

# ESTABLISHING HEALTHY CAMPUSES DURING CHALLENGING TIMES



Key Findings From the 2022  
Active Minds Healthy Campus Award

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# Addressing Student Mental Health During a Global Pandemic

Dear Colleagues:

Colleges and universities are called upon to prepare students to succeed in a complex and ever-changing world, and this has become more apparent considering the global COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past two years, we have seen a dramatic shift in the ways mental health is discussed, supported, and addressed. The national narrative has transitioned to one highlighting the need for greater awareness and support of mental health resources. Institutions of higher education are instrumental in the development of systems supportive of mental health.

Over the past decade, student mental health has been an area of concern for institutions of higher education. In the current climate, the need to address student mental health has become a top priority. During the height of the pandemic, almost two-thirds of college and university presidents identified student mental health as a pressing issue on their campus. The Healthy Minds Study found increases in anxiety and depression as well as decreases in flourishing throughout the pandemic. These conditions, which have disproportionately impacted BIPOC students, have coincided with a national reckoning with and heightened awareness of the need for racial justice. As such students, administrators, faculty, and staff have highlighted the systemic injustices that plague academia, communities, and society and are demanding change.

Despite the grim outlook, there is hope. Students remain agents of change, mental health advocates, and key stakeholders in shaping a future that is supportive, inclusive, and just. Solutions for institutions of higher education are 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.

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. During the pandemic, these institutions quickly pivoted to provide services, resources, and support to students in thoughtful and intentional ways. They asked students what they needed and responded to those needs despite their own struggles and challenges. This would not have been possible without a strong foundation supporting student well-being and the integration of health and wellness as a strategic priority.

In an ever-changing world, let's work together to prioritize mental health on college and university campuses for all students, faculty, and staff.



**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 ten underlying principles for improving health, equity, and wellbeing 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, 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:

- Address “student mental health” explicitly 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.

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.”).

# 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.

# 4

## Cultivate a Deep Commitment to Equal Opportunities for Health

Establishing a healthy campus community means working to address gaps in opportunity to obtain services and information that tend to disproportionately and negatively affect certain populations, such as racial and ethnic minorities and those with limited English skills, lesser income, and/or a marginalized sexual, gender, or other identity.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Provide specialist services for student sub-populations determined to be at higher risk, and recruit, hire, and retain clinical staff members representative of those groups.
- 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.

# 5

## 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 wellbeing.

### 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.

# 6

## Proactively Address Systemic Injustices

Building a healthy campus community means working to disrupt systems designed to perpetuate racism, colonialism and sexism, and other systems of oppression by proactively developing the infrastructure, resources, and values necessary to create diverse, inclusive, and antiracist institutions.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Educate campus community on histories of racism, colonialism, sexism, and other systems of oppression.
- Support internal and external campus community efforts for research, resources, and other initiatives addressing systemic injustices.
- Create partnerships with community-based organizations that serve BIPOC, working-class, and other marginalized communities.

# 7

## Provide Quality, Responsive, Accessible Clinical Services

Supporting a healthy campus community means that, while a school strives to move students towards 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).
- Provide telehealth options to all students regardless of geographic bounds.
- Adhere to national standards of excellence and be available via accessible locations, times, and timelines.

# 8

## 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.



# 9

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

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:

- 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.
- Anticipate future health and wellness needs of college students based on shared student experience.
- 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.

# 10

## 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 efforts.

# 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 sixth year and has elevated the work of 24 campuses.

Colleges and universities are crucial partners in improving the health, resilience, and wellbeing of young adults. The 2022 winners of the Healthy Campus Awards 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. They have done this while navigating a global pandemic.

The 2022 Healthy Campus Awardees are: Auburn University, Barstow Community College, Stevens Institute of Technology, University of South Florida, St. Petersburg campus, and Virginia Tech.

This year's recipients represent a range of campuses that operate within varying contexts and challenges: rural, urban, public, private, small, and large student bodies. 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 2022 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:

- Pivoting to address student needs during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Community-campus partnerships
- Integration of wellness in strategic plans
- Proactively addressing systems of oppression
- Training for faculty and staff around social justice issues
- Embedding clinicians in departments and locations beyond the counseling center
- Hiring additional clinicians and faculty members with diverse identities
- Extensive use of strategic planning and data

Each Healthy Campus Award application goes through an extensive process as well as multiple layers of endorsements. Applicants are assessed across 10 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



### AUBURN UNIVERSITY – GROUNDING MENTAL HEALTH IN THE UNIVERSITY CREED

Auburn University is a public land grant institution located in Auburn, Alabama. It has more than 30,000 students (approximately 24,500 undergraduates), including more than 28,000 full-time students. The undergraduate community of students are predominantly white, conservative, and openly Christian. 13% of students are considered low-income. Auburn has high gender diversity with around 50% women and 50% men. It is a “legacy school” for many students with generations of family members having attended the university before them.

