



How Colleges Flunk Mental Health

This article details the challenges that institutions of higher learning face in serving students with mental health needs, and the resulting impacts on the young people they educate.

<http://mag.newsweek.com/2014/02/07/colleges-flunk-mental-health.html>

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focus

What is the Focus?

The *Focus* newsletter highlights important issues in mental health, providing timely information on a range of topics, including work-force development, supported education, organizational development and sustainability, peer-to-peer services, youth transition and system transformation. Have a suggestion for a topic? Let us know!



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Thirty Schools Recognized for Quality Mental Health Programming

Are Colleges Failing Mental Health?

As a recent Newsweek article, “How Colleges Flunk Mental Health” (link above) points out, there is a tension in higher education between the pressing need to accommodate and serve students with mental health needs, and the difficulties institutions face in terms of their ability to support students while limiting their liability and acting in what they perceive to be the best interest of their student body. The article goes into great depth in examining the first-hand experiences of students, the concerns and perspectives of administrators, and the stresses experienced by academic institutions in trying to support students with disabilities in a higher education setting. While some institutions do an admirable job of treating students seeking help with compassion and understanding, there have also been many instances of students being treated unfairly, alienated, and even asked to leave campus.

One of the central conclusions of the article is that “Current and former students at schools across the country who’ve had positive experiences with their university’s mental health services all had one thing in common: They never felt punished.” The hallmark of a college or university with quality mental health services is the ability to remain open and receptive to students seeking help, instead of stigmatizing them, excluding them from the campus community, and further traumatizing them in the process.

Students Speak Out

In recent years, several organizations have come into being to represent and advocate for students with mental health needs on the nation's campuses. By sparking a public dialogue about mental health, they have been able to counter the tendency toward silence and fear regarding mental health on American campuses. Active Minds (www.activeminds.org), which grew out of the advocacy of one student whose brother took his own life in 2000, now has chapters on more than 400 campuses. This organization focuses on promoting the student voice and reducing stigma by encouraging dialogue. Another organization, The Jed Foundation (www.jedfoundation.org), also came into being when a family lost a college-age child to suicide. Much like Active Minds, The Jed Foundation attempts to prevent suicide and promote emotional health by fostering awareness and sparking conversations that reduce stigma.



A New Way to Measure Mental Health Services on Campus

In addition to its work supporting students, The Jed Foundation also has a program that provides a tool for universities to assess their own mental health and suicide prevention programming, called Jed Campus. Colleges and universities are well accustomed to being evaluated and accredited, but for their academic programs, not their mental health services. Under the Jed Campus model, that is no longer the case. The Jed Campus program works by inviting schools to participate in a confidential self-assessment about their current mental health, suicide prevention, and substance abuse programming. Their responses are compared to standards and practices developed by national experts in college mental health and substance abuse prevention. (The standards can be viewed at www.jedfoundation.org/professionals/comprehensive-approach.) The Jed Foundation in turn provides feedback and consultation to help participants improve their services.

Schools that have exemplary mental health programming receive a Jed Campus seal. Recently the first 30 institutions to receive the Jed Campus seal were revealed. While it seems likely that there will still be tension and difficulty surrounding attempts to make institutions of higher education conducive to students with mental health needs, the Jed Campus initiative is one way to help schools better understand how they can improve, and to bring attention to institutions that can be models for others in meeting the mental health needs of their students. At the same time, the list of Jed Campus seal recipients offers students with mental health needs a list of colleges and universities that are well-equipped to serve them, and more likely to invest in the principles of supported education.

Want to find more resources related to Supported Education?

Check out the Supported Education section of our website!

cafetacenter.net/supported-education

Jed Campus Seal Recipients

1. **Alfred University**—Alfred, NY—www.alfred.edu
2. **Barnard College**—New York, NY—barnard.edu
3. **Boston University**—Boston, MA—www.bu.edu
4. **Brandeis University**—Waltham, MA—www.brandeis.edu
5. **Columbia University**—New York, NY—www.columbia.edu
6. **Cornell University**—Ithaca, NY—www.cornell.edu
7. **Emory University**—Atlanta, GA—www.emory.edu
8. **Fordham University**—Bronx, NY—www.fordham.edu
9. **Georgetown University**—Washington, DC—www.georgetown.edu
10. **Luther College**—Decorah, IA—www.luther.edu
11. **Marymount Manhattan College**—New York, NY—www.mmm.edu
12. **Monmouth University**—West Long Branch, NJ—www.monmouth.edu
13. **New York University**—New York, NY—www.nyu.edu
14. **The Ohio State University**—Columbus, OH—www.osu.edu
15. **Pace University**—New York, NY—www.pace.edu
16. **Pennsylvania State University — Altoona**—Altoona, PA—www.altoona.psu.edu
17. **School of the Art Institute of Chicago**—Chicago, IL—www.saic.edu
18. **Stevens Institute of Technology**—Hoboken, NJ—www.stevens.edu
19. **Texas State University**—San Marcos, TX—www.txstate.edu
20. **Three Rivers Community College**—Norwich, CT—www.trcc.commnet.edu
21. **Tulane University**—New Orleans, LA—Tulane.edu
22. **University at Albany, State University of New York**—Albany, NY—www.albany.edu
23. **University of Kentucky**—Lexington, KY—www.uky.edu
24. **University of Southern California**—Los Angeles, CA—www.usc.edu
25. **University of the Sciences**—Philadelphia, PA—www.usciences.edu
26. **University of West Georgia**—Carrollton, GA—www.westga.edu
27. **University of Nevada** — Las Vegas—Las Vegas, NV—www.unlv.edu
28. **Worcester Polytechnic Institute**—Worcester, MA—www.wpi.edu
29. **Yeshiva University**—New York, NY—www.yu.edu
30. **Yale University**—New Haven, CT—www.yale.edu



The CAFÉ TA Center is a SAMHSA funded program

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