

## Universities of Wisconsin Student Behavioral Health Initiative

### Summary of Activity

Updated: September 2025

#### BACKGROUND

The Student Behavioral Health Initiative emerged following a Senior Student Affairs Officer [presentation to the UW System Board of Regents in April 2019](#), which resulted in the establishment of three workgroups to develop recommendations for addressing the growing influence of mental health issues on the personal and academic lives of students. Counseling, health, academic and student affairs professionals representing all thirteen UW universities participated in the workgroups, and recommendations were submitted to then President Ray Cross in March 2020, prior to the COVID-19 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, providing for basic needs, 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 related to 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
<a href="#">Mini Grant Program</a>	<p>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 potential adoption and scaling at other UW universities.</p> <p>Beginning in 2024-25, behavioral health mini-grant opportunities were subsumed into the Student Success Mini Grant program. This allowed for</p>	<p>Three \$25,000 grant distributions were completed under the initial mini-grant structure—in Fall 2021, 2022 and 2023. Projects received up to \$5,000 for use during the academic year and reports were submitted at the end of the academic year documenting outcomes.</p> <p>Under the new mini-grant program, \$75,000 in grants were distributed in Fall 2024. Five of the nine grants had a mental health or well-being focus, with funding totaling \$32,500.</p>

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	<p>broadening the focus of grant proposals and increasing the maximum award from \$5,000 to \$15,000.</p> <p><u>Funding:</u> UW Administration</p>	To date, fifty-three mini grant projects have been funded for initiatives related to student success and behavioral health, with all UW universities receiving funding for more than one project.
<p>MIEA/Koru Workshops (<a href="#">Mindfulness Institute for Emerging Adults</a>)</p>	<p>MIEA (formerly Koru Mindfulness) is an evidence-based curriculum designed for teaching mindfulness, meditation, and stress management to college students and young adults. Workshops were first offered at UW-Superior through the Pruitt Center for Mindfulness and Well-Being, and expanded via virtual offerings to students at other UW universities during the pandemic. The success of the program prompted other UW universities to request training so they could better serve their own students.</p> <p><u>Funding:</u> UW Administration and ARPA funds</p>	<p>In three successive semesters beginning Fall 2021, virtual participation in MIEA workshops offered by UW-Superior grew from 10 to 43 students from across UW universities.</p> <p>Superior hosted a MIEA certification training in Summer 2025, during which 28 UW professional staff (approx. 2 from each UW) were equipped with the skills to expand workshops to all Universities of Wisconsin. In the first year post-training, over 300 participants attended MIEA workshops, and a community of practice was established to provide instructors with ongoing support, information sharing, and troubleshooting.</p>
<p><a href="#">Pruitt Center for Mindfulness &amp; Wellbeing</a> Speaker Series</p>	<p>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 to reach a wider audience. UW Administration began providing annual financial sponsorship during the 2022-23 academic year.</p> <p><u>Funding:</u> UW-Superior, UW Administration and Other</p>	<p>Mental health and well-being topics from national experts have included: <i>Gratitude; Exercise and Well-being; Neuroplasticity: The Science of Changing Your Brain; Mindfulness and Healing Conversations; Unwinding Anxiety; Improving Sleep; The How, What and Why of Happiness.</i></p> <p>Since 2022-23, attendance at these biannual events has included approximately 600 UW faculty and staff from outside of UW-Superior.</p>
<p>Center for Healthy Minds/<a href="#">Healthy Minds Innovations</a> pilot project</p>	<p>The Center for Healthy Minds at UW-Madison is internationally known for research on the neuroscience of well-being. Their non-profit affiliate, Healthy Minds Innovations (HMI) created a mobile app that teaches well-being skills through meditation practice. UW-Superior originally piloted the app in a required health and wellness course during 2022-23.</p> <p>In 2024-25, ARPA funds paid for HMI to streamline their processes for</p>	<p>In 2024-25, three additional universities joined the pilot, assigning weekly learning and practice modules from the Healthy Minds Program App to 1,040 students as part of course curriculum. Post-semester analyses showed reductions in stress, improvements in coping, and positive change in the four HMI program pillars: awareness, connection, insight, and purpose.</p> <p>Instructors from four additional UW universities will be joining this initiative in</p>

