



Current Trends and Practical Strategies for Addressing Student Behavioral Health

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 Student Behavioral Health

Key Takeaways



Students are reporting **increased behavioral health issues** and seeking help in record numbers



Anxiety and **depression** are the most common student behavioral health concerns, and are increasing; **suicide** is also on the rise



Behavioral Health issues significantly **impact the academic success and retention** of our students

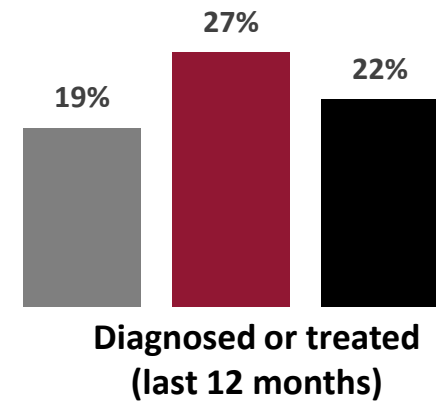
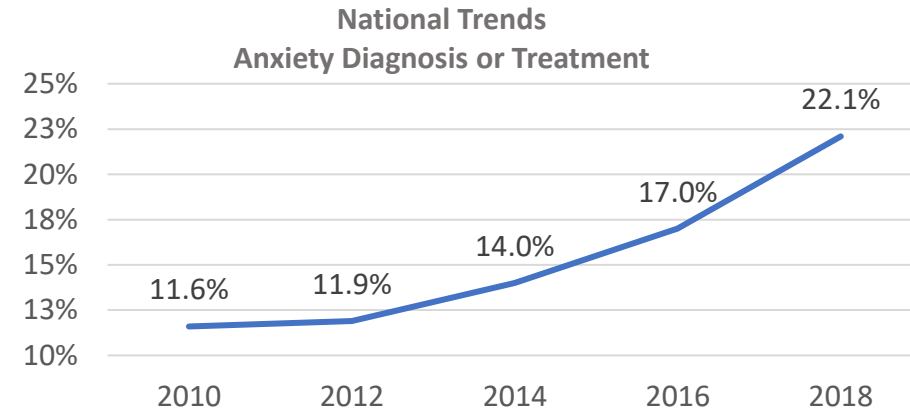
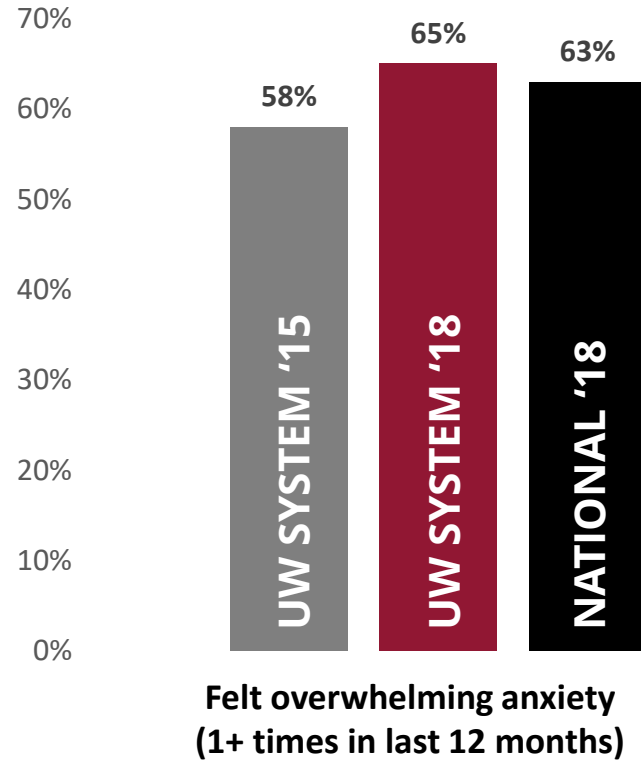
A Framework For Student Wellbeing



	Scope	Focus	UW Institutional Examples
Tier 1 Critical Behavioral Health & Crisis Response Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Select students; most at-risk for self-harm or suicidal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provision of timely services and support for students who are in grave psychiatric distress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Counseling and Health CentersBehavior Intervention/CARE Teams
Tier 2 Targeted Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students identified as part of a “vulnerable” population	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Programs and services aimed at helping students experiencing high rates of stress or behavioral issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">UW-Stout: Behavioral health screening for student athletes
Tier 3 Creating Healthy Learning Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Majority of students; experience some stress but do not require counseling or an intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Preventative efforts to teach students how to create and maintain healthy, balanced lifestyles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">UW-Superior: Pruitt Center for Mindfulness & Wellbeing

