Office of Enrollment & Student Success
Floor 15 Van Hise Hall, 1220 Linden Drive, Madison, WI 53706
EnrollmentAndStudentSuccessOffice@uwsa.edu
www.wisconsin.edu/offices/enrollment-student-success
www.wisconsin.edu/student-behavioral-health

Universities of Wisconsin Student Behavioral Health Initiative
Summary of Activity
Updated: March 2024

BACKGROUND

At the urging of the Universities of Wisconsin Senior Student Affairs Officers during the 2018-19 academic year, and following a presentation to the UW System Board of Regents in April 2019, former President Ray Cross established the Student Behavioral Health Initiative and charged three workgroups with developing recommendations to address the growing influence of mental health issues on the personal and academic lives of students. Counseling, health, academic and student affairs professionals representing all 13 UW universities participated in the workgroups during Summer/Fall 2019, and completed reports summarizing their recommendations in Spring 2020, prior to the global pandemic.

The workgroups adopted a comprehensive public health framework composed of the following levels of intervention to guide the work of the initiative:

- **Prevention/Health Promotion** - Creating healthy campus environments, promoting connectedness, and teaching skills to improve well-being for all students
- **Early Intervention** – Reaching targeted/vulnerable populations and providing resources to address issues early
- **Treatment & Crisis Response** – Providing critical treatment and crisis response resources to help those in greatest need

Additionally, an executive oversight committee made recommendations around operations, policy, and data to inform ongoing behavioral health efforts.

STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

The following tables outline the strategies and projects recommended by the original workgroups, as well as others emerging since the project's inception. Funding, implementation dates and other status information is included where applicable.

Focus Area - Prevention		
Project Title	Description	Status
Mini Grant Program	The objective of the program is to provide one-time funding to universities for innovative programming or strategies that address student mental health and well-being. Successful programs are shared for possible adoption and scaling at other UW universities. Funding: UWSA	Three $25,000 grant distributions have been completed, in Fall 2021, 2022 and 2023. Twenty-six projects have been funded to date and all UW universities have received at least one round of funding. Projects receive up to $5,000 for use during the academic year and submit reports at the end of the academic year documenting outcomes.

Focus Area - Prevention		
Project Title	Description	Status
Koru Workshops ([Mindfulness Institute for Emerging Adults](#))	Koru Mindfulness is an evidence-based curriculum designed for teaching mindfulness, meditation, and stress management to college students and young adults. Workshops were initially offered only at UW-Superior through their Pruitt Center for Mindfulness and Well-Being. Funding: UWSA and ARPA funds	Beginning Fall 2021, the Pruitt Center piloted offering virtual Koru workshops to students at Other UW universities. Participation from other UWs grew from 10 students, to 25, and then 43 in three successive semesters, reaching capacity. This prompted Superior to plan a training in summer 2024 to train 26 professional staff (2 per UW) to expand workshops to all Universities of Wisconsin.
[Pruitt Center for Mindfulness & Wellbeing](#) Speaker Series	The Pruitt Center hosts an annual speaker series with national experts, focused on mental health and well-being topics, offered to their university community and the public. They began offering the series virtually during the pandemic, which allowed a wider audience. UWSA offered sponsorship for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 academic years. Funding: UW-Superior, UWSA & Other	Topics over the past three years have included *Gratitude; Exercise and Well-being*; *Neuroplasticity: The Science of Changing Your Brain*; *Mindfulness and Healing Conversations; Unwinding Anxiety; Improving Sleep*. In 2022-23, 67/326 attendees were Faculty/Staff from UW universities other than UW-Superior. This will continue to be tracked for 2023-24 and beyond.
Center for Healthy Minds/[Healthy Minds Innovations](#) pilot project	The Center for Healthy Minds at UW-Madison is internationally known for research focused on the neuroscience of well-being. Their non-profit affiliate, Healthy Minds Innovations, created a mobile app that teaches well-being skills through meditation practice. UW-Superior piloted the app in a required health and wellness course during 2022-23. Funding: UWSA- behavioral health mini-grant; ARPA funds	Nearly 500 students completed weekly learning and practice modules through using the Healthy Minds Program App. Analyses showed reductions in stress, improvements in coping, and positive change in the four program pillars: awareness, connection, insight and purpose. Six other universities have expressed interest in expanding this pilot in 2024-25, with potential to impact thousands of additional students.

