

From Persisting to Thriving

How We Can Act Now to Support College Student Mental Wellness



FOREWORD

Mental health is one of the most critical priorities for college students today. Since the onset of the pandemic and the declaration of a national public health crisis around mental health, we have read countless articles and heard directly from students about their increased need and desire for mental health support.

College has never been easy. In fact, the higher education ecosystem defines success for students by their capacity to *persist* through countless barriers to remain enrolled and complete their degrees. While intellectual challenge is part of the learning process, we reject the assumption that higher education is something to be endured. Learners are calling for a holistic postsecondary educational experience where they are valued, respected, and seen—not as demographic percentiles or funding metrics—but as whole humans. We believe it is time to listen and answer their calls for care.



In K–5, maybe even middle school, when a child gets injured, it's all hands on deck. In college, it's not like that. But we'd still like to be checked on. [We] still want that same support. As you get older, people stop caring. [We] still want [our] well-being to be taken into account. If I haven't been to class in three days, check in on me."

STUDENT RESEARCHER, STUPSKI FOUNDATION

College Futures Foundation commissioned this study to understand what role philanthropy could play to support college student mental health in California. To that end, our partners at Learning for Action conducted a scan of the state's policy and funding landscape around college student mental health, as well as an analysis of the larger societal narratives shaping policy and funding decisions. A companion to [Degrees of Distress](#), this brief identifies the roles advocates, policymakers, practitioners, and funders can play to shift how we understand college student mental health, so that together we can better promote student well-being.

We hope you use this brief as a guide to be bold and dare to act differently in service of students. If we are to authentically center learners—particularly within public institutions of higher education that serve large student bodies—then we cannot accept the current state of college student mental health, nor can we declare the challenge to be too pervasive to tackle. Instead, we must reimagine how postsecondary environments can become places of care and flourishing, places that nurture transformational learning and community wellness.

As we emerge from a season of compounding crises with lasting generational impacts, especially for students of color and those facing outsized financial barriers, we find ourselves in a moment of heightened awareness about mental health in higher education. Let's embrace the opportunity to collectively ask: How can we act now to help learners move from persisting to thriving?

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Acknowledgements

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We would like to express deep gratitude for the entire Learning for Action team. Their collaborative spirit, rigorous research analyses, and intentional equity lens made for a partnership that took the scope of this scan beyond our hopes and expectations. We would also like to thank the talented individuals at Williams Group who are responsible for bringing everything to life through visual design. We thank them for expertly showing how art can challenge norms and be instrumental in opening our minds, shifting narratives, and moving this important conversation forward.

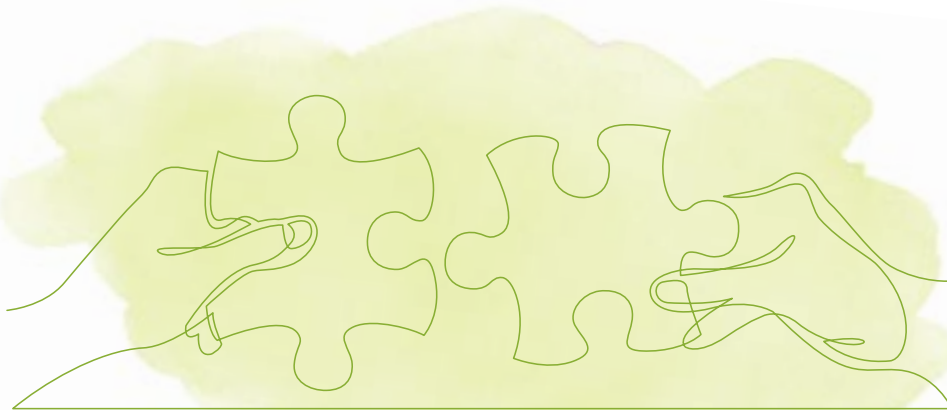
A Note on Language

Informed by the student and field experts interviewed for this brief, the term “mental wellness” used in the following pages refers to the presence of internal resources (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) that enable an individual to thrive. “Mental health,” as we describe on page 8, focuses more narrowly on the clinical diagnosis and treatment of acute mental health symptoms and crises.