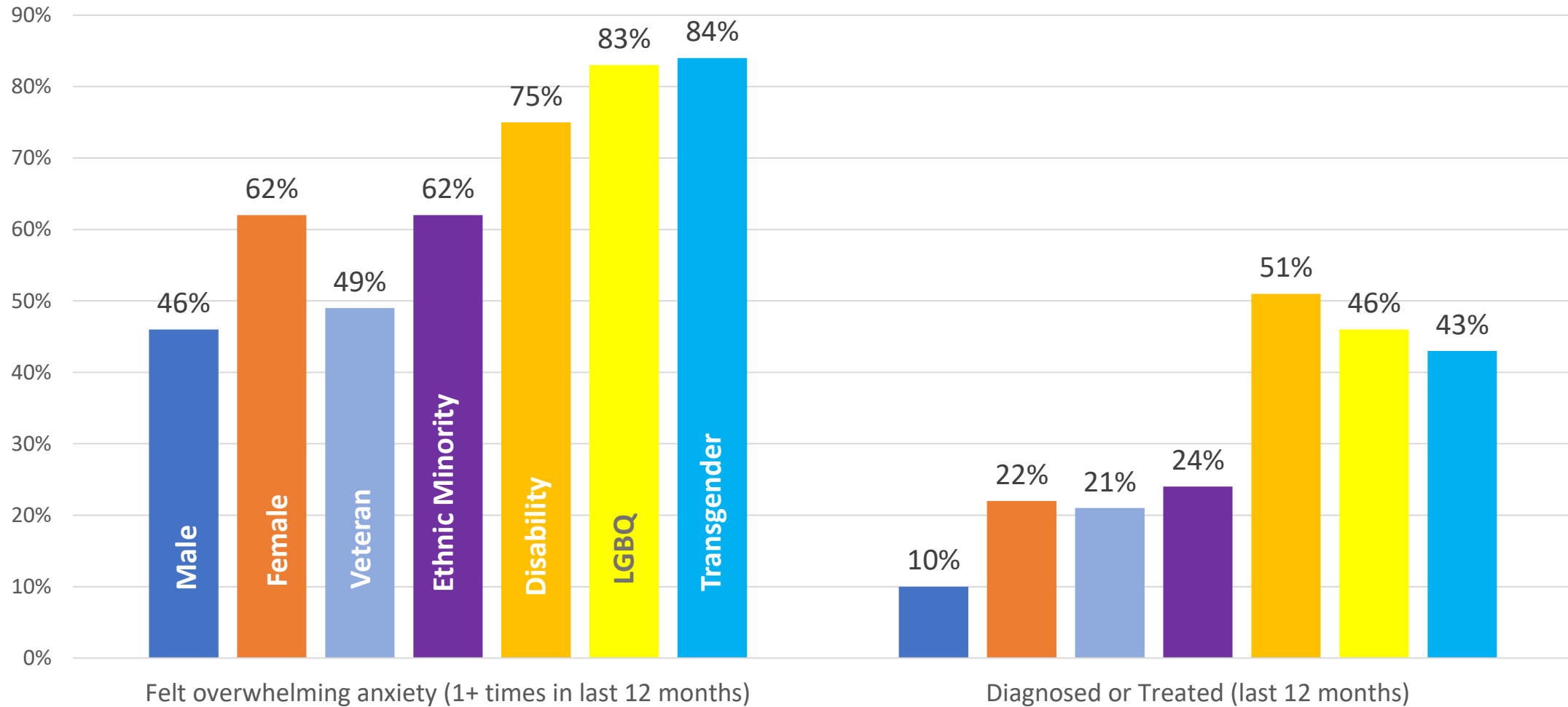
Source: Adapted from the University of California Student Mental Health Resources & Promising Practices Report, 2006

Anxiety - UW System vs. Nationwide



Source: National College Health Assessment (NCHA), Spring 2015, Spring 2010- 2018