It is a Top 100 university (US News and World Report) with Carnegie Research 1 and Community Engagement Designations. Auburn is a university steeped in tradition. The “Auburn Creed” originated in 1943 and remains emblematic of the university’s mission.

With students from all 50 states and 102 countries, Auburn has taken strides to develop student-led initiatives to transform the university to reflect the diverse demographics of its home state and the nation’s forward movement toward creating inclusive and equitable opportunities for all. 22% of students identify as racial or ethnic minorities, and 6.8% of students are international students. Auburn’s 2020 Mental Health Task Force, the Presidential Task Force for Equity and Opportunity, and the advocacy group “Auburn for Change,” all of which were initiatives driven by students, reflect the best of Auburn’s traditions and vision for an inclusive future.

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I believe in a sound mind, in a sound body and a spirit that is not afraid.

– Auburn University creed

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## Prioritizing a Collective Strategic Approach

Auburn's journey to elevating the need to fully address student mental health and wellbeing concerns began in 2015. In collaboration with university administrators, students from Active Minds, Spectrum, and the Student Government Association (SGA) established a mental health task force to understand the mental health needs of their student population and compare Auburn's approach to that of their peer institutions.

Using these findings, student groups were able to advocate for better access to mental health resources and a university-wide approach to mental health that would support the whole student on a campus with a traditionally slow change process. The task force report prompted a major step in creating system changes across campus by providing recommendations and strategies to promote better access to resources and to further destigmatize mental health. The recommendations were adopted and financially supported by campus leadership including the President, the Executive Vice President, and the Senior Vice President of Student Affairs. With this investment and over time, Auburn began to see change. A Sound Mind Initiative (ASMI), grounded in the Auburn University creed, was created to serve as the university's comprehensive communications strategy to promote mental health prevention and awareness to the large campus. The collective work of the Auburn community, led by ASMI, ensures that the conversations about mental health on campus continue beyond the immediate time. It is clear the hard work of Auburn has paid off with 80.6% of students agreeing that health and wellbeing is a priority and with 82.3% of students agreeing that the campus encourages dialogue about health and wellbeing.

## Defining Health Broadly and Pursuing it Comprehensively

Auburn University's strategic approach to health and wellness includes each student, faculty and staff member, alumnus, and guardian of an Auburn student as a key stakeholder. With the ASMI setting the foundation for their approach, Auburn has weaved the multiple dimensions of wellness throughout different offices and services on Auburn University's campus. ASMI involves collaboration among 12 unique campus offices, including the counseling center, health promotion office, campus recreation office, medical clinic, campus dining, student advocacy office, and diversity/equity/inclusion office, and connects mental health to other forms of wellbeing, such as physical, emotional, and financial health.

In 2019, the ASMI webpage was created to supply students with any mental health resources they may want or need. The website is the centerpiece of the ASMI strategy; the unified branding and tagline streamline communication efforts. Content has been converted to print materials and supplied to campus offices that students tend to frequent. Further, the offices within the ASMI framework frequently refer to each other to ensure students are aware of and are using myriad supports available to them. For example, the counseling center maintains relationships with campus ministries to achieve bilateral referrals, and the medical clinic and counseling center frequently refer students to campus recreation by prescribing exercise as medicine. These partnerships have led to the creation of a new hub that addresses food insecurity through a food pantry, nutrition counseling, and need-based food kitchen.

To provide additional support to students, Auburn University has integrated mental health promotion at Camp War Eagle, the Auburn University orientation program, and throughout the First 56, a program for incoming students during the first few weeks of classes. These programs emphasize the three pillars of student success: academic success, social engagement, and healthy decision making. Beyond the incoming student experience, Auburn has a well-established Wellness Coaching program and Peer Wellness Coaching, both of which utilize a strengths-based approach to guide students through the different dimensions of wellness.