Learning for Action’s Full Report



Learning For Action’s full report, *College Student Mental Wellness in California: A Landscape Scan of Systems, Supports, and What Students Need*, including research methods, complete findings, analysis, and sources supporting this brief, can be accessed at collegefutures.org/insights/from-persisting-to-thriving.



CONTENTS AT A GLANCE

This brief surfaces critical observations, action steps, and promising practices toward improving the state of college student mental health in California. Findings presented here amplify voices of students and other field experts in alignment with broad-based research.



We have an opportunity and imperative to move the needle on college student mental health—let’s get our systems ready. 4

In a moment of heightened attention and new funding, we are poised to act on the issue of college student mental health as never before. But attention can be fleeting and this funding is scattered and time-bound. Focus and coordination will be key.

Prevailing mental health narratives neither describe nor serve most college students dealing with these issues—let’s get to the point.7

A narrow, problem-focused definition of mental health neglects root causes and prevention, serves only small fraction of the student population, and fails to address real connections between social identity and mental wellness. It also leads higher education institutions to underestimate their role in promoting student mental wellness. We can talk and think about this topic in ways that make support more meaningful, inclusive, and effective.

A range of actors need to rethink college student mental health—and we can all do our part to make it better.12

ADVOCATES AND POLICYMAKERS can call for deliberate, meaningful public strategies to support college student mental health and wellness.

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS can accept responsibility to reduce harms to student mental health and promote student wellness and thriving.

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We have an opportunity and imperative to move the needle on college student mental health—let's get our systems ready.

With heightened attention and new funding, the time is ripe for acting on the issue of college student mental health. Doing so effectively will require intentional focus and planning.



Energy around this issue is heightened...

Social scientists and educators have long been aware of the pressures and stressors on mental health during the college years—especially for students in marginalized groups. Hostile politics, police violence and the racial reckoning, wealth disparities, and a pandemic have brought this issue to the fore.¹ Students in particular are talking more openly and expansively about mental wellness than previous generations. And there is growing insight and awareness into barriers that prevent students who are underserved from obtaining high-quality, effective support and treatment.

In the most significant overhaul of California’s mental health system in state history, Governor Newsom’s *Master Plan for Kids’ Mental Health* outlines steps to support the mental health of youth and young adults by offering new training for behavioral health professionals, more school counselors, and targeted interventions in K–12 systems.

“

California’s child mental health system has been described as a “patchwork of systems” that is “decentralized [and] fragmented by provider...” According to Dr. Tom Insel, former director of the National Institute of Mental Health, “Unlike almost any other state...California [has] no strong leadership around behavioral health... There is no person, there is no department, there is no group that is setting outcome goals for the mental health systems in California.”

COVID-19 AND CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH: ADDRESSING
THE IMPACT, LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION



...and we need to focus it.

Yet California’s K–12, higher education, and public mental health systems work in a fragmented, decentralized way.

Across systems, there is little capacity to meet college student needs, with provider shortages, limited services, and profound barriers to access. Further, there are no stated goals for outcomes and little data to gauge effectiveness.

College students of color, students facing financial barriers, and those who are undocumented are likely the most impacted by this systemic dysfunction. But the data and public narratives connecting root causes, including racism and poverty, to mental health are slim to none—and so are policies specifically designed to support populations on the margins.

It’s time to prepare all stakeholders, strategies, and systems to act in concert on this issue.

“

No one is being served well by this system, and the reasons why they’re not being served will differ depending on who they are.”

LISHAUN FRANCIS, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH, CHILDREN NOW



New funding is flooding in...

Beginning in 2021–2022, California's state budget significantly increased funding to all three public higher education segments (California Community Colleges, California State University, and University of California) for student mental health supports:²

- \$100M in one-time funding for pandemic-related housing and food insecurity to CCC
- \$45M in ongoing funding for student mental health services to CCC, CSU, and UC
- \$45M in additional funding for basic needs supports to CSU, CCC

The federal government's 2022 American Rescue Plan prompted one of the largest-ever one-time infusions of funding into the nation's colleges and universities for mental health projects:

- \$77B distributed to higher education through three rounds of federal relief to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19³
- \$5.3B issued to California colleges and universities to provide direct financial relief to students⁴

Introduced in 2022, Governor Newsom's *Master Plan for Kids' Mental Health* specifically and significantly outlines steps to support the mental health of all Californians aged 0–25:

- \$4.7B for increased access to mental health and substance use supports⁵

...but it's scattered and timebound.