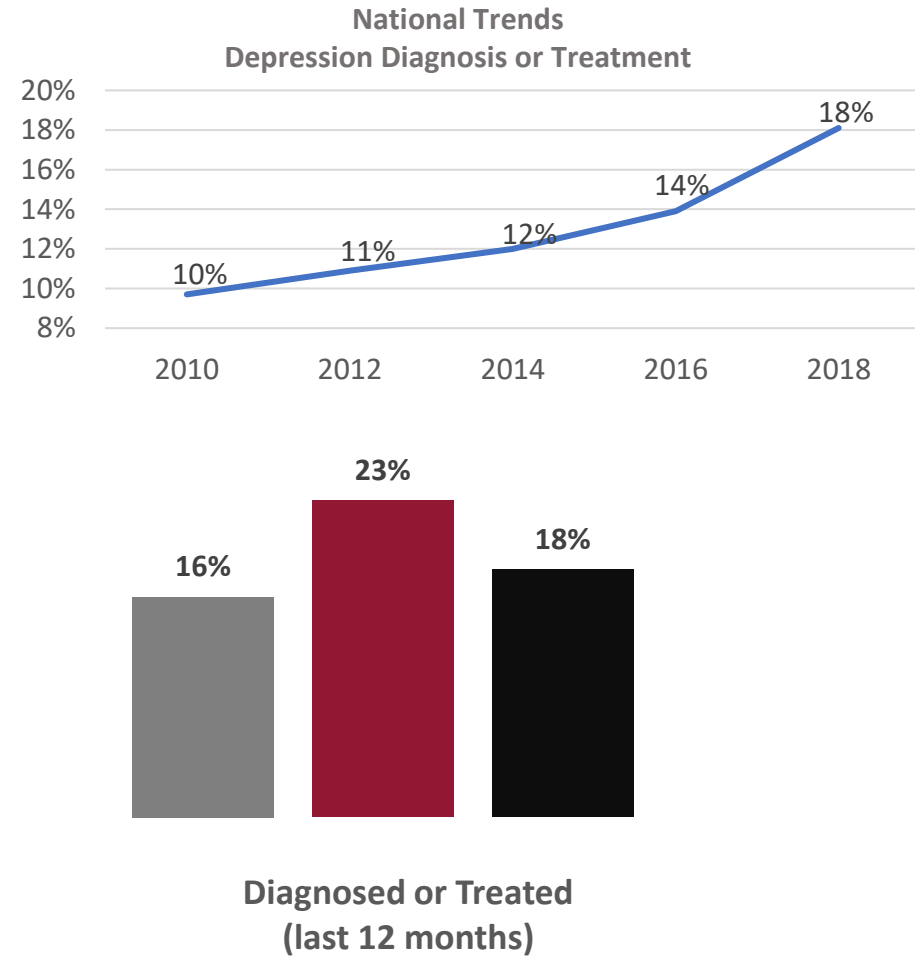
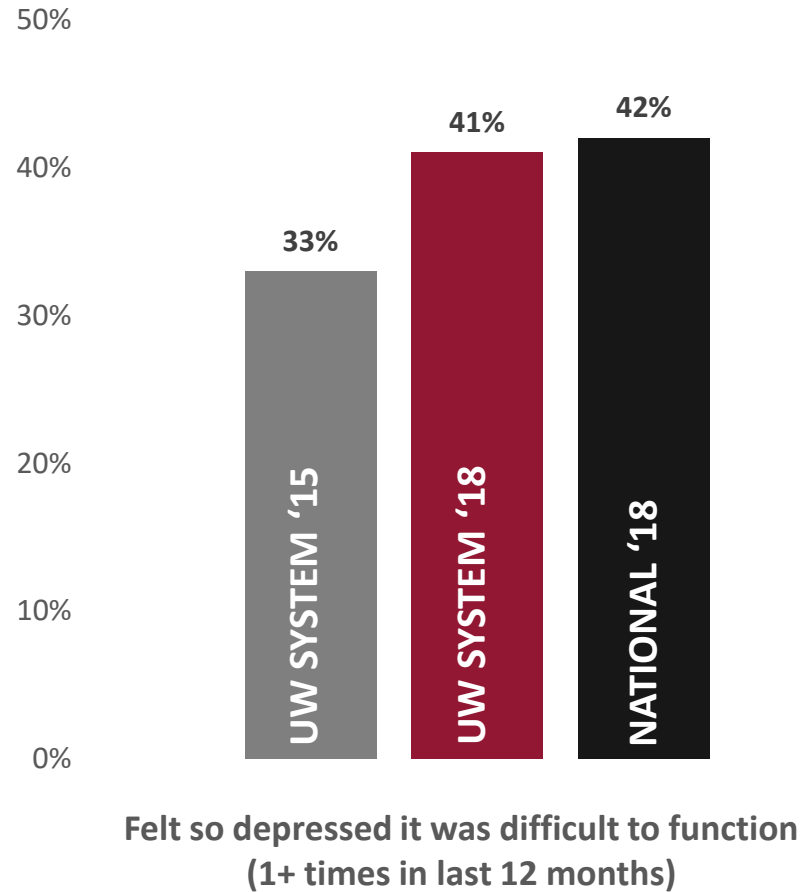
Anxiety – UW System Demographic groups