## Providing Quality, Responsive, Accessible Clinical Services

The increased awareness and commitment to student mental health prompted an additional investment in the systems and structures to support student wellbeing. Auburn University has added a second location for the counseling center while hiring additional staff members for the counseling center and health promotion offices. During this time the counseling center received full accreditation from the International Accreditation of Counseling Services (IACS), lowered the student-to-provider ratio from 1:3000 to 1:1500, and instituted an American Psychological Association-approved predoctoral internship, the first of its kind in a university counseling center in Alabama. In the medical clinic, Auburn was able to hire additional psychiatry staff through a partnership with the university's health service provider. Fortunately, these improvements were possible with funding from a reallocation of existing student service fees rather than raising student fees.

With the constant prioritization of student wellbeing, Auburn University was positioned to quickly pivot to address the treatment needs of students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognizing the hard work of the counseling center during this time, the campus Office of Sustainability awarded them the 2020 Spirit of Sustainability Award. Student Counseling and Psychological Services (SCPS) staff had a steep learning curve to be able to offer high-quality services through a virtual medium. Adapting required a complete overhaul of the intake process, on-call clinician access, scheduling, and so on. In the midst of new learning and operational processes, SCPS was able to keep up with demand and avoided almost all waitlists. SCPS increased outreach efforts by 45%, bringing services proactively to students and student groups.

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Through our on-campus medical clinic staff all having received specialized training on medical treatment for the LGBTQ+ community, I know I can safely receive medical treatment and have my identity fully respected. Auburn's Student Counseling and Psychological Services office also has a training program for their staff on issues special to the LGBTQ+ community, and this is another office and resource that I use to ensure I am taking proper care of my mental health. One of the keys of wellness coaching is balancing the dimensions of wellness, and through the medical clinic and counseling center I can ensure that my physical and emotional wellness is being properly addressed and cared for, and I am able to take care of my other areas of wellness through various forms of involvement and leadership.

– Chase Chaplin, Auburn graduate and Coordinator  
of Peer Health Education

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## BARSTOW COMMUNITY COLLEGE – ENGAGING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY TO MEET BASIC NEEDS

Barstow Community College in Barstow, California, is a public community college of about 3,000 students. Barstow students are representative of the diverse local community. 71% of students identify as racial or ethnic minorities (majority Hispanic), 67% are women, and 72% are Pell grant eligible. 39% of students are enrolled full-time.

Barstow was recently recognized by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges and the Foundation for California Community Colleges as the 2021 winner of the Dr. John W. Rice Award for Student Success. Barstow Community College was lauded for myriad efforts, including a vibrant Teaching and Learning Support Center, faculty-led workshops, enhanced tutoring, and improved early alert tracking. Additionally, Barstow Community College has taken a proactive stance on mental health and wellbeing by providing psychotherapy and other services free to students through in-house providers and partnerships with community social service agencies.

Not only is the campus dedicated to student academic success and overall wellbeing, but it also supports the greater Barstow community. Graduates of Barstow often stay in the area, which is rural with a limited number of community services. Therefore, the college works with many local businesses and community agencies and provides events and other services to the general public including health fairs, mental health screenings, and COVID-19 vaccinations to provide a well-integrated system for community change.

### Defining Health Broadly and Pursuing it Comprehensively

Barstow Community College has taken a proactive stance on mental health and wellbeing. Located in a rural community, Barstow recognizes that its programs and policies must adapt to the changing needs of the community. In September of 2020, during the pandemic, Barstow Community College opened The Mindful Space, the campus mental health counseling center. The Mindful Space started seeing students virtually via telephone and video sessions at no cost to the student. Despite opening during this time, The Mindful Space served almost 500 students for individual therapy, referral, crisis intervention, group therapy, disciplinary counseling, workshops, and other services. In August 2021, the physical office opened and trained mental health practitioners started seeing students face-to-face or by video or telephone.

Rather than contracting services to an outside provider, The Mindful Space hired a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist who could understand the unique needs of students living in the rural area. Now The Mindful Space provides individual psychotherapy, coaching, group therapy, mental health assessment, crisis intervention, consultations, referrals to additional services in the community, and disciplinary intervention to students with grant funding. Barstow Community College has recognized the value of these services and has created a plan to absorb the funding requirements necessary to maintain the services in the future.