While this funding infusion is intended to fill gaps left by decades of underinvestment in college student mental health,⁶ much of it is time limited, with little clarity, consistency, or coordination in how it is to be used across systems. What's more, the U.S. Department of Education expects its one-time funds to be "sustained through philanthropic efforts, local partnerships, or other funding sources."⁷

Meanwhile, college students remain a largely neglected category, with state funds earmarked for students aged 0–25 predominantly supporting K–12 populations and delivered through K–12 systems.

It's time to apply real and lasting resources to college student wellbeing.



All CSU campuses operate like little states... Presidents have freedom in making decisions [on] ways money is spent... There's no uniformity. No one said, 'We're going to get X% of the state money and allocate it directly towards the counseling center.'

DR. TIFFANY HERBERT, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR HEALTH & WELL-BEING, CSU DOMINGUEZ HILLS



Prevailing mental health narratives neither describe nor serve most college students dealing with these issues—let's get to the point.

The way college student mental health is framed shapes how we think and act on it. Today's narratives miss the point in far too many ways. Learning for Action's analysis, including in-depth conversations with field experts, surfaces several key narrative shifts necessary to make support more meaningful, inclusive, and effective.



Move from “mental health problems”...

The dominant understanding of mental health is incredibly narrow, focused on the clinical treatment and management of acute mental illness symptoms, crises, and diagnoses. This framing neglects root causes—like racism, homophobia, and xenophobia—and the kinds of upstream support that promote wellness and prevent problems before they happen.

...to “mental wellness.”

Students today are more likely than their predecessors to understand the topic more broadly, and indeed, many students link mental wellness with feeling supported by their institution, reducing barriers and stigma to accessing support, and having their basic needs met.

It's time to catch up to students and be proactive about what they need to thrive.

“It's really important to say mental well-being and not mental illness. Mental well-being can mean ‘How do we avoid re-traumatization in classrooms and classroom experiences? How can we create unconditional belonging for our students?’ Those are important conversations that we have to continue to focus on so we're not relying on that \$67 dollars a person funding to address student issues when they are in much more acute and severe situations... We can address it from a more preventative lens.”

REBECCA RUAN-O'SHAUGHNESSY, VICE CHANCELLOR
FOR EDUCATIONAL SERVICES & SUPPORT, CA
COMMUNITY COLLEGES CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

“We have to think of mental wellness [more broadly]... If my anxiety and stress is rooted in my ability to eat, or purchase books, or pay rent, psychological services are not going to help me meet those needs.”

DR. RASHIDA CRUTCHFIELD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
CENTER FOR EQUITABLE HIGHER EDUCATION;
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, CSU LONG BEACH

“When they put students on probation because of grades it is all about the academic piece, but missing the piece of ‘why are you struggling?’ ‘What's the story behind that?’ School counselors can utilize that moment to ask more questions. Are we asking about food security? Are there other stressors impacting your grades? ... Utilize that moment to get a full picture of the problem.”

MURIEL CASAMAYOR, LMFT, VOLUNTEER, MENTAL HEALTH
CONNECTOR AND THE MENTAL HEALTH CAREER PROGRAM,
IMMIGRANTS RISING; FOUNDER, INSIGHT FAMILY
COUNSELING & WELLNESS SERVICES

“Once basic needs are taken care of, mental wellness can be a factor... Especially if you're trying to pass classes, are first gen, worrying about paying for school, working jobs to afford school and then you can't focus on classwork, etc. Unfortunately, mental health goes on [the] backburner when those aren't met.”

STUDENT RESEARCHER,
STUPSKI FOUNDATION

“If you don't feel safe, you're stressed out, that's a mental health issue. That's not a diagnostic [issue] in terms of are you bipolar or depressed, but if your body is in a constant state of fear, that impacts your emotional wellness.”

LISHAUN FRANCIS, CHILDREN NOW

Move from “the few”...

The focus on acute mental illness also means that mental health investments and interventions serve only a fraction of the college-going population and fail to address students’ holistic mental wellness needs.



How we label these services matters for sure. If we say that we are providing X services for people in need, there are lots of people who are not going to go. But if we award people access to services because of their strength and perseverance, they will receive that award differently... That framing matters.”