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	delivering student data to instructors, paving the way for more widespread curriculum integration at other UW universities.  <u>Funding:</u> UW Administration mini-grant and ARPA funds	2025-26, providing evidence-based well-being skills training to an estimated 200+ additional students.
<a href="#">President's Advisory Committee on Mental Health and Well-Being</a>	The purpose of the President's Advisory Committee on Mental Health and Well-being is to engage in critical discourse about student mental health and well-being, to provide feedback on ongoing initiatives, and to review and recommend innovative and promising practices that could benefit students across the Universities of Wisconsin.  <u>Funding:</u> UW Administration	The committee met three times in 2024-25, and agreed upon three priority areas to focus on over the next few years: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course Integration of the <a href="#">Healthy Minds Program App</a></li> <li>• Strategic identification of mental health service needs and gaps for students</li> <li>• Development of a systemwide repository of student mental health resources for use by faculty and staff</li> </ul> Subcommittees will be organized in 2025-26 to develop action plans around these three recommendations.
UW Mental Health Shared Projects Coordinator	A staff member was hired at UW-Madison for 2024-25 to provide additional support for mental health and well-being projects across the Universities of Wisconsin, particularly implementation of the <i>Recognize, Respond, Refer</i> suicide prevention training created by UW Madison (see next section)  <u>Funding:</u> American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)	Anna Kopitzke was hired by University Health Services at UW-Madison and has provided leadership and support for the following initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Recognize, Respond, Refer</i> suicide prevention training</li> <li>• President's Advisory Committee for Mental Health and Well-Being</li> <li>• BIT/CARE/TAT training</li> <li>• Mental health student org advisor community of practice</li> </ul>

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<a href="#">Recognize, Respond, Refer</a> : Suicide Prevention Training for Faculty and Staff	<i>Recognize, Respond Refer</i> is an online suicide prevention/gatekeeper training created by staff at UW-Madison's University Health Services to teach 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 comprehensive suicide prevention and mental health promotion strategies.	Fall 2022 – UW universities were provided access to an adapted version of the faculty/staff training in Canvas.  Fall 2024 - revised faculty/staff, undergraduate, and graduate student versions of the training were made available, with implementation support from the

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	<u>Funding:</u> UW-Madison (costs to create and maintain core content), existing campus resources (implementation and marketing costs), ARPA funds (UW Shared Projects Coordinator)	UW Mental Health Shared Projects Coordinator.  2025-26 – faculty/staff version of RRR will be moved into Workday and more uniformly branded across the UWs. A structure for ongoing data collection to track training completion and learning outcomes will be developed.
Mental Health Screening for Student Athletes and Other Student Groups	<a href="#">NCAA mental health best practices</a> 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.  <u>Funding:</u> Campus-supported with existing resources	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 screening to other student groups, including resident assistants, student employees, and international students.
<a href="#">Training</a> 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.  <u>Funding:</u> UW Administration	The first systemwide training for campus teams was held in August 2021. Topics included <i>Threat Assessment &amp; Management; Legal Issues; Case Management; and Non-Clinical Assessment of Suicide</i> .  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).  Planning is underway for the next training series in spring 2026.
Membership to the National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment ( <a href="#">NABITA</a> )	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).  <u>Funding:</u> UW Administration	Each UW university has a primary contact for membership and can add additional campus representatives who serve as members of BIT/CARE/TAT teams.
<a href="#">YOU at College</a>	YOU at College is an online personalized student success and well-being platform that directs students toward campus-based and online resources to promote academic and	YOU was selected as part of a comprehensive RFP for tele-mental health and well-being services in Summer 2022. Twelve UW

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	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.  <u>Funding:</u> American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA); State General Purpose Revenue (GPR)	universities implemented the platform beginning Nov. 2022 through August 2025. Five UW universities plan to continue with the YOU platform for 2025-27.
<a href="#">Togetherall</a>	Togetherall is a virtual peer-to-peer support platform that is moderated by mental health professionals, available to all students as an alternative to seeking clinical care. Peer support programs are a well-established component of holistic mental health and wellbeing service offerings.  <u>Funding:</u> American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA); State GPR	UW universities entered into a one-year contract with Togetherall from July 2024 to July 2025. Services will continue as part of the Mantra contract renewal through at least August 2027.

Focus Area – Treatment & Crisis Response		
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<a href="#">Cultural Competency Training</a>	UW students consistently express a desire to have staff in direct service positions who mirror the wide-ranging backgrounds of the student population and who understand the unique experiences of a variety of different students. Annual training is intended to help staff and faculty gain awareness and skill to better serve the needs of all students, regardless of background.  <u>Funding:</u> UW Administration	Four systemwide trainings for health, counseling, student affairs professionals and faculty have been held to date, with the next scheduled for November 2025. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• January 2021 – Working with BIPOC Students. (100 attendees)</li> <li>• August 2021 - Serving the LGBTQ+ Community. (238 attendees)</li> <li>• April 2023 – Supporting Autistic College Students (650 attendees)</li> <li>• November 2024 - Culturally Responsive Approaches to Mental Health (330 attendees)</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Suicide Hotline Information</a>	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.  <u>Funding:</u> 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.
<a href="#">Mantra Health</a>	Mantra Health offers a suite of tele-mental health and well-being resources to supplement on-campus services. These include tele-counseling, tele-psychiatry, emotional wellness and productivity coaching and self-help modules, and a 24/7 support and crisis service.	After a competitive RFP process seeking tele-mental health and well-being services for twelve UWs (excluding Madison), a contract with Mantra Health was signed for services from 10/2022 to 8/2025. Thanks to dedicated telehealth