■ Male ■ Female ■ Veteran ■ Ethnic Minority ■ Disability ■ LGBTQ ■ Transgender

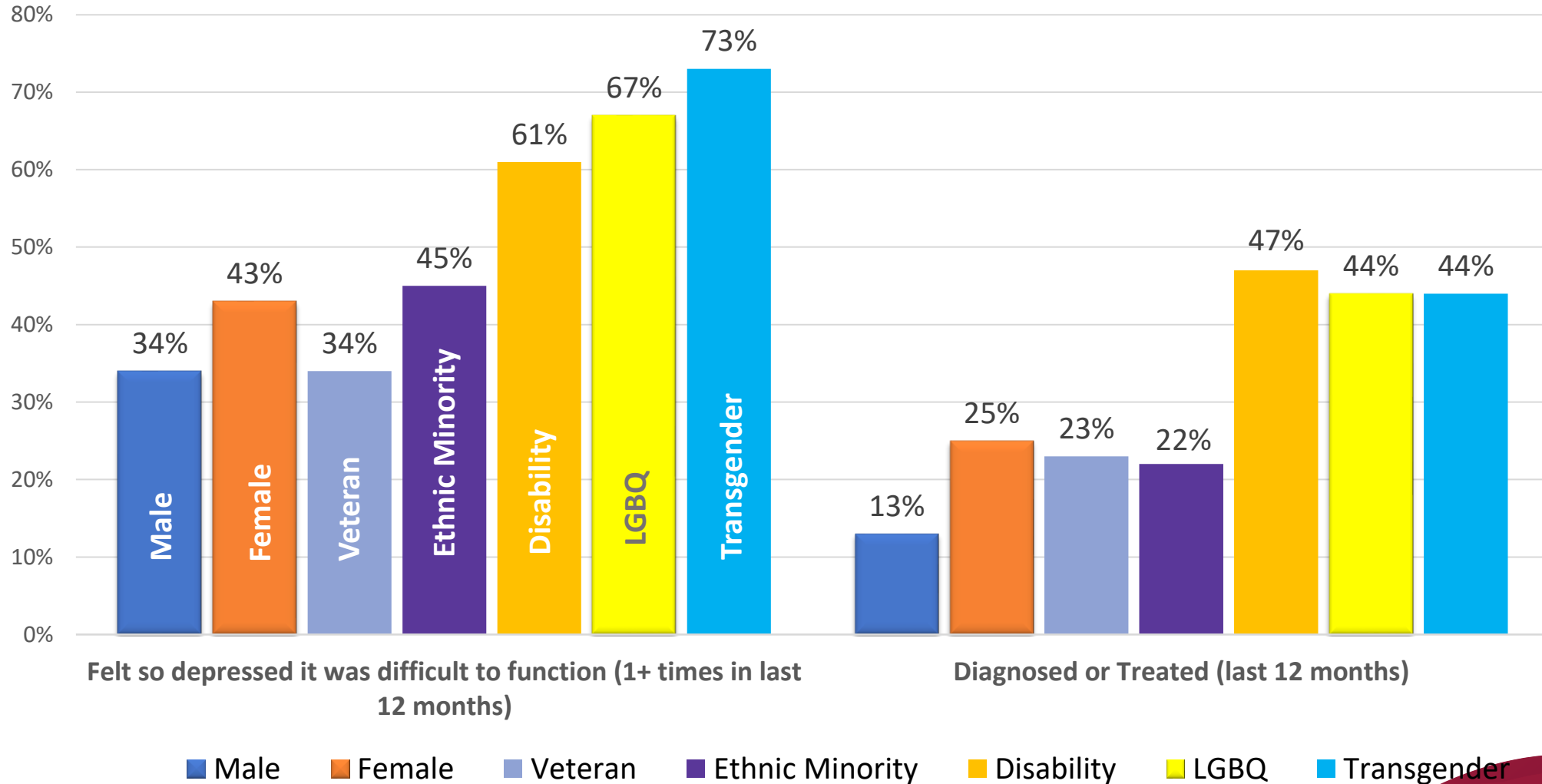


Depression – UW System vs. Nationwide



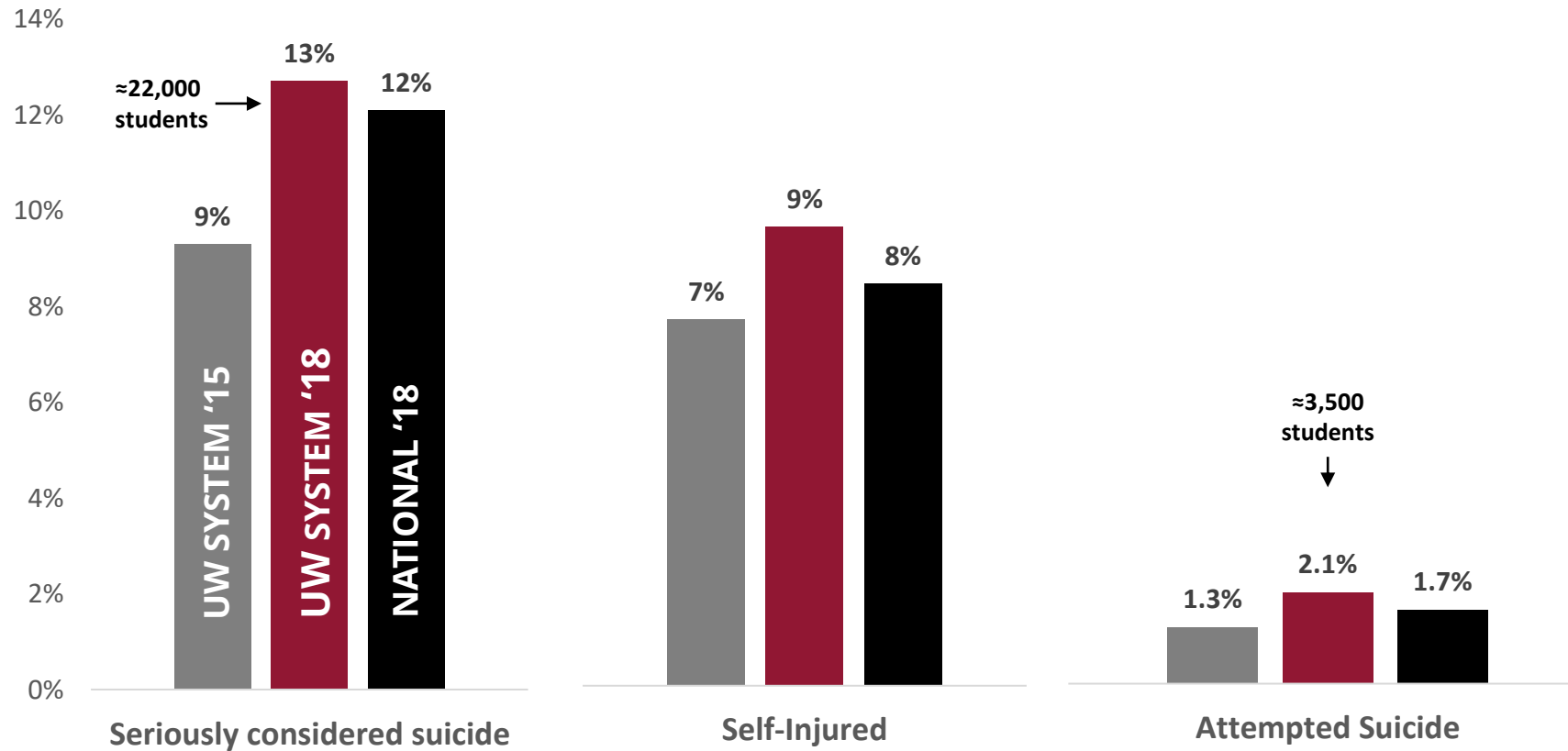
Source: National College Health Assessment (NCHA), Spring 2015, Spring 2010- 2018