DR. RASHIDA CRUTCHFIELD, CENTER FOR EQUITABLE HIGHER EDUCATION; CSU LONG BEACH

... to “the many.”

Resources and programs designed to serve student mental health broadly can directly improve students’ wellness and also improve academic performance, persistence, and graduation rates.⁸

It’s time to expand our focus to reach and serve more students, more meaningfully.



People are becoming more mindful around issues of mental health. The next phase is more energy around the preventative piece as opposed to being in a crisis mode. I think there’s been headway on both sides of the equation.”

DR. EDWARD BUSH, A²MEND; COSUMNES RIVER COLLEGE



“The college experience reduces our identity to just being students. We hold other identities as well, e.g., being part of a family that might require us to work to support the family financially or another community that requires us to have outside responsibilities. When the college experience only sees us as students, that doesn’t give us enough space to take care of other things outside of school ... other factors [that] affect how we perform in school as well.”

STUDENT RESEARCHER, STUPSKI FOUNDATION

Move from “identity neutral”...

A narrow focus on mental health problems and illnesses overlooks considerations like safety and belonging, which are experienced differently across social identities.

It is well documented that people of color—including students on and off campus—are more likely to receive lower quality of care, or care that does not meet their needs. Accordingly, they are more likely to discontinue services.⁹

Long histories of exclusion and oppression similarly shape the experiences of first-generation students, LGBTQ students, and undocumented students, who face identity-specific stressors in their daily experiences.

... to “identity conscious.”

A shift to identity-conscious, culturally responsive wellness supports would lower barriers to seeking and accessing support for a growing majority of students.

Such support would acknowledge and affirm diverse identities, embrace trauma-informed educational practices, and be provided by a diversity of campus and community practitioners and with cultural understanding and humility.

It's time to acknowledge and attend to the links between social identity and mental wellness in college.

“I’m Filipina. Mental health is heavily stigmatized in Asian American culture and other communities of color, which comes with generations of trauma and systemic oppression that many people of color still experience to this day. Dismantling that stigma will require a lot, starting off with conversations with folks, normalizing that mental health is important.”

STUDENT RESEARCHER, STUPSKI FOUNDATION

“Some educators make assumptions that their classrooms are already a safe space, which may not be true for students on the margins—queer students, first-gen students. Educators need to understand [that] it’s an intentional, ongoing practice of developing safety, which leads to belonging and dignity.”

DR. STEPHANIE CARIAGA, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,
CSU DOMINGUEZ HILLS

“If you are in an environment where you don’t have to be concerned about how you show up—if your experience is more aligned with the culture norms and values espoused within the organization, school, or institution that you are a part of—it’s hard to imagine being in the space where your presence is oppositional and how that impacts your psyche, your self-efficacy... If you have to separate yourself or your own identity in order to be able to achieve what we call success, that creates a mental crisis.”

DR. EDWARD BUSH, A²MEND;
COSUMNES RIVER COLLEGE

“

The wellness narrative ... is a white narrative that has emerged through capitalism through ideas of going to the spa and doing yoga... To truly understand how underserved people are thinking about wellness, we have to understand the traumas that impact their lives, and how they want those to stop. [The current frame] only supports those who are frankly already living well and are just a little stressed out. [It does not challenge] the fact that the conditions you live in threaten your mental health.”

LISHAUN FRANCIS, CHILDREN NOW

Move from “not my job”...

Many professionals in higher education, advocacy, and philanthropy perceive mental health as largely outside their purview—confined to the work of counselors and clinicians. This leads educators and others with real influence to underestimate their roles, and it saps the will to do more. Current narrow framing reinforces this viewpoint.

“

The biggest barrier in higher ed is ‘collective shrugging’... Colleges often think, ‘We don’t do mental health ... so let me hire someone or refer you out.’ But so much of it is being kind, being a proactive listener, not having a racist classroom. There is a lot everyone can do within our institutions and system to address mental well-being.”

REBECCA RUAN-O’SHAUGHNESSY, CCC CHANCELLOR’S OFFICE

“Part of the issue ... is professors. If they are not trauma-informed, culturally competent, culturally responsive, don’t practice compassion, empathy, or have an ability to understand complex challenges of students, it is very difficult for students to be able to succeed in the classroom setting.”

