located in west Los Angeles County that serves more than 30,000 students each year from throughout Southern California, the state, the nation and all over the world. SMC is a bright and vibrant campus community with the passionate involvement of faculty and staff, which over the past 90 years has garnered tremendous results: they are the number one community college in transfer success west of the Mississippi. They also have a well-known transfer pipeline to Columbia University.

Students commonly leave their own community college districts to attend SMC. They have a large (56 percent) number of low-income, first-generation college students. They are also a Hispanic Serving Institution, with 39 percent Latinx students. The majority of their students (63 percent) are enrolled part time and juggling work, family, and their education. SMC provides a safe, inclusive and dynamic learning environment that encourages personal and intellectual exploration and they enroll more than 3,000 international students annually from more than 100 countries, who account for more than 11% of the student body. Their youngest student last year was 14 and their oldest was 84.

SMC plays a strong role in the Santa Monica community, enrolling students from the local high school, providing community education and presenting music and theater performances by their own students and performers and lecturers from all over the world. Their student community is richly diverse with over 80 clubs representing students from all over the world and representing all areas of interest.

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“With transportation, financial, and mental health supports from SMC during a recent mental health crisis, I returned to school in a much better state of mental health. Without these partnerships between my school and the services I needed and the support of Active Minds, I think I would be in a very different place than I am now.”

– Camille Horrigan-Slajus, Co-President of Active Minds at SMC

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Prioritizing a Collective Strategic Approach

The institution is the first community college in California and among the first colleges in the nation to establish a care and prevention team to assess and meet the needs of students in crisis. The college has also centralized the management of health and wellness under a single director with a PhD in social work. The Director of Health and Wellbeing oversees both health and mental health services, and the delivery of services is highly integrated with all departments. They further ensure student support is integrated by embedding clinicians in as many specialty programs as possible, such as the Black Collegians, Adelante, Guardian Scholars, dreamer students, and the Center for Students with Disabilities. This strategy helps students with marginalized identities get to know the clinical staff and reduces barriers to treatment.

Championing Student Voices

SMC believes that student voices are critical to college decision-making. As such, they have student representation on many college committees include the Basic Needs Workgroup, LGBTQ Advisory Committee, and the Mental Health Advisory Committee. Student voices are also central as they develop new initiatives, such as their Social Justice and Gender Equity center, the relocation of their Veterans Resource Center, and their centralized food pantry. They are further connecting students to the support they need through a new peer coaching model and student care teams comprised of academic and career counselors, financial aid technicians, and employment advisors.

In addition to drop-in meditation workshops on campus, SMC screens every student for depression and suicidality and provides referrals for services in their health services center. Referral options include connection to a mental health clinician, mental health services call line, free transportation to off-campus therapy, and a telehealth clinic at the University of Southern California, which offers free therapy to students remotely and via a tele-suite at the SMC campus. This resource is particularly helpful for students who prefer to have therapy where they live and to online students.

Supporting Students' Basic Needs

SMC is a highly diverse environment; many SMC students are international, undocumented, and/or the first in their families to attend college. As such, SMC offers specialized programs for those populations and for students who struggle financially or are aging out of the foster care system. These supports include food vouchers, a free farmers market and meals on campus for students in need of food, as well as multiple food pantries across the campus. We also provide free childcare for full-time students and connections to childcare for all students who are interested and are in the process of establishing a safe park program for homeless students. Additionally, SMC has more than 10 partnerships with local health, behavioral health, and basic need organizations to expand their capacity to provide HIV testing and treatment, gynecological services, housing assistance, food, and legal resources.

"SMC truly understands that in order to be successful inside the classroom, we have to support our students outside the classroom," said Superintendent and President Dr. Kathryn Jeffery. "Our college is fully committed to closing equity gaps for our students, and we believe that by providing quality wraparound care for our more vulnerable students, the entire campus will benefit."

Skidmore College is a highly selective, independent, residential liberal arts college in Saratoga Springs, New York, enrolling 2,500 undergraduate students from 45 states and 60 countries. The college emphasizes that "Creative thought matters," engaging students through interdisciplinary studies, a strong tradition of 'mind and hand' (incorporating theoretical and practical pedagogy), and 45 majors and 39 minors with the goal of preparing socially responsible graduates for complexity, diversity and change.