Depression — UW System Demographic Groups



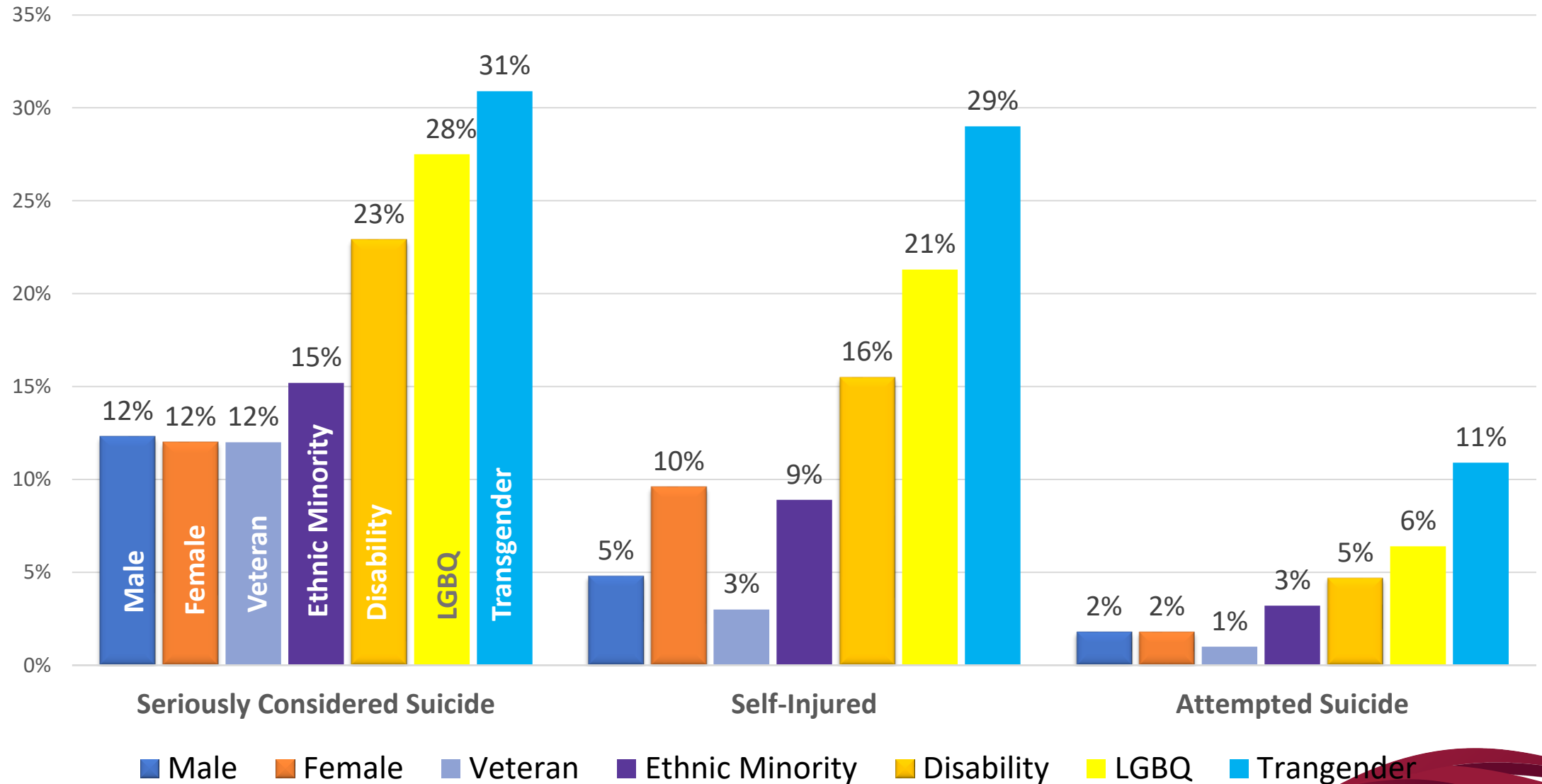
Source: NCHA-Spring 2018

Suicide and Self Harm (last 12 months)



