

Developing Coping and Resilience Skills to Advance Student Success

Targeting Support at High-Stress Moments



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Student Affairs Forum

Developing Coping and Resilience Skills to Advance Student Success

As counseling centers and related services struggle to keep pace with the escalating number of students seeking support, student affairs leaders are seeking ways to proactively address student needs. EAB recommends institutions use **scalable, targeted interventions to get ahead of students' mental health concerns** and help at-risk students build the skills necessary to succeed on campus.

On-Demand Webconferences Related to This Research

- ❑ [How to Promote Resilience in the First Year](#)
- ❑ [Connecting Low-Risk Students to Meaningful Mental Health Resources on Campus](#)
- ❑ [Partnering with Faculty on Well-Being Initiatives](#)

Visit [EAB's Mental Health Resource Center](#) for additional insights, tools, and resources.

Grit, Coping, and Resilience in the Headlines

No Shortage of Articles Highlighting Skill Gap Among Current Students



The Coddling of the American Mind



Top Students, Too, Aren't Always Ready for College



Students Should Be Taught Resilience, but Educators Struggle With the Best Way Forward



Succeeding in the Global Economy: The Skill Employers Really Want From New Recruits



Homework Therapists' Job: Help Solve Math Problems, and Emotional Ones



Declining Student Resilience: A Serious Problem for Colleges

Students Struggle to Cope With Day-to-Day Challenges



Students struggle to prioritize their work with a **lack of parental oversight**



Students **clash with new roommates** who they do not know



High-achieving students struggle to persevere after they **fail a test**



Students **blame their professors** when they struggle to learn content

Source: Cross Country Checkup. "Student Should Be Taught Resilience, But Educators Struggle with the Best Way Forward." *CBC Radio*, February 9, 2018; Gray, Peter. "Declining Student Resilience: A Serious Problem for Colleges," *Psychology Today*, September 22, 2015; Lukianoff, Greg And Jonathan Haidt. "The Coddling of the American Mind." *The Atlantic*, September, 2015; Petroff, Alanna. "The Skill Employers Really Want From New Recruits," *CNN Money*, September 23, 2016; Spencer, Kyle. "Homework Therapists' Job: Help Solve Math Problems, and Emotional Ones," *The New York Times*, April 4, 2018; Tuttle Hansen, Elaine. "Top Students, Too, Aren't Always Ready for College," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 11, 2013, EAB interviews and analysis.



Defining Our Terms

A Variety of Concepts That Address These Issues

Grit: Passion and sustained persistence applied toward long-term achievement, with no particular concern for rewards or recognition along the way

Resilience: Ability to face, overcome, and be strengthened by life's adversities and challenges

Growth Mindset: Belief that basic talents can be developed through dedication and hard work – brains and talent are just the starting point

Positive Education: Educational strategy that blends academic learning with an emphasis on wellbeing



Same Problem, Different Names

"Today's students are bright, eager, academically ready, and take direction well. They have lots of good qualities but don't have the fundamental skills to take agency in their lives. **Call it a lack of coping, resilience, grit, or positive education... they lack the necessary skills to succeed.**"

*Vice President of Student Affairs
Public Research University*



Source: Duckworth, Angela. *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*. New York: Scribner, 2016; Dweck, Carol. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York: Random House, 2006; Newman, Tony. *What Works in Building Resilience?* London: Barnardo's, 2004; Seligman, Martin, et al. "Positive Education: Positive Psychology and Classroom Interventions." *Oxford Review of Education* 35:3 (2009): 293-311; EAB interviews and analysis.

Examining the Root Cause

Two Prominent Theories About Why Students Lack Coping and Resilience Skills



Today's Students Are 'Soft'

- "Helicopter" parents contribute to **lack of independence**
- Parents are reluctant to see their children struggle and step in to **shield them from consequences**
- Students **lack experiences and coping skills** that help them to bounce back from challenges
- Failure-averse students **shut down** when they do not succeed



Today's Students Face More Challenges

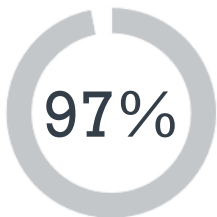
- Student **feel uncertain about the future** in a charged and tumultuous political climate
- High cost of college and the **burden of student debt** adds to students' stress and anxiety
- **Social pressures and FOMO** present 24/7 through social media
- **Competitive job** market magnifies student anxiety



