

Healthy Minds Climate Survey Working Group Recommendations Spring 2018

To support Vanderbilt University's Mental Health and Well-being Initiatives, the Institution launched the Healthy Minds Survey in late October 2016. The Healthy Minds Survey is conducted by a research group at the University of Michigan and is a widely used instrument to measure campus mental health and well-being. This online survey was distributed to all undergraduate, graduate, and professional students, and a total of 4,705 – or two out of every five (40%) – students completed this 45 minute survey.

In December 2017 the Healthy Minds Working Group released [preliminary findings](#) to the Vanderbilt community. In spring 2018 the Healthy Minds Working Group reconvened to further examine the dataset. Additional analysis focused on the unique needs of graduate and professional students, international students, and students of color. The working group met with an expert on stigma, and also shared findings with a variety of key constituents including student groups, deans, and staff members. As a result of these additional analyses and continued conversations, the Healthy Minds Working Group makes the following recommendations:

Social Norming Campaign

The working group noted discrepancies in the data between what an individual participant believed to be true and their perception of their peers. For example, approximately 5% of respondents indicate they would think less of a person who has received mental health treatment. However, between 36-41% of respondents believe “most people” would think less of a person who has received mental health treatment. This discrepancy was even more pronounced among international students and students of color. As a result, the working group recommends that **the Institution launch a social norming campaign to present accurate data and corresponding campus services**. Suggested areas for inclusion in a campaign:

- Time as a barrier to accessing resources
- Competitiveness
- Stigma around mental health and help seeking
- Positive mental health

Additionally, the working group recommends that this campaign should focus on **specific populations of students** where discrepancies are more pronounced.

Using Data to Inform Practice

The Healthy Minds Survey represents a wealth of data provided by over 4,700 Vanderbilt students. It is imperative this data inform trainings, workshops, and classrooms across campus. To that end, the working group recommends the **creation of a one page synopsis of key findings to disseminate to colleagues** (faculty, staff, teaching assistants) **so they have accurate Vanderbilt-specific data to inform classroom instruction and campus programming**.

To enhance this key findings document, the **working group recommends facilitating targeted focus groups** for specific populations of students (i.e., international students, students of color) to better understand their unique perspectives on mental health.

Training & Education

Almost 70% of Vanderbilt respondents indicated they sought counseling or support from a peer or colleague who is **not a healthcare professional**. This suggests students are seeking support from peers and as a result, these peers would benefit from additional gatekeeper and mental health training. Over 30% of respondents indicate they do not feel confident in helping someone with a mental health concern, and the majority of respondents indicate they have not participated in a mental health gatekeeper training. **The working group recommends that an online mental health gatekeeper module (i.e., Kognito At-Risk) be implemented as a mandatory module for students, faculty, and staff.**

The working group also recommends enhancing training and education to create **a nuanced vocabulary about emotions** to provide students, faculty, and staff with effective language to utilize beyond the binary of distressed and well.

Teaching & Instruction

The majority of respondents indicate that at Vanderbilt they feel that students' mental health and emotional well-being is a priority. To continue this sentiment, the working group recommends that **faculty address mental health excuses as part of broader health excuses in class expectations and syllabi.**

Furthermore, the working group recommends that **teaching assistant and research assistant training include mental health gatekeeper training** and address ways in which students can support students with mental health concerns.

Campus Services

The working group notes that the Psychological and Counseling Center (PCC) is the most frequently reported provider of mental health services. As the PCC transitions to the University Counseling Center (UCC) on July 1, 2018, the working group notes this is an ideal time to consider enhanced counseling center services. These recommendations are as follows:

- Enhance cultural competency of UCC staff
- Consider some satellite locations outside of the physical location of the UCC
- Consider some extended evening hours
- Create multiple modalities for mental health support, such as online wellness tools
- Enhance partnerships with campus partners include a mental health component in mid-semester check-ins
- Strengthen relationships with community mental health providers and improve lists of available providers in the community