### Securing and Making the Most of Available Resources

Being a rural campus, Barstow Community College has thoughtfully partnered with local community-based and governmental agencies to provide a well-integrated system for change. Barstow has used this approach to find the right care for the right person at the right time in the right area. With many Barstow students

staying in the local area, this helps change the community. They have established memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with the two largest community-based organizations in the Barstow area, Victor Transition Age Youth (TAY) and Indian Health Care, to refer students to appropriate providers through a warm handoff system. Rather than using the police for psychiatric emergencies, Barstow partnered with San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health for any needs related to suicidal ideation or risk of hospitalization as they have admitting rights to the local area psychiatric hospital.

On campus, Barstow added the CareSolace system which enables students, faculty, and staff to find mental health services for their specific needs. Case managers work with each individual by helping them find providers covered under their insurance or to access free/low-cost services. The case managers schedule the initial appointment with the local provider and provide accountability for the client. This system allows for continuity for students once they leave Barstow and ensures they continue to receive the care they need. It also provides an option for campus faculty and staff who may have unmet mental health needs and limited access to resources. CareSolace is a crucial program at Barstow Community College because the local mental health services are incredibly limited with few individual therapists available.

## Cultivating a Deep Commitment to Equal Opportunities for Health

With Barstow Community College's diverse student population, they are committed to addressing gaps in opportunities to obtain services and information that tends to negatively affect certain populations. They have created a Student Success and Equity Committee which is a shared governance entity responsible for developing the Student Equity Plan. The focus of this plan is to boost academic achievement for student sub-populations determined to be of higher risk for discontinuation and requires each college to develop detailed goals and measures addressing disparities.

To meet this goal, many of the programs provided by Barstow focus on supporting students' basic needs and providing emotional support. The Vets/9Line provides military veterans academic, financial, and emotional support during their academic journey as well as specialized transitional support and services. The Youth Empowerment Support Services program assists current and former foster youth in successfully completing college by meeting their basic needs and providing them with additional academic support and counseling. The Homeless and Housing Insecurity Program provides basic needs support to students who are homeless or marginally housed. Brother Reaching Academic Success and Service is a minority male program that provides resources to promote academic integrity, personal development, and social interaction between minority males at Barstow Community College.

The Food Pantry provides a wide variety of fresh, frozen, and non-perishable food items on a weekly basis to all enrolled students. The Adult Education Program currently serves students in a variety of ways, including basic skills enhancement in English and mathematics, English as a second language for English language learners, and citizenship courses to help individuals complete the naturalization test. To support students who are undocumented, the college provides counselors to help them navigate the educational system. These services are 100% tuition-free, thus eliminating any burden on the student.

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Our mission at Barstow Community College has been to get mental health education, training, and resources to students in our area by all means possible. We aim to be student centered so that barriers can be removed and allow for student success. We know when students succeed our community also succeeds.

– Tanesha Young, Dean of Counseling and Student Success

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## STEVEN'S INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY – POLICY AND SYSTEMS CHANGE TO PREVENT DISTRESS

On an urban campus in beautiful Hoboken, New Jersey, Stevens Institute of Technology enrolls 3,700 undergraduate and 3,900 graduate students in a rigorous academic curriculum focused primarily on STEM and business fields. Stevens' unique blend of technological education and applied learning opportunities prepare students for the real world. Stevens offers entrepreneurship coursework to first-year students; a wide choice of interdisciplinary majors; and unparalleled access to highly ranked internships and cooperative education.

Students are from 24 states and 59 countries, and of the 3,700 undergraduates, 18% are considered low income, 29% are women, and 13.1% identify as racial or ethnic minorities. This lack of diversity can significantly impact the well-being of these populations. Stevens also has a unique graduate student population, composed largely of international students. Language barriers and stigma related to mental health represent significant health challenges.

Through a variety of programs and services, Stevens shows their dedication to student health with a special focus on underrepresented minority students. Student health is approached holistically, and care is coordinated and comprehensive. Mental health initiatives include a mental health task force of representatives across campus; hiring of diverse staff to connect with specific student populations; faculty, staff, and Resident Assistant mental health gatekeeper training; and partnerships with student mental health organizations (Active Minds).

Stevens has an excellent employment outcome rate with 97.3% of undergraduates employed or attending graduate school within 6 months of graduation and is consistently ranked in the top 15 schools in the nation for best 20-year return on investment for graduates, according to the Payscale College ROI Report.