A Top-of-Mind Issue for EAB Members

A Growing Appetite for Preventive Support

Grit and Resilience Hot Topics Across Student Affairs



Of Student Affairs
Forum members rated
Growing Grit and
Resilience as an
important priority

Selected Presentations from NASPA and ACPA Conferences

- ✓ *Getting Gritty: Teaching Students to Embrace Failure as a Key to Growth*
- ✓ *Reframing Resilience / Failing Brilliantly*
- ✓ *A Question of Resilience*
- ✓ *No Time For That?: Developing Career Resilience in Nontraditional Students*

“

There's an idea that there is something wrong with students today. But that's because people are failing to recognize the normal challenges of jumping into difficult work (leaving home). These changes highlight where the gaps are between people's current skills and their aspirations. **There's not something wrong with the students and there is not something wrong with the college – that's exactly what we're here to do.**

Abigail Lipson
Director of the Success-Failure Project
Harvard University

”

“Every Year is Record Breaking”

Students’ Appetite for Mental Health Support Continues to Grow

Counseling Center Demand Shows No Sign of Slowing



7x

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



12 days

Median wait time for individual therapy appointments on campuses that use a waitlist

Low-Risk Students Contribute to Growing Demand

Who are low-risk students?



Not at risk of hurting or harming themselves or others



Developmental challenges



General anxiety or stress exacerbated by the academic or political environment



Loneliness or social isolation

“Demand for mental health support is rapidly growing ... In response, we have poured more and more resources into clinical support services. **Despite the additional investment, both waiting times and student distress are increasing.**”

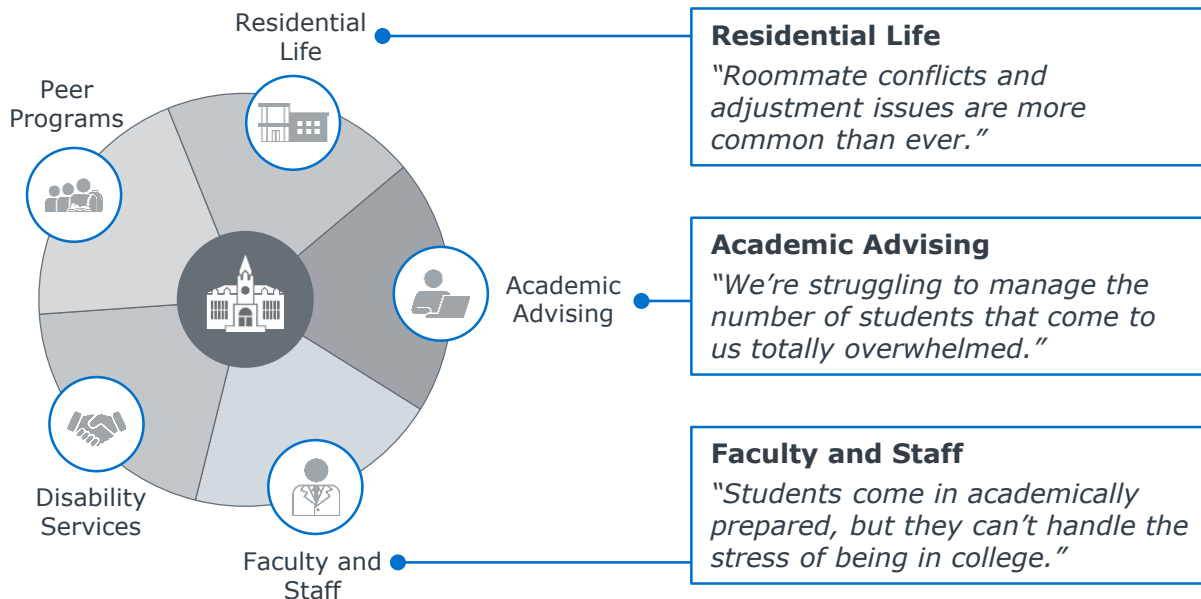
*Vice-Provost and Dean of Students
University of Alberta*

Source: LeViness, Peter, Carolyn Bershad, and Kim Gorman. “Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors Annual Survey,” 2018; Center for Collegiate Mental Health, [2015 Annual Report](#); Costopolous, Andre. “Our Role is to Support Students When They Are Ready to be Students,” *University Affairs*, August 25, 2017; EAB interviews and analysis.