One-quarter of the students self-identify as students of color while 12% are international students. As more than 40% of each graduating class has utilized the counseling center at some point during their education, supporting the mental health of their students is a central challenge and commitment.

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Skidmore's commitment to student health is a fundamental part of their identity. In fact, "wellbeing," defined broadly to include mental, physical, and community health, serves as one of four priorities in Skidmore's Strategic Plan. Skidmore defines "wellbeing" broadly, to include mental, physical and community health. Further, their strategic plan links wellbeing to inclusion and makes it clear that both are central to their mission: "Inclusion and well-being belong together, because they require and reinforce each other. Attention to well-being and inclusion is not an "add-on" to our strategic vision, but rather it relates to the very foundations of the intellectual and personal growth we seek to foster at Skidmore."

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Commitment to Sustainable Systems Changes and Policy-Oriented Long-Term Solutions

Institutionally, Skidmore has made key structural decisions to support and improve the health of their entire community, including faculty and staff. The college responded to insight from their faculty and staff with new wellness support, including individual wellness coaching, annual employee wellness fairs, wellness screening days and group wellness programs. They relocated their counseling center and health services into custom designed and renovated spaces with welcoming waiting rooms, expanded offices, more room for patient care, and dedicated meeting space. They also expanded their services to better support student health year-round. For example, all on-campus housing remains open during break periods to support students who need it and they extended counseling center staffing to include summer hours and made their mental health emergency on-call system available every day of the year.

Skidmore's counseling center also developed a new service delivery model, "Pathways to Care," to better match resources to students' immediate mental health needs. The model is flexible, responsive and prioritizes students' active engagement in their own care decisions. The counseling center now offers a variety of support options to students, including online resources, workshops focused on skill building, 'one at a time' individual therapy appointments, and time-limited consistent appointments for students with high acuity concerns, elevated risk or limited resources to access local care options. Through this new model, over 80% of students access treatment within three business days.

A Comprehensive, Student-Centered Approach

Skidmore prioritizes student wellbeing before and during the college experience. They reach out to families prior to students' arrival to let them know about services and support. First-year students participate in Weeks of Welcome (WOW), an eight-week, campus-wide orientation program that encourages students to prioritize their wellbeing in holistic ways. WOW offered over 300 programs and nearly 70% of the first year class participated. Feedback is overwhelmingly positive, with 92% rating the program positively. They also have vibrant traditions of creative, student-led and administratively supported initiatives which link wellness, inclusion, and community, such as LGBTQ athlete support programs created by student athletes, peer health education, student-led and student-organized annual conferences on supporting the wellbeing of Womxn of Color, and radio shows focused on storytelling, identities, community, vulnerability and connection and fundraising for suicide prevention. The Skidmore Mindfulness Program fosters wisdom, compassion, stress reduction and wellbeing on campus through meditation and mindfulness programs, weekly yoga asana classes, workshops, and events open to all. Additionally, the campus offers wellness coaching to students who seek support around meeting specific health-related goals, including stress management, life balance, self-care, and making healthy changes to life choices.

"Skidmore's commitment to student well-being is not only supported through institutional support, strategic planning, and practices but is apparent in the everyday lives of Skidmore's students, including myself," said Skidmore Student Government Association President David Robakidze. "Skidmore has adopted a long-term approach to ensuring a safe, welcoming, healthy and rewarding experience for every student. The collaboration between SGA, individual students and administrators and members of President's Cabinet will continue and strengthen over time to the benefit of all Skidmore students."

The University of Arizona (UA), a land-grant, Hispanic-serving institution and recognized as one of the nation's top public universities, advances the frontiers of interdisciplinary scholarship and entrepreneurship with top programs in business, nursing, optics, and law among others. Situated 60 miles north of the U.S./Mexico international border, UA is a vibrant campus community composed of over 45,000 undergraduate and graduate students. UA prides itself on resources that support their diverse student population, including Arizona Assurance (academic, financial and social support for low-income students), the THRIVE Center (for historically under-represented and low-income students), and Arizona First Cats (first-generation college students). Despite the university's many accolades, they are perhaps best known as being a friendly, open and caring campus community, composed of faculty and staff who go the extra mile to put their students first.