### **Prioritizing a Collective Strategic Approach**

At Stevens, health is prioritized at the highest levels. Stevens has made wellness an institutional priority, focused on mental health and creating a campus culture that encourages and supports help-seeking. This focus on student wellness is manifested through financial support, commitments from senior leadership, and programming and initiatives. In 2018, The Stevens Board of Trustees approved a plan to foster positive student mental health and combat suicide. In the following year, Stevens' President established a Mental Health Task Force bringing together stakeholders from throughout the community to consider best practices and creative ideas to further encourage students to seek support from mental health professionals when needed. In 2021, the university president formed a task force on Equity and Inclusive Excellence with representation across the campus community. This commitment is clear in funding, action and across all levels of the institution.



In 2019, Stevens built a state-of-the-art facility to offer a comprehensive, coordinated, and holistic approach to wellness. This allowed the units of the Wellness Team (Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Wellness Education, Health, and Disability Services) to collaborate on student care, provide in-house referrals, and engage in effective screening for depression and other mental health concerns. To ensure appropriate staffing to meet student needs, Stevens created new full-time positions in CAPS. These included a Mandarin-speaking staff psychologist to better connect with the significant population of Chinese graduate students, a wellness educator to provide workshops to students and to support the behavioral intervention team, and a mental health counselor with expertise in psychotherapy for students of color. Additionally, partnership and collaboration remain paramount for all wellness programming. Stevens partners with offices across campus to provide wellness workshops and trains faculty and staff to support students in distress. Lastly, Stevens conducted an in-depth campus environmental scan to limit student access to lethal means with the goal of reducing campus suicide.

### **Committing to Sustainable Systems Changes and Policy-Oriented Long-Term Solutions**

Supporting student mental health goes beyond the student. Parents and guardians are introduced to mental health, warning signs of distress, and campus services during Family Orientation and again at Family Weekend. Faculty and staff complete required online mental health modules annually to educate them on warning signs. As a STEM institution with only two liberal arts core courses required of undergraduate students, Stevens had to be intentional in the ways they could incorporate wellness into the academic curriculum. Currently, members of the wellness team teach a variety of courses (including an introduction to Koru Mindfulness) that count towards student physical education requirements for graduation.

Some of the most impactful changes at Stevens support students at highest risk. In 2015-2016, during the inaugural year of the CARE team, concerns were reported regarding 79 students, and by 2018-2019 this number had risen to 225 students. Not only are more students in crisis being identified by the university, but more have access to care and are receiving help. CAPS saw a 37% increase in the number of crisis appointments between 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. The university also takes a hands-on approach to medical leave where students are assigned a Stevens case manager during their time away. This maintains student connection to the university and allows continuity of care once the student returns to campus. The Stevens Financial Aid Team has partnered with mental health staff to allow for the maintenance of scholarship funds when students exit on medical leave. The Stevens medical leave of absence program is a model program with a relapse rate below 10%.

### **Addressing Emerging Issues or Opportunities in the Field of Student Wellness in Innovative, Unique Ways**

Stevens remains innovative in the ways they have built a healthy campus community. Incoming students are informed of campus mental health supports before arriving on campus. Even prior to beginning school, Student Health offers students the option to be contacted by CAPS to learn about mental health offerings at the school. Students who opt-in receive a transition-of-care guide designed by CAPS to help students and their families think through the important questions regarding how they will maintain their mental health while at university. This allows wellness staff to connect with these students and families throughout the summer to arrange for accommodations, appropriate transitions of care, and treatment continuity. Once on campus, depression screenings are offered each semester, and students who visit Health Services are screened on every visit. A primary goal is referral to CAPS before a mental health issue becomes a crisis.

Stevens is committed to meeting the unique needs of their student population and anticipating emerging issues. To better support student-athletes, Stevens has embedded a CAPS trainee within athletics, and they offer weekly walk-in hours on-site at the gym, consultations to coaches and teams, educational workshops, and leadership on the Mental Fitness Committee. This position greatly increased the likelihood of athletes seeking help for emotional distress. Additionally, for the growing transgender and non-binary student population, there is now an institutional process by which students can change their name or gender at the institution without making a legal change. To establish an inclusive environment, Stevens has instituted gender-inclusive housing and restrooms throughout campus. Recently students have requested more services related to sexual health, and now Stevens offers PrEP for HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis - an option that can significantly reduce the risk of HIV infection for individuals at risk of exposure to HIV through sex or shared needle use.