Demand Not Just Limited to Counseling

Increasingly Students Look for Help Earlier and In a Variety of Places

Demand Spills Over to Other Areas on Campus





“Helping Our Students Thrive”

Retention and Student Success Impacts Abound

10%

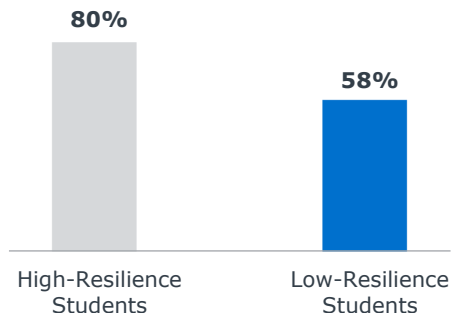
Of low-resilience first-year students persevere through academic challenges¹

0.90

Difference between low resilience and high resilience first-year students' average GPAs²

First- to Second-Year Retention

By Resilience Level, 2014-15



“

I believe this impacts retention - **students who are better able to manage their anxiety are more likely to continue.** We became concerned when students indicated they were leaving because of anxiety or performance issues in the classroom.

*Susan Lantz, Vice President for Student Life
Susquehanna University*

”

1) Compared to 75% of high-resilience first-year students

2) 3.10 for high-resilience first-year students and 2.20 for low-resilience first-year students

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The Shifting Enrollment Landscape

Resilience and Well-Being Initiatives Can Be a Competitive Advantage

Increasingly Volatile Enrollment Conditions...

36

States will see slower growth or declines in the high school graduation rate

64%

Of colleges did not meet new student enrollment targets in 2017

CHRONICLE SPECIAL REPORT

"Marketing to Survive"

Colleges Hone Their Search for a Competitive Advantage

"A Population in Flux Forces Colleges to Adapt"

Colleges are trying an array of strategies in response to changes

”

A New Competitive Advantage

It's more and more common to hear parents and families asking about the availability of mental health and well-being resources on campus during the admissions process. **This creates a lot of pressure to make sure we're prepared to answer those questions** and provide support that will be compelling to students and their parents."

*Dean of Students
Private College*

Source: Hoover, Eric and Beckie Supiano. "A Population in Flux Forces Colleges to Adapt." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 6, 2016; Hoover, Eric. "Marketing to Survive." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 29, 2016; Selingo J. The Future of Enrollment, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2017. Jaschik, Scott. "The 2017 Survey of Admissions Directors: Pressure All Around," *Inside Higher Ed*, September 13, 2017; and EAB interviews and analysis.

Study Roadmap

Developing Coping and Resilience Skills to Advance Student Success

Implementing and Refining Resilience Initiatives



Building a Campus-Wide Network



1

Prime Students
Early in the **First
Year**



2

**Target
Interventions**
Beyond the First
Year



3

Leverage **Campus
Partners** to Scale
Reach



4

Coda: Charting
a Path to an
**Institutional
Framework**



Simply Having Resources Isn't Enough

Difficulties Abound in Getting Mindshare Among Upperclassmen

A Plethora of Support for First-Year Students...



Orientation
grit inventory



Well-being
tips from peer
mentors



Residence hall
resilience
campaign



First-year
curriculum
infusion

...Dwindles to Self-Serve Resources for Sophomores and Beyond

✗ *Opt-in required*

✗ *"I don't know what help I need, so why bother?"*

✗ *"This content is for first years, it doesn't fit my current situation."*

What Comes Next?

"We spend a lot of energy familiarizing first-year students with these concepts, but **upperclassmen face an abundance of challenges that require resilience.** Right now, we depend on students finding their own help. **We need to be more proactive about connecting students with resources.**"

*Vice President of Student Affairs
Public Research University*

Special Population Initiatives Abound...