Focus Area – Early Intervention		
Project Title	Description	Status
[Recognize, Respond, Refer](#): Suicide Prevention Training for Faculty and Staff	Suicide prevention/gatekeeper training teaches non-mental health professionals the knowledge and skills needed to recognize signs of distress and make referrals to appropriate resources. This is a core component of a comprehensive suicide prevention strategy. Funding: UW-Madison (core content) and existing campus resources (implementation)	In Fall 2022, UW universities were provided access to the training resource created by UW-Madison's Prevention and Campus Health Initiatives office, adapted for use at any UW university. Training developers will meet with UW university leads annually to incorporate training updates.

Focus Area – Early Intervention		
Project Title	Description	Status
Mental Health Screening for Student Athletes and Other Student Groups	NCAA mental health best practices guidelines recommend pre-participation mental health screening for all student athletes. Several UWs have implemented this strategy in cooperation with their counseling centers. Athletes are also made aware of resources to improve their mental health and well-being. Funding: Campus-supported with existing resources	Since first discussed in 2019, participation has grown from a few universities offering screening to most UW universities now offering systematic athlete screening, Some have expanded the program to other groups, including resident assistants, student employees, and international students.
Training for Behavior Intervention /CARE and Threat Assessment Teams	Behavior Intervention, Campus Assessment Response & Education, and Threat Assessment Teams (BIT/CARE/TAT teams) exist on every UW university and serve a critical role in early identification, support, and deterrence of escalation for students exhibiting signs of distress, disruption, or potential danger to self or others. Training is held on a biannual basis and is organized and planned by a committee of UW university professionals. Funding: UWSA	The first systemwide training for campus teams was held in August 2021. Topics included *Threat Assessment & Management*; *Legal Issues; Case Management*; and *Non-Clinical Assessment of Suicide*. The second training occurred in spring 2024. A 4-part series of customized topics was coordinated with the National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment (NABITA).
Membership to the National Association For Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment (NABITA)	Membership gives access to resources including the latest news, research, best practices, case law, professional development opportunities and other developments impacting Behavior Intervention, CARE, and Threat Assessment teams. (BIT/CARE/TAT) Funding: UWSA	Each UW university has a primary contact for the membership and can add additional campus representatives who serve as members of BIT/CARE/TAT Teams.
YOU at College	YOU is an online personalized well-being platform that directs students toward campus-based and online resources to promote academic and career success, purpose and connection, and physical and mental well-being. YOU serves as the digital "front-door" connecting students to the right resources at the right time. Funding: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)	YOU was selected as part of a comprehensive RFP for tele-mental health and well-being services conducted in Summer 2022. Twelve UW universities implemented the platform beginning Spring 2023. Regular cohort meetings with the vendor support best practices for content inclusion and marketing to drive utilization by students.

Focus Area – Treatment & Crisis Response		
Project Title	Description	Status
Cultural Competency Training	Students have expressed a desire to have staff in direct service positions on campus who mirror the diversity of the student population and who are well-versed in the challenges, needs and issues faced by underrepresented and marginalized student groups. Annual training is intended to help staff and faculty gain awareness and skill to better serve diverse student needs. Funding: UWSA	Three systemwide trainings for health, counseling, student affairs professionals and faculty have been held to date, with the next scheduled for November 2024. • January 2021 – working with BIPOC students. (100 attendees) • August 2021 - serving the LGBTQ+ community. (238 attendees) • April 2023 – supporting Autistic college students (650 attendees)
Suicide Hotline Information	Governor Evers signed the Student ID Bill on 03/02/20 mandating that suicide hotline contact numbers be listed on student ID cards as quick resource for students. Funding: Campus-supported with existing resources	All UW universities implemented this recommendation during the 2020-21 academic year. Beginning Fall 2023, cards began including the new 988 suicide hotline number, which Congress designated to replace the 1-800 number.
Mantra Health	Telecounseling and telepsychiatry services that serve as a supplement to, and coordinate with, campus-based counseling and psychiatry services. These services are intended to improve timely access to services that have been overwhelmed with demand and to better reach underserved students. Funding: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)	After an RFP process seeking comprehensive tele-mental health and well-being services, a contract with Mantra Health was signed by President Rothman on 10/01/22. Twelve UWs (excluding Madison) implemented services in cohorts of three and were live at all 12 universities by January 2023. Contract runs through 2024/25.
UW Mental Health Support 24/7 (Didi Hirsch Crisis Services)	Phone, text, and chat services with trained crisis counselors, available 24/7, 365. This service can be consulted for general support as well as crisis situations. Funding: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)	Implemented simultaneously with Mantra's telepsychiatry and telecounseling services noted above. Students can call/text 888.531.2142, or chat via UW Mental Health Support 24/7 Portal.
SilverCloud	SilverCloud is an evidence-based, online, self-guided resource designed to teach resilience skills and address common concerns including stress, anxiety, and depression. Funding: UWSA	**Replaced by the YOU at College** platform as part of the tele-mental health and well-being RFP. Active from Fall 2020 - June 2022 under emergency procurement authority.
2021-23 Biennial Budget Request	Proposed $10M to improve counselor/ student ratio to 1/1000 across UW universities, increase access to psychiatric providers, and add case manager staff. Funding: $0	This and other special project funding proposals did not make it into the final Universities of Wisconsin budget approved by the legislature.