STUDENT RESEARCHER, STUPSKI FOUNDATION

... to “part of everything we do.”

Students and other field experts assert that there is, in fact, a great deal higher education institutions and individuals can do to create safer, healthier environments that promote broad-based student mental wellness.

For example, faculty and staff who interact with college students most often are well positioned to affirm their belonging, refer to campus supports, and diffuse everyday stressors like racially charged microaggressions.

Advocates and funders also can do more.

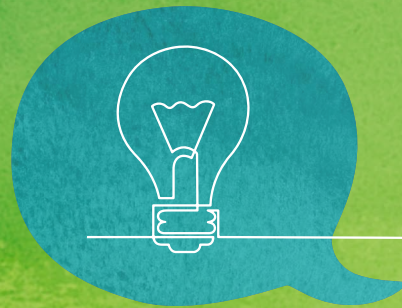
It’s time to be the wellness champions college students need us to be...

“We can inject mental health and wellness at every level—course presentations, student conduct, case management—to better understand what’s going on with this student. Is it a mental health issue? Financial? Family? [We need] to extend the realm of understanding of mental health beyond the counseling center.”

DR. TIFFANY HERBERT, CSU DOMINGUEZ HILLS

A range of actors need to rethink college student mental health—and we can all do our part to make it better.

Among others, advocates for higher education and mental health, policymakers, college and university leaders, and philanthropic funders are well positioned to have a critical impact on college student mental health. All have daily and strategic opportunities to shape more meaningful narratives and practices, preparing the way for a healthier and more equitable future.



ADVOCATES AND POLICYMAKERS can call for deliberate, meaningful public strategies to support college student mental health and wellness.

KEY STEPS:



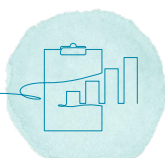
Help ensure that funding to support college student mental health is ongoing and dedicated to this purpose.



Support both preventive solutions and those for targeted populations—expanding reach and relevance through service models that include community engagement.



Make connections toward meaningful collaborations between higher education and community systems charged with supporting mental health.



Underscore that data-driven approaches are imperative to understanding and investing in what works, as well as tracking and responding to trends across systems.



Evaluate the impact of mental health and wellness activities on student success and academic outcomes, including its positive association with college completion.



At the state level there is room for research and evaluation about how some of these funds are being allocated and what are the outcomes of those allocations. We are still using models based on what we think works and not what does work.”

DR. RASHIDA CRUTCHFIELD, CENTER FOR EQUITABLE HIGHER EDUCATION;
CSU LONG BEACH

“We need a comprehensive solution set that serves the many and serves the few. [If you] create a program to provide end-to-end solutions for all students, there is not enough money. You need a structure to fix most of the problems, so [higher intensity programs] can focus on the unique problems.”

REBECCA RUAN O'SHAUGHNESSY, CCC CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS can accept responsibility to reduce harms to student mental health and promote student wellness and thriving.

KEY STEPS:



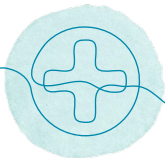
Make student wellness a priority and institutionalize it in strategic plans and evaluations of institutional effectiveness; collect and analyze data to track trends and uncover high-leverage interventions.



Understand and address practices that promote isolation, perpetuate hostile and competitive climates, exacerbate financial precarity, and create barriers to support.



Create campus and classroom environments that promote safety and compassion, and that affirm diverse student identities and belonging.



Attend to the full continuum of care, which includes wellness and prevention, the identification of needs, and providing meaningful services and referrals as needed.



Proactively identify and reach out to students who may need mental health supports, including those who are struggling academically or to meet basic needs.



Ensure wellness investments are relevant by directly engaging students from diverse backgrounds in shaping solutions and providing feedback on existing services.

“

Both research and common sense suggest that positive mental health is a precondition to thriving in academic pursuits ... [and] if institutions desire to ethically claim a commitment to the public, they must act in the best interest of the health of both the students and communities they serve.”

DR. SAM MUSEUS AND DR. LINDSAY PÉREZ HUBER, *DEGREES OF DISTRESS*

“Quality has to include consumer input. Are young people happy with the care they are getting? We are deficient in that because we rarely ask consumers about their experience. Because so much of [the mental health field] is emotional, how people feel about the care they are getting and how much young people are brought into their treatment plan directly impacts how much better they can get.”