...Raising Questions About Long-Term Sustainability

A Range of Segment-Specific Support



Resilience coaching for
first generation students



Failure-norming campaign
for honors students



Online interviews with
commuter students



Special panel on cultural
resilience for international
students



Transfer student peer
mentoring



Wellness-themed living
and learning communities

Looking Beyond the First Year

Two Recommendations for Delivering Targeted Interventions

RECOMMENDATION #1

Monitor Warning Signs for Just-in-Time Interventions



Redirect low-risk students on counseling center waitlists



Catch warning signs through a “spot-and-refer” campaign

RECOMMENDATION #2

Provide Proactive Support at High Stress Moments



Embed resilience and coping strategies into career services



Provide prescriptive resilience training and support to readmitted students

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“We Know the Symptoms...

...But Aren't Always Proactive with Follow-up Support”

Early Warning Signs Across Campus...



Missing class and/or appointments



Persistent roommate conflicts



Failing early assignments



Dropping courses after the withdrawal deadline



Disengaged from peers and/or instructors

...Are Overlooked, Resulting in Significant Consequences



Behaviors go unnoticed or not flagged for follow-up



Student concerns escalate without appropriate intervention

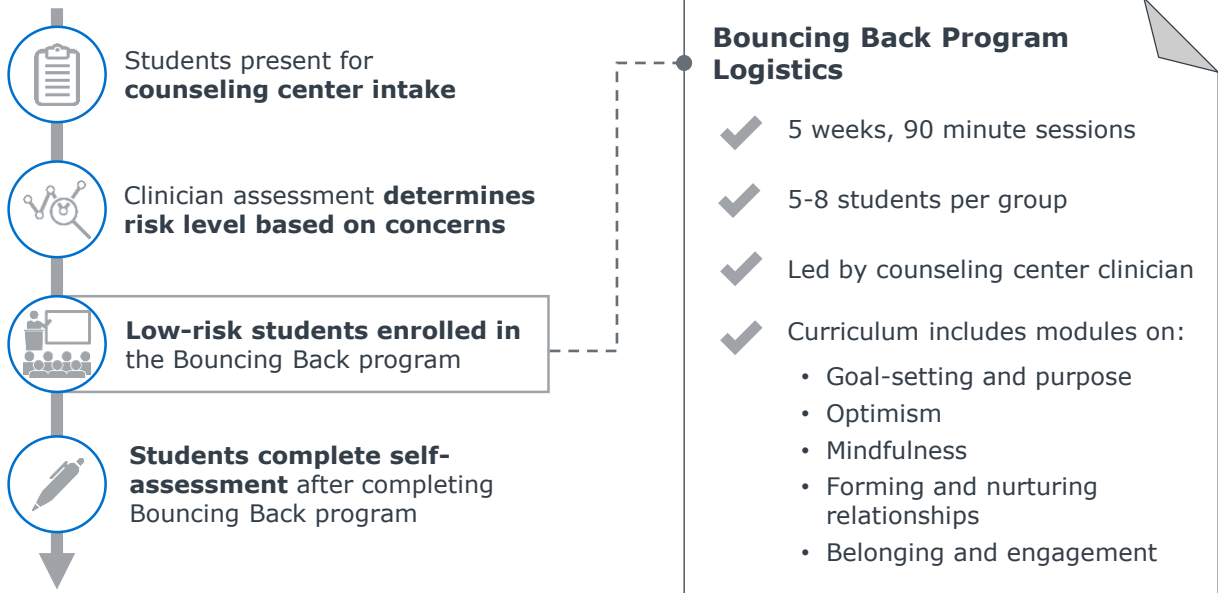


Institutions miss opportunities to help students get back on track

The Bouncing Back Program

The University at Buffalo Surfaces Students Through Counseling Center Intake

How It Works



Early Results Indicate Promise

University at Buffalo Expands Program Via Online Platform



Positive Participant Feedback on Bouncing Back

"I no longer feel lost and without a plan for my moving forward and overcoming situations. This group has helped me form a better understanding of myself..."

It was most helpful to...