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“Whenever I come into any part of campus health, the staff can tell if I am having a rough day and give me encouraging words to push through giving me the mental power I need. They have made the biggest impact on me through this semester. These people are just some of the most dedicated, caring, incredibly hard-working and compassionate people I have come to know in some small way from spending hours of my time this semester at campus health.”

– *Claire Krob, freshman studying public health at the University of Arizona*

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Defining Health Broadly and Pursuing it Comprehensively

The UA recently developed a comprehensive strategic plan, and support for student health and success is an integral part of the first pillar of the plan, described as “The Wildcat Journey.” The roots of UA’s strategic approach to holistic health go back much further, however. Examples of this include the adoption of a “mind, body and spirit” approach to wellness, led by the UA Campus Health Service well over 30 years ago. UA had the first full-accredited college health service in the nation in 1978 which has been successfully reaccredited every three years since – leading the way for objective standards that measure their work and the quality of health care delivered on campus.

A key to UA’s promotion of mental and physical health is their integrated approach to wellbeing. Medical, counseling and health promotion services are located under one roof. Both medical and counseling/psych services have shared an electronic health record (EHR) for the past 15 years, allowing for the continuity of care for students that transcend the traditional boundaries between medical and behavioral health. All students seen in the medical clinic receive a PHQ-9 screen – which has been standard of care at UA Campus Health for over a decade. Students with positive screens for depression and suicidality are directly walked up to counseling and psych services in the same facility. The UA has been ranked in the top 3% for Best Health Services in the nation by The Princeton Review consistently for five years in a row – a rare feat for any school and particularly for a publicly funded university. UA staff take particular pride in this, since the rankings are compiled directly from student surveys.

Securing and Making the Most of Resources

UA’s longstanding work in the area of health promotion have also connected and leveraged resources from various departments at the university in support of student health. In addition to funding a comprehensive approach that have improved health at the population level, these grants have also galvanized partnerships and collaborations across the university including faculty, senior administration, student affairs, housing, dean of students, student government, campus safety, athletics, parents and community members, among others. One example of this is how the UA produces and shares campus-specific data. UA has a long history of utilizing outcome data to ensure the effectiveness of its health programs. From mental health trends, to 15 years of campus alcohol data, to annual results of the Health & Wellness Survey – UA uses data-driven methods to increase transparency and collaboration across the university. The Health & Wellness Survey has become something of a campus tradition, administered each year to more than 4,500 students in a random selection of UA classrooms since that time. To increase both transparency and access to this information, the survey instrument and results are posted on the Campus Health website. This helps give the campus community (students, faculty, staff, parents) a common set of facts to draw from when the campus talks about the health issues that impact UA students. In addition to annual survey data, topic-specific trend reports are also published, including the Mental Health Trends at the UA Report that highlights recent shifts in the state of mental health on campus.

Addressing Emerging Issues through Innovation

In 2019, UA became the first public university to bring on-demand, text-based primary health care to all students through an innovative partnership, which links patients with physicians through a secure app, available 24/7, at no cost to students. The service has been well received, and has further expanded both medical and mental health accessibility for on-campus and online students alike, across all 50 states where their students reside. In an increasingly digital age, the campus has also prioritized unique, high-touch programs to encourage in-person interaction and connection, including their Passport to Health, Stressbusters, and Mindful Ambassador programs.

“Last but not least, the compassionate nature of our campus community is perhaps our greatest strength,” said President Robert Robbins. *“Simply put, our staff and faculty choose to care and put the health and wellbeing of our students first.”*



**UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND: FORGING THE FUTURE,
BUILDING ON STRENGTH**

The mission of the University of Richmond is to educate in an academically challenging, intellectually vibrant, and collaborative community dedicated to the holistic development of students and the production of scholarly and creative work. A Richmond education prepares students for lives of purpose, thoughtful inquiry, and responsible leadership in a diverse world. As a result of their changing student population – 82% of students are from out-of-state, 26% are students of color, and 13% are first-generation college students -- it is extremely important that the University effectively responds to student diversity and the increasing competitiveness of the student body.

The University of Richmond strives to be on the forefront of colleges exploring modern approaches to health and wellness. Faculty and staff continue to develop programs and initiatives that take a holistic approach to nutrition, physical activity, sleep, education, and disease prevention. By practicing good health, the University will not only ensure a vibrant university community today, but also shape the long-term health and well-being of our society.

