Four Strategies to Reinvigorate Group Therapy on Campus

Meeting the Escalating Demand for Campus Mental Health Services

Liz Brown, Senior Consultant
ebrown@eab.com

Student Affairs Forum

2018 Webconference Series

Meeting the Growing Demand for Campus Mental Health Services

Meeting the Growing Demand for Campus Mental Health Services

Institutions are struggling with an undefined and unsustainable scope of mental health care that is overly dependent on traditional models to connect students with on campus mental health support. EAB's research explores how institutions can maximize existing clinical resources and target interventions to key student segments on campus.

Upcoming Webconferences

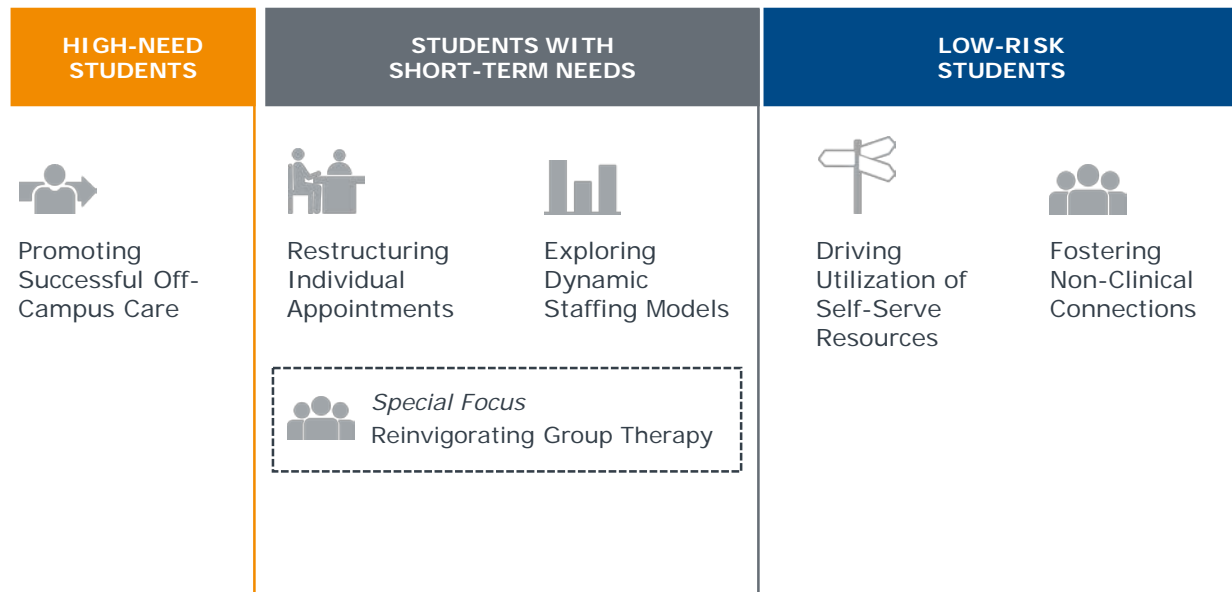**Thursday, July 12,** *2:00 – 2:30pm EST*
How to Connect Low-Risk Students to Meaningful Resources on Campus

Visit eab.com to **view on-demand recordings** of each webinar in this series, including:

- Trends in Campus Mental Health Services
- Promote Successful Off-Campus Mental Health Care for High-Need Students
- How to Instill a Goal-Oriented Focus in Individual Counseling Appointments
- Dynamic Staffing Models for Campus Counseling Centers

Meeting the Growing Demand

Mapping Targeted Interventions to Key Student Segments

HIGH-NEED STUDENTS	STUDENTS WITH SHORT-TERM NEEDS	LOW-RISK STUDENTS

HIGH-NEED STUDENTS

Promoting Successful Off-Campus Care

STUDENTS WITH SHORT-TERM NEEDS

Restructuring Individual Appointments

Exploring Dynamic Staffing Models

Special Focus
Reinvigorating Group Therapy

LOW-RISK STUDENTS

Driving Utilization of Self-Serve Resources

Fostering Non-Clinical Connections

More Students Are Seeking Short-Term Therapy on Campus

Demand for Individual Appointments Outpaces Enrollment Growth
Average Growth, 2009-10 to 2014-15

5.6%
Average percent change in
institutional enrollment

38.4%
Average percent change in
counseling center appointments

7x **Rate at which demand for counseling center appointments outpaced enrollment growth**

Students Are Demanding Increased Access to Individualized Care

66 **Students come to campus expecting individual counseling**. We had a protest last year where students were chanting, "more free therapy, less free football." We can't simply ignore them when they ask for more support on campus."

Director of Counseling Services
Public Research University

66 A growing attitude among our students is a desire to "**get their money's worth**" from the fees they pay on campus. We've seen a rising number of students coming to counseling services because they feel like they already paid for it."