"Talk about alternatives and opening eyes to help you see what is upsetting you and **what you can do to cope positively.**"

"Learn different **tools and techniques to move forward.**"

Key Benefits



Content adaptable for one-off or short-term interventions



Small groups helped students build support network and campus connections



Group format expands students' access to services/strategies

Next Steps for Bouncing Back



Adapt content for online platform to scale reach



Implement online rollout and marketing campaign¹

1) Ongoing in 2018-2019

Multifaceted Resources for Targeted Support

Ryerson's ThriveRU Initiative Offers Many Ways to Get Help

Ryerson University

ThriveRU's Mission: Provide training and resources to Ryerson students, faculty, and staff in order to teach the skills associated with resilience, well-being and thriving in both an academic and personal context.

Three Components of ThriveRU

1

"Thriving In Action" Program

- Semester-long program with an equity focus that blends holistic learning strategies and thriving skills
- 11-week program starts in third week of the semester
- Intended for undergrads in second semester or higher
- 3 cohorts per semester, 15-30 students per cohort
- Stakeholders refer students via online link to register for the course; students increasingly self-refer

2

ThriveRU Workshop Series

- Four session resilience training program
- Additional one-off workshops offered across the semester
- Topics include optimism, grit and changing habits
- Taught by ThriveRU Scholar-in-Residence

3

Self-Guided Resources

- Weekly workbook
- Resilience flashcards
- Meditation recordings
- Quick tip handouts

An Institution-Wide “Spot and Refer” Campaign

Ryerson ThriveRU Initiative, Thriving in Action, Focuses on Warning Signs

1



Attend Program Orientation

Stakeholders receive recruitment email and are invited to program orientation to learn more

2



Highlight Risk Indicators

Indicators include poor grades, missing deadlines, and being disengaged

3



Learn About Referral Mechanisms

Refer via course portal, or provide hard or soft copy of self-serve resources

4



Ask Questions

Stakeholders review resources with ThriveRU experts

5



Receive Follow Up Resources

ThriveRU website provides specific guidance and ongoing resources for stakeholders

6



Make Student Referrals

Stakeholders refer students to Thriving In Action and other ThriveRU resources

Catching Early Warning Signs

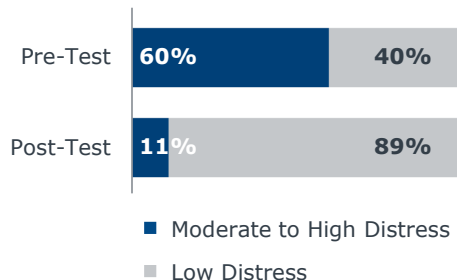
Stakeholders Drive ThriveRU Utilization

“Thriving In Action” Program 2017-18 Results

37%

Increase in participants’ feelings
of belonging at Ryerson

Self-Rated Distress Levels¹



Referrals Come From Variety of Stakeholders

- ✓ Student Affairs
 - Disability Services
 - International Student Services
 - Resident Advisors
 - Counseling Services
- ✓ Departmental Program Assistants
- ✓ Faculty

Stakeholder Participation Key to Success

“These people see students all the time and have built relationships with them. **If your department advisor says, ‘you know, I think this would really help you,’ you’re going to listen to that trusted adult.**”

*Dr. Diana Brecher
Scholar-in-Residence, ThriveRU*

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Provide prescriptive resilience training and support to readmitted students

Provide Proactive Support at High-Stress Moments



Keep Resilience Top-of-Mind During Key Inflection Points

Meet Students Where They're At With Transition Challenges

“The stress and anxiety from certain transition points can become so overwhelming that they derail every aspect of a student's life. **If we embed resilience into our support and resources around that transition, we can meet them where they are rather than expecting them to find it while in crisis.**”



*Director of Student Success and Retention
Large Public Research University*

Career Planning



- Writing a resume for the first time
- Anxiety about interviewing and networking
- Coping with rejections and/or setbacks

Returning From Leave



- Adjusting to campus life and responsibilities
- Facing overwhelming pressure to succeed
- Navigating administrative hurdles

“We Received Many Qualified Applicants...”

Tufts University Targets Resources to Sophomores in the Career Process

Sophomores Face a Number of Big Picture Decisions



"What should I major in?"



"Should I study abroad?"



"Can I afford to do an unpaid internship?"



"Am I a failure because I didn't get that interview?"

