



Student Mental Health: An Important Element of Student Success

Both colleges and students are reporting an increasing demand for student mental health services. More students are entering college with mental health diagnoses and psychotropic medication needs; more students are accessing mental health services on campus; and more students are presenting with serious psychological issues than in years past. However, in this time of reduced financial support for higher education, mental health services are sometimes seen as a luxury that campuses cannot afford. But student mental health services are not only needed to support the psychological well being of students, they are also an important part of academic success and retention.

Of 17, 271 California community college students surveyed in Spring 2013:

- 42% indicated finances were traumatic or difficult to handle
- 22% felt hopeless and overwhelmed
- 18.3% had periods when they felt overwhelming anxiety
- 9.1% seriously considered suicide
- 2.5% attempted suicide

Academic Success

- The American College Health Association survey finds strong evidence that mental health needs are related to measures of academic success. The 2015 survey found that students who reported psychological distress also reporting receiving a lower grade on an exam or an important project; receiving a lower grade in the course; receiving an incomplete or dropping the course; or experiencing a significant disruption in thesis, dissertation, research, or practicum work.

Stress	30.0%
Work	13.9%
Sleep Difficulties	20.0%
Anxiety	21.9%
Cold/Flu/Sore Throat	14.6%
Depression	13.8%
Finances	6.6%

- Students with high levels of psychological distress are less academically successful: they have more test anxiety, lower academic self-efficacy, and less effective time management and use of study resources (Brackney and Karabenick, 1995).
- Students with higher levels of psychological distress have more difficulty concentrating on their schoolwork; they are less likely to persist when faced with distraction or difficulty. (Brackney and Karabenick 1995).

- Students who experience mild or moderate symptoms of depression or anxiety also demonstrate more academic difficulties and lower GPA than non-depressed students (Locke, 2009; Deroma, Leach, and Leverett, 2009).
- Students who receive treatment for depression report substantial gains in academic performance: 31% of students at one university receiving treatment for depression reported an increase in satisfaction with their ability to study/work and 34% of students reported an increased sense of satisfaction with how much schoolwork they can do (Klein, 2010).
- Among a survey of California Community Colleges, students reported that mental health issues affected academic performance.
- Santa Rosa Junior College students who had accessed the Student Health Services department were more than twice as likely to get their degree or certificate than the district average (Unpublished report, 2013).
- Substance use disorders are strongly associated with lower GPA (Svanum and Zody, 2001).

Student Retention

- 5% of college students prematurely end their education due to psychiatric disorders (Kessler, Foster, Saunders, and Sang, 1995).
- Psychological adjustment predicts retention as well or better than academic adjustment (Gerdes and Mallinckrodt, 1994).
- A study found that students who receive at least 6 counseling sessions have higher retention rates than students who request but do not receive counseling (Wilson et al, 1997).
- A five year longitudinal study found that the retention rate for students who received psychological counseling was 85%, compared with 74% for the general student body (Turner and Berry, 2000).

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California Community Colleges Student Mental Health Program (CCC SMHP)

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The California Community Colleges Student Mental Health Program (CCC SMHP) is dedicated to increasing the capacity of the CCC system to provide student mental health services. Funded by the California Mental Health Services Authority, this program offers cost-free training and technical assistance (TTA) to California’s community college campuses.