Vice President for Student Affairs
Public Research University

More Students, Longer Wait Times

Counseling Centers Cannot Keep Pace with Students Seeking Help

Waiting for an Appointment…

1 in 3

About **one-third** of institutions maintain a **waitlist for individual therapy appointments**

2-3 weeks

Average wait times for individual therapy appointments on campus is **2-3 weeks** and **longer during busier times of year**, such as midterms and finals

…Means Students Don't Get The Help They Need When They Need It

" Things start to **back up like a traffic jam**. A lot can happen in four or five weeks during a quarter in college. It really wasn't OK to have that delay in place."

Gary Dunn, Director of Counseling and Psychological Services
University of California, Santa Cruz

" When students summon the courage and make time to come to the counseling center, they are at the point of their own crisis. When we would put them in a queue it was problematic because they **didn't know how to manage their own manifesting behaviors**."

John Austin
Interim Vice-Provost, Students
Ryerson University

What Increased Demand Looks Like on Campus

Waitlists Are the Most Visible Metric...

"After the first week, students have to wait weeks for an appointment. I know that there are **students on the waitlist that we just won't get to** this semester."

"Our waitlist just won't go away. We have hired additional staff and increased clinical hours offered to students, but **they just keep piling up**."

...But There's More Below the Surface

✖ **Decreased frequency of therapy** appointments to accommodate more clients

✖ **Staff burnout** because of long hours and overwhelming caseloads

✖ **Lack of physical space** to accommodate new hires and increased clinical hours

✖ **Less time and resources** for outreach, early education, and other priorities

✖ **Student dissatisfaction** about service availability

✖ Delayed treatment leads **students' concerns to escalate**

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Time for a New Approach

Today's Stark Reality Requires a New Path Forward

"

Opening Up to New Ways of Providing Support

"The biggest shift for our profession-and university counseling centers on the whole-is that **we have to think differently about how people can be helped.** We can't keep saying that the 50-minute hour is the best answer because we just don't have the resources. **We must get creative, explore and commit to new ways of working, and be open to new ideas that don't compromise the quality of our work with students.**"

Director of Counseling Services
Private Research University

"

Realigning Expectations Around Counseling Services

"**Counseling centers have become a place where people expect solutions.** There is a huge amount of expectation from students, parents, and faculty in the community that we will whisk in and fix people that are somehow broken. **We can't live up to that mission.** Before folks run to counseling, they need to utilize the other services on campus. We need more resources to teach students how to be well and not just panic when students are unwell."

Vice Provost for Student Life
Canadian Research University

"

"

Highly Functioning Groups Can Improve Capacity and Personal Outcomes

Increases Clinical Capacity	Allows counseling center staff to **see more students**	Can be used as **primary or supplemental** treatment
Proven to be Clinically Effective	Positive **measurable outcomes** in clinical and academic research	**Preferred treatment method** for some common presenting concerns
Flexible for Evolving Student Needs	Provides a platform to reach **diverse student populations**	Easy to **adapt and scale** for pop-up trends and issues
Community Support	Students can **build peer relationships**	Students can **practice new skills** in real-time

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Group Therapy Is Not a New Idea...

...But Significant Barriers Hamper Utilization on Campus

⚠️

Common Roadblocks to Sustaining a Robust Group Therapy Program

Dated Understanding
Traditional image of groups does not connect with the expectations from today's students

Lack of Confidence
Clinicians and students perceive groups to be a second-rate treatment option

Complicated Logistics
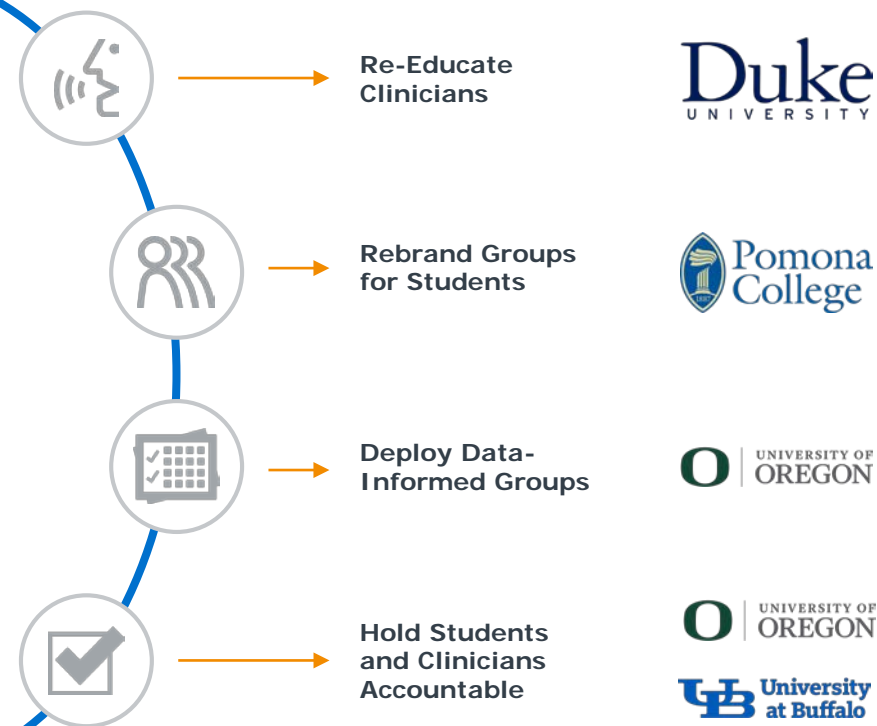Difficult to recruit clinician instructors and coordinate schedules with busy students