Tufts Career Center Provides Resilience Skill Building Support



Sophomore Career Summit

One-day event features panel on managing expectations and **coping with stress**



Career Exploration Course

Curriculum includes strategies to **build and apply resilience** in career development



Resilience One-Pager

Quick tips to promote resilience, cope with rejection, and connect with on and off-campus resources

Resilience and the Job Search

Tufts Career Center's Resilience One-Pager

Applying to jobs or grad/professional school goes hand-in-hand with developing resiliency – the ability to bounce back and keep going after life's inevitable stumbles. The Career Center is here to support you as you face these challenges and work to build your resiliency.

3 Things to Remember When Facing Rejection

1. **It's okay to be disappointed.** Feeling disheartened or losing confidence after rejection is natural. Believe it or not, these feelings say something good about you! They mean you care about what you're doing.
2. **Everyone – and we mean everyone – faces rejection during the job search and/or grad school application process.** Whether it's sending an application that disappears into the void, failing to receive a call-back after an interview, or getting all the way to the final round and then hearing a 'no,' you are not alone in facing the challenge of rejection. See below for stories from individuals who have managed similar feelings/situations.
3. **Your self-worth is not tied to a single (or even several!) rejections.** While rejection is difficult, it doesn't diminish all you've accomplished thus far, nor does it predict your ability to succeed in the future.

5 Ways to Build Resiliency

1. **Evaluate your belief system:** In the big picture, how do you think about the stress of rejection? Are there ways you could you perceive it differently, i.e., in more helpful and productive terms?
2. **Be self-aware:** Reflect on your levels of resiliency for different areas of life, e.g., personal relationships, academic life, career-related plans. Are you more resilient in some areas and less so in others? Can you apply some of the things that make you more resilient in particular areas to this situation?

Returning From Leave Is Challenging

Students Need More Help Than the Current Status Quo

External Pressure Rises to Support Students Returning to Campus

“Schools have to realize that the person on leave is still their student, and that they have an obligation to help them return to school and succeed.”

Karen Bower, Attorney

“The campus should create a health success plan with students returning from a health-related leave of absence that specifies the support offices and staff that are available upon return and how to access them.”

Active Minds Policy Statement

There is More We Can Do

“That first semester back from leave can be a rocky road. **We already have resources - we just need to do more with them** to help these students realize that they can bounce back and be successful.”

*Vice President for Student Affairs
Mid-sized Public University*

Investing in Better Supports



Two Early Programs Focused on Returning Students



Highlight Resilience Skills

"Fresh Start" Readmit Program

- ✓ Required 8-week course to help readmitted students develop success skills and get back on track
- ✓ Successful course completion required to secure full re-admit status at the institution
- ✓ ThriveRU is brought in to lead resilience workshop to help returning students develop strategies to overcome barriers
- ✓ Students are invited to participate in Thriving In Action



Provide Wrap-Around Advising

Roadways Initiative

- ✓ Non-profit community partner grant provides money for re-admits to overcome hurdles around returning to college
- ✓ Advisor reaches out to re-admits to learn about their challenges and help them navigate roadblocks (especially financial hurdles)
- ✓ Advisor brokers connections to various campus resources to help readmitted students succeed and graduate

Designing a Plan for Success

Vanderbilt Helps Students Personalize a Roadmap for Returning to Campus

Returning from MLOA at Vanderbilt

- 1 Submit personal narrative and medical documentation to Office of Student Care Coordination and academic program
- 2 Meet with Student Care Coordination to complete **Student Success Plan**
- 3 Readmission Decision: Student Care Coordination consults Dean of Students for final decision
- 4 Meet with Student Care Coordination to discuss Student Success Plan implementation
- 5 Return to campus, following up with Student Care Coordination as needed

Student Success Plan

Goal Setting Domains

- ☐ Personal
- ☐ Social
- ☐ Academic
- ☐ Housing

Tools for Success

- Medical/Mental Health Support
- Alcohol and Other Drug Support
- Well-being Support
- Academic Support
- Additional Campus Support

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More Resources at EAB.com

- **Ready-to Use Slides:**
Explore the demand for mental health services with campus partners
- **Dive Deeper:** Read the White Paper on Expanding Well-Being Initiatives Through Faculty Partnerships
- Additional resource centers on **Campus Climate, Student Activism, First-Generation Students,** and more.



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