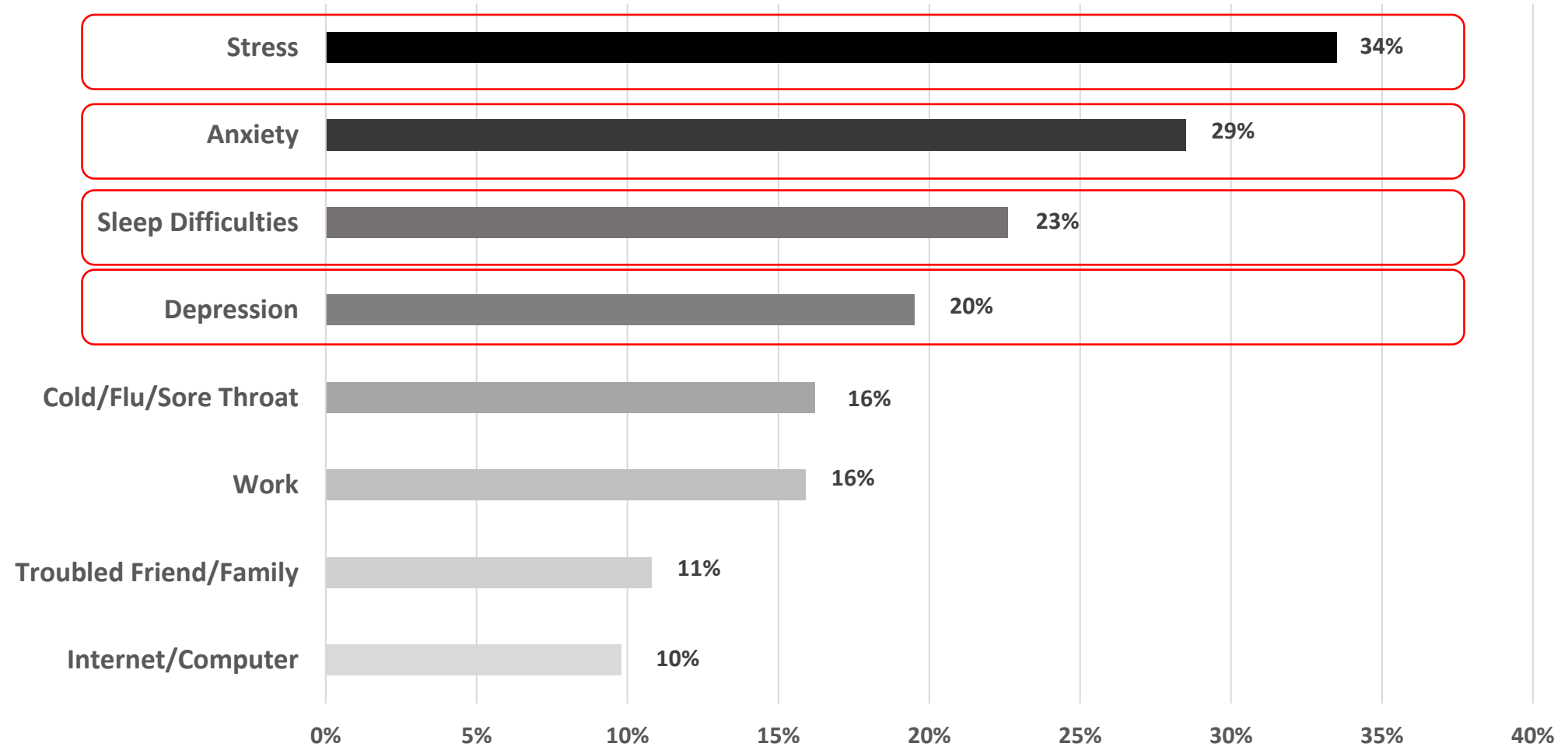
Source: NCHA-Spring 2015 and NCHA-Spring 2010- 2018