No Follow Up
Students are left on their own to follow through and process their group experience

"The last thing I remember is being thrown into the dryer."

IMAGE CREDIT: PINTEREST

Four Recommendations to Build a Successful Group Program

Re-Educate Clinicians

Duke
UNIVERSITY

Rebrand Groups for Students

Pomona College

Deploy Data-Informed Groups

O | UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

Hold Students and Clinicians Accountable

O | UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

UB University at Buffalo

Re-Educate Clinicians

Duke University's Strategy to Grow Staff Buy-In

> "Research and experience show that the **number one reason why students don't 'do' group therapy is because staff don't believe in it**."
>
> *Danielle Oakley, Director of Counseling and Psychological Services*
> *Duke University*

Key Elements

Group Champions

Director and group coordinator set the tone about group therapy and dedicate staff resources to coordinate and maintain the group program

Research-Based Training

Short professional development session debunks myths about group therapy and outlines research on clinical efficacy

Experiential Component

Staff lead existing groups in pairs to better understand the content and build comfort in group setting, interns also invited to observe

Tailored Scripting

Staff are equipped with scripting and strategies to push past initial skepticism and present group therapy to students as the best-fit option

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Rebrand Groups for Students

Pomona College's "Life Hacks" Mini-Series

Preparing Students for Group Therapy

☑ **Compelling branding** with content organized around accessible themes and common concerns

☑ **Simulates the group experience**, getting students comfortable in an informal, group-like setting

☑ Intended to **prepare students** for traditional group therapy programs

Mental Health Edition

Life Hacks is a workshop mini-series focused on helping students build/gain tools that enhance their well-being, build stress management and coping skills, and have more fulfilling relationships.

Workshops include:

- Self Care 101
- The Happiness Trap
- Coping with Distress
- Stress Management
- Counting Sheep to Getting Sleep
- Living Mindfully
- Overcoming Perfectionism
- Overcoming Test Anxiety
- Procrastinators Anonymous

Deploy Data-Informed Groups

University of Oregon Uses Data to Address Students' Needs

Annual Review

Counseling center administrator reassesses group therapy program and reviews key data, including:

- Students' top presenting concerns
- Attendance records
- Clinician preferences
- National trends

How Oregon Uses Data to Drive Logistics

- Pre-assign group meeting times and locations for popular, multi-session groups
- Set a multi-year rotation schedule for clinician instructors based on expertise and indicated interest

How Oregon Uses Data to Determine Content

- Develop group experiences that map to emerging national trends or growing student populations on campus
- Prioritize investments in group experiences that can apply to many different types of student concerns
- New or expanded groups include an anxiety management group, eating disorder group, and interpersonal process groups

Hold Students and Clinicians Accountable

Establish Mechanisms to Track Progress and Follow Through

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

University of Oregon's
Check Out Session

Prompted reflection on students' goals and next steps

- Last session of a group is reserved for guided review
- Group members provide feedback and debrief goals
- Facilitators help students transition to other groups or individual therapy

University at Buffalo

University at Buffalo's
Note Sharing Protocol

Clinicians document group progress in session notes

- Group co-leaders take notes after group sessions
- Notes are tracked in electronic health records
- Individual therapists follow-up on group progress

Private Practice's
Missed Session Fee

Students are charged a small fee when they miss group

- Ensures attendance
- Incentivizes students to take their commitment to group seriously
- Ensures best possible experience for all attendees

Research and Resources from the Student Affairs Forum

Current and Forthcoming Resources

Ready-to-go Presentation Deck
Briefing for senior institutional leaders, with national data and trends

How to Set and Communicate a Sustainable Scope of Service
Flexible framework, key criteria, discussion guides, and an annotated compendium of sample statements

Research Study and Toolkit
23 practices and 11 tools to maximize clinical efficiencies on campus

Webconferences
On demand and upcoming opportunities to hear the research

Expert Insights
Short actionable articles featuring innovative strategies

Four Strategies to Reinvigorate Group Therapy on Campus

Meeting the Escalating Demand for Campus Mental Health Services

Liz Brown, Senior Consultant
ebrown@eab.com

Student Affairs Forum