LISHAUN FRANCIS, CHILDREN NOW

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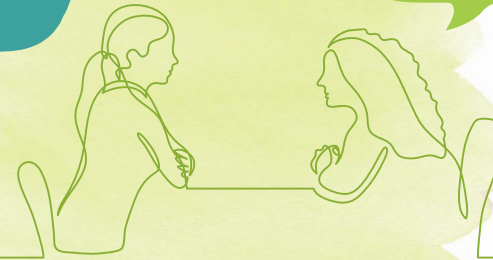
The question has to be, ‘How are you allocating your current resources to this work and how [can you] shift it to match your institutional priorities?’ How can we hold those who work for our colleges accountable? Dedicated money to do mental wellness support, and latitude to be able to allocate those resources [are needed], but my fear is we advocate for more resources without changing the mindset—and so at the end nothing is appreciably different.”

DR. EDWARD BUSH, A²MEND; COSUMNES RIVER COLLEGE

“

How do we build that institutional muscle around trauma-informed care, so it’s not just a counselor’s job to be interacting with students in a way that’s attentive and positive, but how do faculty treat that as their job as well?”

REBECCA RUAN-O’SHAUGHNESSY, CCC
CHANCELLOR’S OFFICE

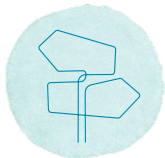


“We can sit together and create this wonderful curriculum, but if we don’t ask the students feedback and do it in community, we’re putting together these resources that may not be what they want or need. Community-based work is when you’re going to get better results. Just because we have a degree, funds, doesn’t mean we have the best answers.”

MURIEL CASAMAYOR, LMFT; IMMIGRANTS RISING; INSIGHT FAMILY
COUNSELING & WELLNESS SERVICES

PHILANTHROPY can truly center college students by prioritizing their mental health and wellness in grantmaking strategies.

KEY STEPS:



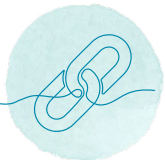
Usher in a paradigm shift with partners toward a more upstream, holistic approach to student wellness.



Fund direct efforts in peer-to-peer support programs, faculty and staff wellness, and the embedding of identity-conscious support.



Support and engage in research and innovation, such as evaluation for long-term outcomes, adaptation of existing approaches to specific groups, and multi-stakeholder community partnerships.



Build capacity for centralized case management approaches, improved links between mental health systems, and culturally relevant trainings for campus community members.

In recent years, only 1.3% of overall philanthropic investments in the U.S. went to support mental health.¹⁰ ... Yet mental health is interconnected to major philanthropic priorities (e.g., economic mobility, K–12 improvements, racial justice).¹¹

CENTER FOR HIGH IMPACT
PHILANTHROPY, CITING INSIDE
PHILANTHROPY, 2020

“In philanthropic work, I think there is an overemphasis on things that are programmatic and far less on things that are systemic. Unless you deal with the core disease, you’ll continue to chase different symptoms. I think philanthropy really needs to dedicate some resources to looking at core issues as it relates to mental health.”

DR. EDWARD BUSH, A²MEND;
COSUMNES RIVER COLLEGE

PROMISING PRACTICES

While more inquiry and research on this topic is needed, some communities are already at work on practices that hold promise for college student mental health. Such practices call for further adoption, adaptation, and study.

Burden-Free Learning Materials

Equity-minded institutions are interrogating the ways education is delivered and identifying opportunities to remove financial burden. For example, the “Burden Free Instructional Materials Taskforce” of the CCC Chancellor’s Office helps institutions design courses with free resources or provides textbooks free of charge through grant programs, eliminating educational costs as a stressor and barrier to learning.



Embedding Supports in Classrooms

Professors can affirm belonging, promote growth mindsets, build connections between students, and make referrals to supports beyond classrooms. For example, some institutions incorporate a Student Services Syllabus in every course that contains information about mental wellness and available resources.

Peer Supports

Many university Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) centers have created peer counseling programs. Some campus communities convene Sister Circles that invite women of color, both students as well as faculty, staff, and administrators, to build relationships and their sense of belonging while discussing issues of identity, empowerment, and other topics deeply related to well-being.