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Within the first two weeks of school, I was starting to have scheduled meetings with both the Wellness Education and Disability Services offices at Stevens... I quickly realized that the meetings had a massive impact on my college life. My counselors listen to what I have to say and provide me their opinions on the situations I was in, as well as offer advice on how to resolve conflicts in both classes and social settings. Even when I have a meeting after a relatively good week, the meetings are still a great opportunity to reflect on what made that week so good to begin with, which can sometimes serve as a reminder of what I can do for myself to make sure every week at Stevens is as good as can be. The Wellness Education and Disability Services offices at Stevens have been a huge part of the reason I feel that I can be successful at Stevens, both socially and academically, and I don't believe I would be where I am right now without them.

*-Cole Gardella, second-year student studying Pure and Applied Mathematics*

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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA,  
ST. PETERSBURG CAMPUS – STUDENT-LED  
ACTION IMPROVING WELLBEING AND  
ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC INJUSTICES**

The University of South Florida, St. Petersburg campus is nestled in a bustling and highly vibrant waterfront section of St. Petersburg, Florida. The University of South Florida, St. Petersburg campus' students are exceptionally diverse and are passionate about contributing to a diverse and inclusive community. With almost 4,500 students, approximately 2,700 are enrolled full-time. Students come from 15 states and 27 different countries, and 36.4% identify as racial or ethnic minorities. 63.9% of students are women.

The Division of Student Success is highly visible in the community and strives to engage and empower students to look after themselves and one another. The University of South Florida, St. Petersburg campus' Student Success team values student agency and relies heavily on their vision for the campus to help drive its work. Students frequently describe a feeling of 'family' as they engage with each other and campus staff. In addition to the "small school atmosphere" with the "large university resources and academic opportunities," The University of South Florida, St. Petersburg Campus has unique Wellness Center initiatives, including an updated stepped-care model of counseling services.

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The work of the Wellness Center did not stop at the clinic door. In coordinated efforts with other offices in the Division, these professionals creatively and consistently contributed to novel initiatives that bolstered student health. Targeted, division-wide efforts to support health and wellness have included housing-based COVID care teams, virtual suicide and violence prevention trainings, a web-based didactic platform on health and wellness issues, and both synchronous and asynchronous recreation and wellness activities to engage students across multiple platforms. Not to be outmatched by a global pandemic, our staff also continued to address important diversity and inclusion needs focusing on the implications for students' social health and emotional wellbeing. Collectively, these efforts sent a clear message to our students: Even as we are apart and the next step is uncertain, we care deeply for your health and wellness.”

*-Rhea F. Law, President*

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## Championing Student Voices

The University of South Florida, St. Petersburg campus listens, elevates, and prioritizes the student voice. On steering and planning committees, university leadership regularly holds seats for students. They are invited to participate in climate and programming surveys and faculty regularly engage students in real-world academic activities that often include focus groups and research to fully understand the needs of the student body. When new policies, procedures, and programs are introduced the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg campus hosts listening sessions and town hall events to take the pulse of the student body and make sure their voice is heard.

In The Wellness Center, the P.E.E.R.S. (Providing Education, Empowerment, Resources and Support) student group educates the diverse student body on a variety of important college health issues. P.E.E.R.S. challenges faculty and staff to think intentionally about the parity of mental and physical health and to develop robust wellness outreach programs. Thus, they consistently work to meet students where they are, use social media platforms to pull in student interest, and consistently ask for feedback and suggestions about the best way to bring programs to students. The vision of The Wellness Center embodies this spirit: “We envision a healthy campus culture where all students are empowered, resilient, community-minded adults engaged in cultivating personal achievement and lifelong fulfillment.”

## Proactively Addressing Systemic Injustices

Pursuing diversity, equity, and inclusion and dismantling systems of oppression are institutional imperatives at the University of Florida, St. Petersburg campus. In Fall 2019, the Division of Student Success was charged with exploring their standing within the construct of Multicultural Organization Development (MCO) and to work actively toward the highest level of inclusivity and opportunity. The tangible outcomes of this effort included updated policies, procedures, and plans that support recruitment and retention of diverse staff, enhance the accessibility of physical space, and create new working relationships among offices with shared interests in the area of inclusivity.

As the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and racial injustice proliferated, it was very important that the institution not lose track of these efforts. As such, they established a “Race and Social Justice Hour” to encourage active participation in grappling with institutional racism and marginalization that flows from the power structures in societal and higher ed institutions. Sessions are both didactic and discussion-based, and topics have included intersectionality, white privilege, Critical Race Theory, and sociocultural health disparities, among others.

