Ensuring Campus Mental Health and Wellness

Investing in mental health services is necessary to help America’s future innovators and leaders.

Stress levels among college students are six times higher than the general population. According to a number of recent reports on student mental health:

- **40%** of graduate students reported having **moderate to severe anxiety and/or depression** (compared to 6% of general population)
- **6 in 10** college **dropouts** reported the cause being mental health issues
- **12.1%** of college students have seriously considered **suicide** over the past year, compared to 6.1% in 2008

These challenges can:
- **Impair achievement**. In 2018, 42% of students at some point felt so depressed that it was difficult to function in day-to-day life, compared to 30% in 2008.
  - 40% of graduate students report that such difficulties also affected their academic performance.
- **Delay graduation** and contribute to lower graduate student retention rates. On average, the retention rate for graduate students with mental health issues is only 57%.
- **Result in suicide**, which is the second leading cause of death on college campuses.

Given that students pursuing higher education have a greater prevalence of depression and mental health disorders, it is imperative to ensure the success of America’s future leaders and highly-skilled workforce by providing robust mental health services.

### Increase Funding for Collegiate Mental Healthcare Services

Many universities provide some resources that allow students to have drop-in appointments with mental health specialists. Unfortunately, low funding for mental health services across the country means that existing resources are not enough and many students are not given the support they need. Providing financial support to university health centers with a focus on mental healthcare is essential.

**SAGE recommends:**
- Fund 3-year grant programs through the Department of Health and Human Services or Department of Education to support and increase mental health treatment on campuses.
- Fund 3-year grants through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to support suicide prevention work in higher education.
  - There is precedent for both of these actions, with bills introduced in 2016 proposed but not passed.

### Support Community-Based Educational Programming to Decrease Stigma

Stigma regarding mental health directly correlates with students being unwilling to seek help, even when contemplating self-harm or suicide; on college campuses, this stigma is even more prevalent. Ignorance about how to identify mental health issues and the resources available further inhibit the ability to seek help.

**SAGE recommends:**
- Support and fund programs that follow the National Institution of Health “Train the Trainer” model where faculty members are trained by mental health professionals to respond to student needs and refer them outside help.
- Fund 3-year grants for educational programs which decrease societal stigma of mental health diagnosis and treatment for both faculty and students.

2 Ibid.


19. doi:10.1017/S1121189X0002621