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First-Generation Symposium

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### Supporting the Mental Health Needs of First-Generation Students

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# SUPPORTING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF FIRST GEN STUDENTS

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# AGENDA

- **Research about Mental health and First Generation students**
- **Identify the mental health needs for First Generation Students**
- **Counseling & Psychological Services at Rowan University**

# WHAT WE KNOW (OR MIGHT NOT KNOW!)...

- **In 2022, roughly 19 million undergraduates enrolled in postsecondary education <sup>1</sup>**
- **Worsening mental health 2020-2021 <sup>2</sup>**
  - **60% of students experienced at least 1 clinically significant mental health problem**
  - **Roughly 50% increase from 2013**
- **First Generation Stressors <sup>3</sup>**
  - **Basic Needs insecurity**
  - **Acculturative stress- Home vs school environment**
  - **More likely to experience:**
    - **Post-traumatic Stress**
    - **Family Achievement guilt**
    - **Lack of familial social support- leading to stress and depression**

# COLLEGE MENTAL HEALTH DATA

- **American College Health Association (ACHA)**
  - National College Health Assessment (Survey)
  - General population
  - Data by semester
- **Center for Collegiate Mental Health (CCMH)**
  - Penn State University
  - Specifically for students receiving mental health services (Data collection)
  - Annual Reports
- **Healthy Minds Network**
  - UCLA, University of Michigan, Wayne State University, and Boston University
  - General population of college students (Survey)

# MENTAL HEALTH AND FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS

- Findings from the National Healthy Minds Study, 2018-2021; Published in May 2023<sup>4</sup>
- 192,202 students from 277 US Campuses
- 17.3% First Generation Students
- Mental Health Outcomes
  - Continuous scales (flourishing, depression, anxiety)
  - Depression Scale
  - Anxiety Scale
  - Suicidal Ideation
- Treatment Outcomes
  - Any Treatment (therapy and/ or medication)
  - Therapy
  - Medication use
    - Barriers to mental health services

**Table 1.** Sample characteristics

	All students (N=192,202)	FG students (N=27,738)	CG students (N=164,464)
<b>Financial stress</b>			
Always/often stressful	40.56%	54.17%	37.71%
Sometimes/rarely/never stressful	59.44%	45.83%	62.29%
<b>Age</b>			
18–21	69.35%	53.18%	72.74%
22–25	16.63%	17.49%	16.45%
26–30	5.50%	9.28%	4.70%
31+	8.52%	20.04%	6.11%
<b>Gender identity</b>			
Cisgender man	40.97%	36.76%	41.85%
Cisgender woman	55.86%	61.13%	54.76%
TNB	3.17%	2.11%	3.39%
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>			
AI/AN	0.34%	0.48%	0.31%
Arab Am	0.87%	1.16%	0.81%
APIDA	5.93%	7.39%	5.63%
Black	10.62%	15.65%	9.57%
Latinx	8.21%	25.20%	4.66%
Multiracial	9.72%	8.71%	9.93%
White	64.30%	41.41%	69.08%

Notes: Table values are weighted percentages. “FG” is “first-generation”; “CG” is “continuing-generation”; “TNB” is “transgender and nonbinary”; “AI/AN” is “American Indian/Alaskan Native”; “Arab Am” is “Arab American”; “APIDA” is “Asian/Pacific Islander/Desi American”.

# FINDINGS...

## Mental Health:

- FG slightly lower levels of flourishing (36.2% vs 37.0%)
- FG slightly higher levels of depression (43.1% vs 40.4%)
- FG slightly higher levels of anxiety (36.4% vs 34.1%)
- BOTH reported high rates of suicidal ideation with CG students slightly higher (15.1% to FG 14.8%)

## Treatment:

- Among FG 45.5% vs CG 55.1% for counseling and medication
  - Lower rates in 2020-2021
- Counseling only: FG 32.8% received counseling vs CG 42.8%
- Medication only: FG 29.7% vs CG 36.8
- Barriers similar for both FG and CG
  - Financial reasons 31.5% vs 25.8%



# CONSIDERATIONS FOR FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS

- **Need to further research**
- **Inequalities in Mental Health Prevalence:**
  - **Financial stress/ debt risk factor for suicide<sup>5</sup>**
  - **Approx 50% of FG also low-income, minority racial backgrounds, parents, caregivers, veterans or first-generation American citizens**
- **Inequalities in Mental Health Services:**
  - **“Treatment Gap”**
    - **Untreated depression= 2-fold increase of dropout<sup>2</sup>**

# TRENDS 2013-2021 MENTAL HEALTH AND HELP-SEEKING BY RACE/ETHNICITY

- >350,000 students at 373 campuses that participated in the Healthy Minds
- Study between 2013 and 2021
- Measured Flourishing, Depression, Anxiety, S/I, ED, and NSSI

## Race/ Ethnicity:

- American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN)
- Arab/Arab American
- Asian/Pacific
- Islander/Desi American (APIDA)
- Black/African American
- Latino/a/x
- White
- Multiracial (comprised of students who selected more than one racial/ethnic identity).

# TAKEAWAYS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH...

## Mental Health:

- Flourishing: 32.5% decrease
  - Depression: 134.6% increase
  - Anxiety: 109.5% increase
  - Eating Disorders: 95.6 % increase
  - Self Harming Behaviors: 45.5% increase
  - Suicidal Ideations: 64% increase
- 
- Mental Health worsened for ALL racial/ethnic groups
  - NSSI and ED increased most significantly for White students
  - ALL other measures increased most among racial/ethnic minority students

**Table 3**

Trends in help-seeking from 2013 to 2021 by race/ethnicity.