This process occurred in tandem with larger efforts directed by the President of the University to define the Principles of Community (Excellence with Equity, Diversity with Inclusion, Freedom with Responsibility, Dialogue with Respect, and Transparency with Accountability) which set forth a standard for how students, faculty, and staff can engage with each other. This work led to specific staff- and student-facing steps, including structured opportunities to discuss relevant local ballot initiatives, pilot programs that seek feedback specifically from BIPOC students, and space for staff to engage with one another around social identities and the impact on their work. These efforts represent both top-down and bottom-up action. Through their invitation and example, university leadership has ensured that discussion of current social justice issues does not wane.

## Providing Quality, Responsive, Accessible Clinical Services

Within their integrated health clinic (the Wellness Center), the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg campus says that there is no wrong door to their office. When students present with a need – whether physical, psychological, or social – the Wellness Center offers ‘wrap-around’ care that also empowers them to take charge of their health. The medical team is positioned to offer both in-person and telehealth services for any student appointments. In their regular end-of-semester satisfaction survey, students have praised the responsiveness of our providers and support staff as they sought both routine and acute care. Specialty services (including behavioral health consultation, nutrition, and psychiatry providers) operate in close partnership with these staff members, ensuring communication happens swiftly and with clarity. Often their interactions yield information that points toward additional services within the center, typically giving them a chance to provide a ‘warm hand-off’ to the psychological services team.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, psychological services transitioned to providing services fully online, and as time progressed the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg campus introduced a hybrid approach. Currently, students have the option of receiving most services in either modality. Simultaneously, the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg campus overhauled its clinical model to adopt a unique stepped-care approach. This model (STepped-care and Responsive Intervention DELivery, or ‘STRIDE’) allowed them to clearly categorize the range of options available to students and communicate more clearly which of these various options might most closely fit their need(s). The four ‘steps’ (self-driven resources/modules, highly-focused consultation, individual or group counseling, and care coordination) enables them to meet students where they are in terms of both acuity and readiness and to use these data points as a tool for treatment planning.

This model also made it possible to re-think how providers’ clinical time was used. With demand increasing, they proactively planned for ways to maximize access without negatively impacting providers. The session limit that had previously helped address this issue was eliminated, giving students much more flexibility. Despite all the changes, an overwhelming majority of students remained highly satisfied with services and noted that visiting the Wellness Center contributed to their academic and personal success.



## VIRGINIA TECH – DATA-DRIVEN INITIATIVES TO EMBED A CULTURE OF CARING

Virginia Tech has almost 37,000 students including almost 30,000 undergraduates, 92% of which are enrolled full-time. Approximately 34,600 of these students are at the main campus in Blacksburg, Virginia while approximately 2,200 Hokies study at the university's Roanoke and National Capital Region campuses.

Virginia Tech students have a deep pride in their school, often referred to as Hokie Spirit. The university's motto of *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve), creates a community of people invested in serving their peers and colleagues through experiential learning, research, and an inclusive, spirited culture. The student body represents 40 states and 115 countries with 25% of students identifying as racial or ethnic minorities. 15% of students are considered low-income, and gender diversity is high with 57% male and 43% female students.

Virginia Tech works to champion research and innovation and has been ranked as one of the Top 5 research institutions in the nation. Additionally, Virginia Tech has a history as a military school and is one of only six senior military colleges outside the five federal military academies and is also one of only two large, public universities in the nation that maintains a full-time Corps of Cadets.

Virginia Tech recognizes that wellbeing work is work that everyone must do. Therefore, they prioritize a collective approach to wellbeing by aligning the student health center, counseling center, campus recreation, health education, and residence life all under an Assistant Vice President within Student Affairs.

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Our university prioritizes the well-being of our students, and we work hard to ensure that we are meeting the diverse and ever-changing needs of our students in physical, community, financial, social, purpose, and mental well-being. At Virginia Tech, we believe wellbeing work does not live with any one area or department but is work that all of us, as educators, must do.”

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– *Timothy D. Sands, President*

## **Committing to Sustainable Systems Changes and Policy-Oriented Long-Term Solutions**

The Virginia Tech Mental Health Initiatives Task Force has worked tirelessly to strategically implement recommendations supporting mental health on campus. The outcome includes a collective wellbeing focused approach to ensure a sustainable system to unite mental health efforts across campus. For greater academic support, the Coordinated Care Network allows academic advisors, who meet with students on a regular basis, to refer students to services and spaces that can help with their wellbeing. Some of these places are the Dean of Students Office, wellness consultations in campus recreation, coaching appointments in health education, and Services for Students with Disabilities for any kind of accommodation.