Focus Area – Operations, Policy, and Data		
Project Title	Description	Status
Behavioral Health staff position at Universities of Wisconsin Administration	Hire a full-time position to coordinate mental health and well-being initiatives across the Universities of Wisconsin, serve as a resource to campuses, and advise leadership on mental health policy and best practice. Funding: Salary and fringe provided by UWSA	Hired John Achter as Director of Student Behavioral Health in August 2020. Title modified to Sr. Director of Student Success and Wellbeing in July 2023.
Dedicated Student Behavioral Health Website	The Office of Student success developed a website dedicated to providing information on the behavioral health initiative, links to campus-based and telehealth services, a resource library, training resources, and reports from the Counseling Impact Assessment Project and the National College Health Assessment. Funding: Supported with existing UWSA resources	Content updated as the initiative evolves, including landing pages for: • Behavioral health mini grants • Cultural competency training • BIT/CARE/TAT training • Wisconsin Area College Counseling Center Conference (WACCC)
Medical Withdrawal Policy	Created by a task force of student affairs representatives to ensure consistent, transparent, and compassionate withdrawal guidelines for students who experience a serious or unexpected physical or mental health condition, may need to provide care to an immediate family member, or experienced the death of an immediate family member. Funding: Campus and UWSA supported with existing resources	The policy was issued in January 2021. Campuses developed or revised their own policies to be consistent with the system policy by Fall 2021. Policy under review for revision in Spring 2024.
National College Health Assessment (NCHA)	Systemwide administration of a population health survey assessing student attitudes and behaviors related to physical and mental health, alcohol and drug use, and experiences with harassment and violence. Since 2015, this survey has been administered every 3 years across the Universities of Wisconsin during the Spring semester to track trends and plan and evaluate services and programs. Funding: UWSA	The American College Health Association (ACHA) provides university- and system-level aggregate reports. Catalyst at UW Stout produces an additional disaggregated report to show trends among specific student groups. Reports allow university, system, and national-level comparisons to inform individual campus and systemwide initiatives. Dates Administered: Spring semester 2015, 2018, 2021, 2024

Focus Area – Operations, Policy, and Data		
Project Title	Description	Status
Counseling Impact Assessment Project	The Universities of Wisconsin Counseling Impact Assessment Project was established in 2010 to track mental health concerns, counseling utilization and outcomes, and staffing levels across UW counseling centers. This provides UW and national benchmarking data for each university and allows for system-level analyses of counseling utilization and impact. Funding: UWSA	An annual report is produced which summarizes the results from data collection each academic year. Counseling center directors have also routinely presented a summary of results to the Board of Regents.
Wisconsin Area College Counseling Conference (WACCC)	WACCC (formerly WAPCHE) is coordinated by counseling center professionals to bring together their peers from UW and other Wisconsin colleges and universities on an annual basis for networking and professional development. Funding: UWSA and individual attendees	UWSA funding is provided to support keynote speaker costs focused on a topic of current relevance to mental health professionals in higher education.