	Year-by-year help-seeking, weighted %							
	2013	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21
Past-year treatment								
All	40.7	45.1	45.6	47.6	51.0	52.3	50.5	50.2
AI/AN	32.2	40.5	40.8	55.7	56.8	38.8	43.6	48.3
Arab American	49.2	27.5	34.3	37.5	31.2	40.2	32.2	40.2
APIDA	23.2	30.5	29.1	33.2	37.3	37.2	32.1	33.8
Black	29.3	28.9	36.8	34.4	39.1	40.6	36.6	37.7
Latino/a/@	25.2	37.9	44.6	37.8	36.4	40.1	41.2	35.9
Multiracial	46.7	47.6	45.8	49.9	54.1	52.4	52.5	50.7
White	44.6	48.9	48.2	50.9	55.3	56.3	55.1	55.8

# TAKEAWAYS ABOUT HELP-SEEKING...

- **The highest annual rate of past-year treatment for Asian, Black/ African American, and Latinx students was at or below the lowest rate for White students.**
- **Arab American students experienced a 22% increase in prevalence of serious mental health concerns, there was an 18% decrease in treatment.**
- **APIDA (Asian/ Pacific Islander/ Desi American) has lowest use of mental health services**
- **Previous studies indicate that while racial/ethnic minority students experience mental health symptoms at similarly high rates as White students, minority students are less likely to access mental health treatment**

# WHAT CAN WE DO?

- **Expand reach of Mental Health Services**
- **Culturally relevant services**
- **Accessible services**
- **Funding for services beyond institutional services offered**
- **ALL departments have an important role to play**

# ROWAN UNIVERSITY- COUNSELING & PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

## How do we meet the needs of First-Generation Students?

- **First-Generation Task Force**
- **Collaborate with other departments**
- **Participate in campus-wide events**
- **Services at CPS**
  - **Crisis/ ProtoCall**
  - **Individual therapy**
  - **Pet Therapy**
- **Groups/ Workshops**
  - **We're the First**
- **Let's Talk**
- **Uwill**



WHAT IS THE BEST PREDICTOR OF WELL-BEING?



# SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS: THE BEST PREDICTOR OF WELL-BEING

*You are NOT alone. Most common college issues students face are effectively treated in a group setting.*

# GROUPS happen here

**Join us**  
Inquire with a counselor about  
**groups**



**G**athering together, united in purpose

**R**eaching out to others, making connections

**O**rganizing our efforts, working as one

**U**niting our strengths, achieving together

**P**ooling our resources, sharing the load

**S**tanding together, supporting each other

**GROUPS**  
happen here

Check our Website for  
currently offered  
groups and  
workshops!



THE WELLNESS CENTER  
Winans Hall ● 856.256.4333

# We're First



**We're First Group** aims to provide support for first-generation college students. Students will have opportunities to relate, encourage, and support through shared experiences with topics that may include, but not limited to, lack of knowledge about college experience/resources, impostor syndrome, financial and family stress, and challenging subject matters.

**The Wellness Center - Winans Hall  
Mondays- 2-3:00pm  
Facilitated by Andrea Leach, LCSW**



For more information about Groups and Workshops, please scan the QR code.

# GROUPS/ WORKSHOPS

- **DBT Skills Group\***
- **RO-DBT Skills Group\***
- **Understanding Self and Others\* (General Group Therapy)**
- **Grief and Loss\***
- **Trans Body Positive\* (Trans/ Non-Binary Students Process Group)**
- **In, Out & In Between\* (LGBTQIA+ Process Group)**
- **Yoga for Healing\***
- **Connecting Across Cultures (Support Group International Students)**
- **We're the First (Support Group 1st Generation Students)**
- **Rowan Recovery Support Group (Support Group)**
- **Adult Children of Families Affected by Addiction (Support)**
- **U Good F.A.M.? (BIPOC students)**
- **Queer Collective (LGBTQIA+ Support Group)**
- **ADHD Support Group**
- **Managing My Emotions (DBT Based Workshop)**
- **Anxiety Toolbox (Workshop- Anxiety))**
- **Getting Unstuck (Workshop- Depression)**
- **Time & Task Management (workshop- ADHD)**
- **Find Your Wise Neurodivergent Mind (Workshop DBT for Neurodivergent students)**
- **Reiki Workshop (1 time workshop)**
- **Chill-n-Chat (Peer led)**
- **T-Break**

# LET'S TALK

- NO APPOINTMENT/ VIRTUAL
- OUTSIDE WELLNESS CENTER
- QUICK CHECK-IN
- SUGGESTIONS, REFERRALS, IDEAS PROVIDED

STUDENTS MAY BE REFERRED TO LET'S TALK BECAUSE THEY WANT TO GET SOME ADVICE, NEED SOME IN THE MOMENT SUPPORT, OR TO VENT. STUDENTS USE LET'S TALK AS A CONSULTATION SERVICE, NOT AS COUNSELING.





Students receive

## FREE IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO TELETHERAPY

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Choose a therapist based on your preferences  
*issue, gender, language, ethnicity*

At a time that fits your schedule  
*day, night, weekend availability*

*Get started using your school email*

**Private. Secure. Confidential.**



# How do I access resources available at the Counseling & Psychological Services?

- Give us a call - 856-256-4333
- E-mail: [wellnesscenter@rowan.edu](mailto:wellnesscenter@rowan.edu)
- Spring hours:
  - Mon - Thurs: 8am-6pm
  - Friday: 8am-4pm
  - After hours care (Protocall)



Open the camera app on your phone and scan the QR code!



# REFERENCES

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3. Jenkins, S. R., Belanger, A., Connally, M. L., Boals, A., & Durón, K. M. (2013). First-generation undergraduate students' social support, depression, and life satisfaction. *Journal of College Counseling*, 16(2), 129–142.
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QUESTIONS?