To ensure long-term continuity of services, Cook Counseling—the university’s counseling center—has embedded counselor positions within the Colleges of Science, Engineering, and Business and the veterinary and medical schools. The focus on mental health prompted individual colleges to assess their individual stressors. Proactively, the veterinary college changed their grading policy to alleviate some of the pressure and stress felt by the students and instituted an elective course titled, Care Forward, to help students understand how to take care of themselves and prevent burnout/compassion fatigue.

To provide students with increased access and awareness of resources, the university launched a new website housing all wellbeing resources in one place, regardless of what entity was offering the resource. From a clinical perspective, Cook Counseling adapted their previous model of care to the new “Cook Connect Model” which has dramatically cut down on initial appointment wait times. The new triage model takes a comprehensive approach to mental wellness by connecting students to the many different wellbeing resources available on campus, in addition to or even in place of traditional individual and group therapy sessions. Lastly, Virginia Tech reimaged the residential life program to implement a model focused on student wellbeing. In this model, student well-being leaders (once thought of as Resident Assistants) will focus on certain areas of well-being. These positions have shared core responsibilities, however, they will be working within a team structure with some positions holding expertise in wellbeing, diversity and inclusion, and student success. This model provides an upstream approach to well-being by infusing content experts and embedding mental health counselors within the residential communities creating an innovative case management system for students living on-campus.

## **Proactively Addressing Systemic Injustices**

In cultivating a healthy campus community, Virginia Tech aims to infuse multicultural competencies into its initiatives to acknowledge and address how multi-level systems of power impact students’ ability to make connections, access care, and cultivate personal and academic success. Virginia Tech’s Principles of Community and the Student Affairs Anti-Racism Commitment are fundamental to the university’s ongoing efforts to increase access and inclusion within its community and highlight the institution’s individual/collective commitment to working to eliminate bias and discrimination, increasing understanding of these issues, and acknowledging/addressing the behaviors/structures that perpetuate inequality.

The university's InclusiveVT Project 2022 works to increase the number of diverse students who consider, apply, and attend—particularly, Black students, Native American and Indigenous students, Hispanic/Latino students, and first-generation students—through events/outreach and financial support. To address national trends indicating that students who borrow loans are disproportionately underrepresented minority students who are likely to borrow higher amounts and are more likely to default on student loans, Virginia Tech has invested in building financial wellness programs and delivering targeted programming for first-generation students. Based on findings in the Report on Programs and Services for LGBTQ+ Students at VT, the university has begun constructing/adapting all-gender restrooms in the buildings where they are most needed. Lastly, Recreational Sports collaboratively launched a for-credit course called 'Adaptive Recreation' as part of the Disabilities Studies minor to bring in programs/staff to launch adaptive sports for Intramural Sports and Sport Clubs.

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

Virginia Tech takes the evaluation of health and wellness data very seriously and is committed to using these results to make informed decisions that lead to positive results. This assessment and results dissemination is done on a departmental, divisional, and institutional level. Departmentally, all aspects of services and programs are assessed. The counseling and health clinical assessments are instrumental in keeping the campus informed of trends and ensuring timely action to resolve problems and enhance services. The recreational sports and wellness areas use data to ensure the services offered are relevant and useful to students, as well as to assess behavior change.

On a divisional level, all Student Affairs departments are responsible for sharing metrics related to their area, yielding a culture of assessment with the expectation that action items will be created with the results. On an institutional level, Virginia Tech implements the National College Health Assessment (NCHA) biannually and the Healthy Minds survey yearly. These assessments allow the university to better understand general wellbeing on campus as well as the mental and emotional health of students. Beyond national data collection efforts, Virginia Tech implemented two Health and Wellness Needs Assessments to assist university staff in determining student needs and identify strategies to reach and engage them. As services had dramatically shifted during the pandemic the findings from these assessments ensured the institution was effective in the change.



# Conclusion

The demand for campus health services, especially mental health services, is rising. It is 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](https://activeminds.org).

## Former Healthy Campus Award Winners

- **Arizona State University**
- **California State University, Long Beach**
- **Cornell University**
- **Dennison University**
- **Duke University**
- **Jefferson College**
- **Jefferson Community College**
- **Kent State University**
- **Lawrence University**
- **Ohio State University**
- **Sacramento State University**
- **Santa Monica College**
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