Suicide & Self Harm - UW System Demographic Groups



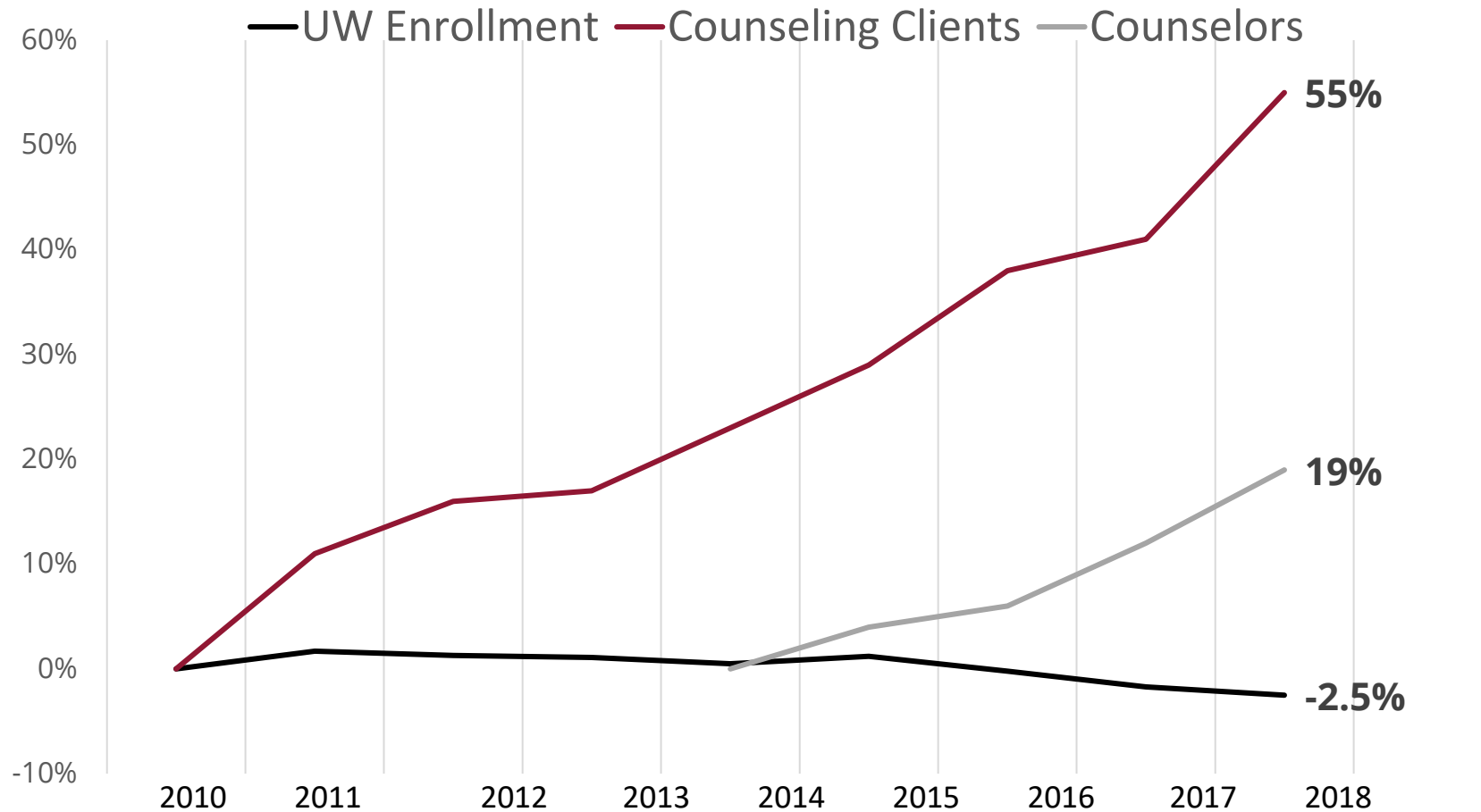
Source: NCHA-Spring 2018

Impact on Academics



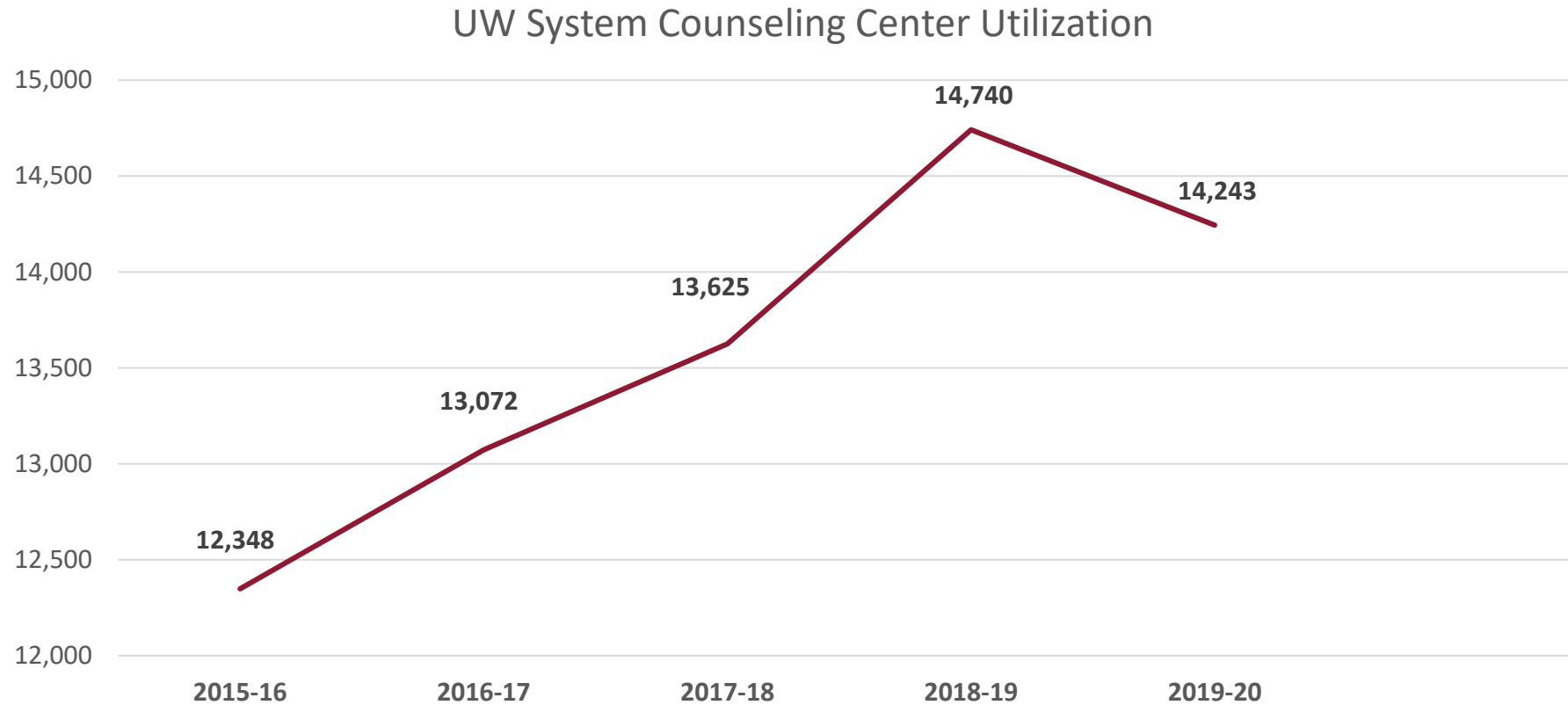
Source: National College Health Assessment (NCHA), Spring 2018

Counseling Center Utilization & Enrollment Trends



Sources: UW System Fact Book; UW System Counseling Directors

Counseling Impact Assessment Project: Utilization



Source: Counseling Impact Assessment Project, 2020

COVID Impact on Mental Health



- **Mental health concerns increased:** Approximately 50% of students screened positive for depression and/or anxiety in Fall '20. Previous findings were around 40% (HMS, 2021). 85% of students seeking help at counseling centers (Fall '20) said their mental health was impacted by COVID-19, and those students scored higher on measures of distress.
- **Help seeking decreased:** More students reported mental health concerns, but fewer sought help through counseling centers. Those who did received more service.
- **Presenting concerns changed:** Anxiety/stress, Academic stress, focus/motivation, loneliness/isolation, eating and sleep, trauma, and family issues all showed increases. Social anxiety, relationship issues, and alcohol decreased.
- **Sub-groups of students were impacted differently:** Year in school, Race, First-generation status, LGBTQ+ identification, Disability, and Veteran status affected type of impact reported



COVID Impact on Mental Health – Subgroup differences



- **Freshman:** Reported greatest impact on mental health, loneliness/isolation, and missed experiences compared to So-Sr students.
- **Seniors:** Reported highest impact on career and finances compared to others.
- **Native students:** Reported above average impact across multiple areas, including mental health, finances, health, grief/loss, and food/housing insecurity.
- **Black students:** Reported lower rates of negative impact than average, except in areas of grief/loss, finances, and food/housing insecurity.
- **Transgender men, non-binary, queer-spectrum students:** Reported above average impact on mental health, motivation, loneliness, academics and missed experiences.
- **First generation students:** Reported greater than average impact on finances and food/housing insecurity.
- **Students with Disabilities:** Reported higher than average impact on mental health, academics, and health concerns
- **Veterans:** Reported below average impact across almost all categories.