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“In the face of a growing collegiate mental health crisis, I cannot express how comforting it is as a student to know that the college I attend, the University of Richmond, is committed to the safety of its students and the promotion of their well-being. Although I am only a sophomore, I have already had a wealth of exposure to the extensive resources that the university has in place to achieve these goals, both from personal experience with mental health struggles and also with my advocacy work.”

-Emma Johnson, student at the University of Richmond

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A Campus-Wide, Public Health Approach to Student Well-being

The University's new strategic plan, *Forging our Future, Building on Strength*, lays out the institution's shared goals for the coming years and includes a goal to create a comprehensive well-being initiative for students to support high achievement and a well-balanced life with 15 objectives and 73 action steps, 49 of which have been accomplished. As a next step, the University formed a Health and Well-being Unit, bringing together the work of Counseling and Psychological Services, the Student Health Center, Health Promotion, and University Recreation. Integrating their expertise and aligning their resources creates opportunities to reach a broader audience. The new Health and Well-being unit will develop and implement a vision and strategy for a comprehensive wellness program for students, faculty and staff.

The facility will provide easy access for students and is designed to be a collaborative high-impact environment to support student learning, student well-being, and student success. As part of their holistic approach, they have cultivated campus partnerships with Dining Services to include a Registered Dietician, Music and Art Departments for music and art therapy, and Chaplaincy Office for pet therapy and counseling. Among the many amenities, the Well-being Center will include a health food café, demonstration kitchen, meditation garden, meditation rooms, salt therapy room, sleep pods, mind/body studio, and a self-care center. When the Well-being Center opens, they are looking forward to introducing the newest member of our Health and Well-being team, Emmet, a two year old labradoodle owned by a Student Health Center Registered Nurse that will serve as our facility dog that will reside in the building.

Weaving Wellness into the Curriculum

Wellness efforts also extend throughout the campus' student development and academic units. In keeping with the University of Richmond's objective to foster a thriving and inclusive community, embedded in the first-year curriculum is a wellness education requirement designed to ensure that every student begins their Richmond experience with an understanding of the full spectrum of health resources available to them. The wellness graduation requirement has been created and designed as a multidimensional collaborative campus wide approach to support student learning, well-being, happiness, and success.

To identify and select topics, the Health Promotion Department works closely with the Counseling and Psychological Services department to identify the top impediments to academic success, and also the most pervasive reasons students visit the Counseling Center. Course topics vary each year to address the ever changing interest and needs of their students. What makes this wellness graduation requirement unique and successful is that it is a genuine campus collaboration with approximately 60 staff and faculty from multiple and diverse departments teaching these courses. During the summer of 2019 the university provided funding for approximately two dozen faculty and staff to receive comprehensive training in the Koru mindfulness intervention. These trained faculty and staff are beginning to offer this mindfulness training throughout the university community.

Measuring Progress to Guide Future Efforts

Based on survey results, the wellness graduation requirement is making an impact, with 94% of students reporting they gained a better understanding of their health. The Counseling Center user satisfaction rates indicate that 99% of clients surveyed would use the services again if needed and 97.2% would recommend the services to a friend. Patient Experience Surveys achieved 100% satisfaction ratings in all criteria except appointment self-scheduling (95%) and length of visit (89%). All data is suggesting that services are effective and students are satisfied with their experience.

Conclusion

Rising demand for campus health services, especially mental health services, make this a wise time for every college and university to undertake a comprehensive review of how an institution is prioritizing student wellbeing, inclusive of mental health, in its policies, systems, and programming across all departments, schools, and services. The work of taking an institution-wide, public health approach to student wellbeing can be done in any size institution and in any setting. Campuses are most effective in addressing these issues head-on and navigating changes over time when they use data and meaningful partnerships with students, especially students most impacted, to guide and improve their work. For more information about how to partner with Active Minds in this work, visit activeminds.org.

Previous Healthy Campus Award Winners

- Arizona State University
- California State University, Long Beach
- Cornell University
- Duke University
- Jefferson College
- Jefferson Community College
- Kent State University
- Lawrence University
- Ohio State University
- Sacramento State University
- School of the Art Institute of Chicago
- University of Minnesota
- University of North Carolina at Greensboro
- University of Oregon
- University of South Carolina
- University of South Florida
- University of Texas at Austin
- University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Western Washington University

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