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	These additional resources are intended to improve timely access to care and support, and to better reach underserved students.  <u>Funding:</u> American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA); State GPR	funding approved in the 2025-27 biennial budget, the contract has been renewed through 8/2027, with a possible extension through 8/2029 pending funding continuation in the next biennium.
UW Mental Health Support 24/7 (Didi Hirsch Crisis Services)	Phone and text service with trained crisis counselors, available 24/7, 365. This service can be consulted for general support as well as crisis situations.  <u>Funding:</u> American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)	Implemented simultaneously with Mantra's telepsychiatry and tele-counseling services in 2023. Mantra ended this subcontract and began offering their own 24/7 service in Fall 2024.
SilverCloud	SilverCloud is an evidence-based, online, self-guided resource designed to teach resilience skills and address common concerns including stress, anxiety, and depression.  <u>Funding:</u> UW Administration	Active from Fall 2020 - June 2022 under emergency procurement authority.  <b>Replaced by the <i>YOU at College</i></b> platform as part of the 2022 tele-mental health and well-being RFP.
Biennial budget requests for additional mental health providers	2025-27: President Rothman proposed \$6.5M to improve counselor/student ratio to 1/1000 across UW universities, and provide salary adjustments to compete with market forces.  2021-23: President Thompson proposed \$10M to improve counselor/ student ratio to 1/1000, increase access to psychiatric providers, and add case manager staff.  <u>Funding:</u> \$0	These requests did not make it into the final Universities of Wisconsin budgets approved by the legislature.

Focus Area – Operations, Policy, and Data		
Project Title	Description	Status
Behavioral Health staff position at Universities of Wisconsin Administration	A recommendation from the 2019-20 behavioral health workgroups was to 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.  <u>Funding:</u> UW Administration	Hired John Achter as Student Behavioral Health Coordinator in August 2020. Additional responsibilities led a title change to Sr. Director of Student Success and Wellbeing in July 2023.
Dedicated <a href="#">Student Behavioral Health Website</a>	A dedicated website was developed to provide information on the behavioral health initiative, links to campus-based and telehealth services, training resources, a	Content updated as the initiative evolves, including landing pages for the following:

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	<p>resource library, and reports from the Counseling Impact Assessment Project and the National College Health Assessment.</p> <p><u>Funding:</u> UW Administration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• President's Advisory Committee for Mental Health and Well-Being</li> <li>• BIT/CARE/TAT training</li> <li>• Recognize, Respond, Refer Suicide Prevention Training</li> <li>• Culturally Responsive Approaches to Student Success</li> <li>• Student Success Mini Grants</li> <li>• Wisconsin Area College Counseling Conference (WACCC)</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Medical Withdrawal Policy</a>	<p>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 experience the death of an immediate family member.</p> <p><u>Funding:</u> Campus and UW Administration supported with existing resources</p>	<p>Policy issued in January 2021.</p> <p>UW universities developed or revised their own policies to be consistent with the system policy by Fall 2021.</p> <p>Policy revised in June 2024 based on campus feedback.</p>
National College Health Assessment ( <a href="#">NCHA</a> )	<p>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 programs and services.</p> <p><u>Funding:</u> UW Administration</p>	<p><u>Dates Administered:</u> Spring semester 2015, 2018, 2021, 2024</p> <p>The American College Health Association (ACHA) provides university- and system-level aggregate reports.</p> <p>Catalyst at UW Stout produces an additional disaggregated report to show trends among specific student groups.</p> <p>Reports allow university, system, and national-level comparisons to inform individual campus and systemwide initiatives.</p>
<a href="#">Counseling Impact Assessment Project</a>	<p>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.</p> <p><u>Funding:</u> UW Administration</p>	<p>An annual report is produced which summarizes the results from data aggregated across UW counseling centers each academic year. Counseling center directors have also routinely presented a summary of results to the Board of Regents to raise awareness and advocate for mental health resources.</p>

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Wisconsin Area College Counseling Conference ( <a href="#">WACCC</a> )	<p>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.</p> <p><u>Funding:</u> UW Administration and individual attendees</p>	UW Administration funding is provided to support keynote speaker costs focused on a topic of current relevance to mental health professionals in higher education.