Intersegmental Partnerships

Some California community colleges are expanding their collaboration with local graduate school partners so that MSW and LCSW interns can provide supports to CCC students in a creative effort to pool community resources.

Heritage-Seeking Trips

Study abroad opportunities to ancestral homelands for students of color can allow students to experience an environment where they belong and are affirmed by default. A²MEND provides these life-altering opportunities for Black male college students, with the support of mentors and a peer cohort to promote community healing and wellness.

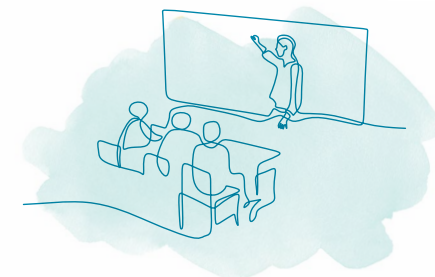


Community-Based Connections

Community-based organizations such as Immigrants Rising know students as people outside of their academic environments. They are well-positioned to provide mental health education to college faculty, counselors, and affinity centers, clubs, and organizations—as well as connect with family members as support resources. This can promote a more comprehensive community-based network of resources working together.

Longitudinal Prevalence Research

The Lumina Foundation tracks national data and funds research on college student mental health and well-being. The Annie E. Casey Foundation tracks well-being data on children and young people and has shed light on the national youth mental health crisis with its *Kids Count* data book.



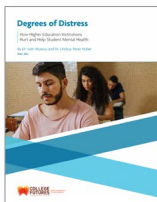
RELATED RESOURCES

Degrees of Distress, authored by Dr. Sam Museus and Dr. Lindsay Pérez Huber and commissioned by College Futures Foundation, examines through a racial equity lens how higher education institutions hurt and help student mental health, with the goal of informing policy, practice, and narrative for a national movement toward students thriving and succeeding in postsecondary and beyond.



DEGREES OF DISTRESS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A two-page distillation of top findings and actions steps from the research.



DEGREES OF DISTRESS FULL REPORT

In-depth data, analysis, recommendations, and resources for understanding and acting on this issue.



TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH: OPPORTUNITY FORUM VLOGCAST

A dialogue with *Degrees of Distress* report co-author Dr. Lindsay Pérez Huber; associate vice president for health & well-being at CSU, Dominguez Hills Dr. Tiffany Herbert, and former College Futures Foundation holistic student support and mental health lead Dr. April Yee.



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ABOUT LEARNING FOR ACTION

Learning for Action is a women-owned consultancy with a mission to partner with social sector organizations to strengthen their learning culture and practice in service of equity and justice. Over the course of our 23-year tenure, we have conducted nearly 900 evaluation, capacity building, and consulting projects for organizations, foundations, and government agencies across the social sector in the United States and internationally. Operating at the intersection of evaluation, strategy, organizational development, and capacity building, LFA's approach is based on rigorous data collection while grounded in a community perspective to catalyze social change. We aim to support structural change that addresses the underlying root causes of inequities so that all members of our communities have access to the opportunities they deserve for productive, healthy, and meaningful lives.

[LearningForAction.com](https://www.learningforaction.com)



ABOUT COLLEGE FUTURES FOUNDATION

At College Futures Foundation, we believe in the power of postsecondary opportunity. We believe that securing the postsecondary success of learners facing the most formidable barriers will ensure that all of us can thrive—our communities, our economy, and our state. We believe that the equitable education system of the future, one that enables every learner to achieve their dreams and participate in an inclusive and robust economy, will be realized if we are focused, determined, and active in our leadership and partnership.

We also know that the past few years have brought profound shifts in California's education and workforce landscapes—including college enrollment declines alongside high demand for affordable, career-connected training, national conversations on student debt and mental health, and numerous other changes prompted or accelerated by COVID-19 and a nationwide racial reckoning. These changes have underscored the realities of how inequitably our systems center and serve diverse people. We know that the coming years will present equally significant challenges and opportunities, and that we must be well-prepared to meet these moments.

Our Vision: We envision a California where postsecondary education advances racial, social, and economic equity, unlocking upward mobility now and for generations to come.

Our Mission: Our mission is to increase postsecondary completion for learners who are underserved. We center learners and their aspirations and needs on the path to achieving their educational goals.

[CollegeFutures.org](https://www.collegefutures.org)

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