How to Help: Creating a Culture of Well-Being

Lessons from resilience/protective factors research

- **High expectations for self and from others**
- **The presence of caring, supportive relationships**
- **Opportunities for meaningful engagement**
- Good problem-solving skills
- Positive outlook
- Safe and healthy environment
- Religiosity

How to Help: Your environment

- How is your office decorated and arranged. Does it communicate openness? Warmth?
- What questions do you ask on your forms. Do they suggest interest in the whole student?
- What books do you have on your shelves? What art or signs do you post in your office?
- Do you display anything (certificate, magnet, window cling?) that indicates completion of mental health awareness or suicide prevention training?

How to Help: Start with Yourself!

- Check in with self? How are you? What are you bringing to meetings with staff? With your students?
- If you are stressed/anxious yourself, others will pick up on it and it will impact your work
- Macro-level considerations: diet, exercise, sleep, social life, self-care practices, psychotherapy
- In-the-moment considerations: Center with deep breaths, grounding activity, a short walk, or other technique to get centered in the present moment

How to Help: Questions to Ask

- How have you been? (if "good or fine," ask again later in conversation)
- How's your stress level lately?
- How have you been eating and sleeping?
- Is there anything you want to talk about (other than purpose of meeting today)?
- Would you be willing to talk to someone?
- What can I do for you?
- When is the best time to check in with you again?

How to Help: Additional Questions

- Have there been times when you aren't feeling (good or fine)?
- I noticed (mention specific observation). How are you feeling?
- You talked about (stressful event). How are you coping with that?
- When issues are disclosed. . . Listen, empathize, and consider asking:
 - How often does that happen? Does it get in the way of school or relationships?
 - Do you have people you can talk to about what you are going through? Are you doing it? Is it helping? Do you ever feel you need more? Are you aware of campus resources?
- When issues aren't disclosed
 - If that changes, do you have people you could talk to about it? Are you aware of campus resources? I'm here for you if you are ever struggling and want some help.

How to Help: The Anxious Student

- The anxiety paradox—we have to experience it to move through it
- Project a sense of calm yourself
- If comfortable, help the student engage in deep breathing and grounding techniques
- Ask the student:
 - What has worked for you in the past when you have felt this way?
 - If student has ever had counseling for anxiety, ask “what have you talked with your counselor about that could be useful right now?” or “What is one thing you could do that would be helpful after our meeting today?”

How to Help: Boundaries

You do NOT need to:

- Become diagnosticians who are able to diagnose psychological disorders
- Become part-time therapists and counselors.
- Take responsibility for fixing a student's mental health concerns

You can and should:

- Always communicate that you care
- Be honest about the limits of your ability to help
- Make compassionate referrals and follow-up
- Consult if you are not sure what to do
- Report serious and/or persistent concerns to your BIT/CARE/SOC Team
- Call police in cases of imminent risk to self or others

How to Help: Resources

Think “stepped care”

- Start with natural supports: friends, family, significant others
- Inquire about who they feel comfortable talking to on campus
 - Multicultural center, LGBTQ+ office, Student Support Services, hall director, faculty member, coach, etc.
- Meditation apps (Headspace, Calm, Healthy Minds Program)
- SilverCloud and other self help on your Counseling Center website
- Counseling Center
- Health Center
- Disability Services
- BIT/CARE/SOC
- For your self: Gatekeeper training (MH First Aid; QPR; Campus Connect; Kognito)

Silver Cloud

24/7 Digital mental health platform for depression, anxiety, stress, sleep, and resilience



SilverCloud

Self-Help – Mindfulness Training



The Healthy Minds Program Framework

The ground-breaking Healthy Minds Program uses neuroscience, contemplative traditions, and skill-based learning methods to help you develop the skills for a healthy mind, now in the palm of your hand. Translating pioneering neuroscience into tools for everyday life, our unique framework guides you through the four pillars of the science of training the mind.



Awareness

Be present. Train your mind to be more calm and focused. Meditation training to strengthen mindfulness, attention, and self-awareness.



Connection

Feel connected. Develop skills to strengthen appreciation, kindness, and compassion through building connection skills.



Insight

Get curious. Learn how your sense of self shapes your emotions and reactions, and practice self-inquiry to decrease stress and emotional reactivity.



Purpose

Stay motivated. Strengthen your values and principles and learn simple skills to apply them in everyday life.

Self-Help – Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)



Eight (8) weekly sessions include:

- Instruction in mindfulness meditation practices and mindful living
- Gentle stretching and mindful yoga
- Exercises to enhance awareness in everyday life
- Group discussions centering on specific topics related to living mindfully

People who complete the course often report one or more of the following:

- Lasting improvements in physical and psychological symptoms
- Increased ability to stay calm and to think more clearly
- Increased self-awareness
- Greater energy and enthusiasm for life
- Reduction in pain levels and/or enhanced ability to cope with pain
- Improved self-esteem and self-confidence
- Ability to cope more effectively with short and long-term stressful situations

Course fee* is **\$50** (for UWS students/faculty/staff); or **\$100** (for the greater community)

[Registration page](#)



Questions?