The University of Texas at Austin

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A Faculty and Staff Toolkit
FOR CO-CREATING HEALTHIER ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENTS

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Toolkit Purpose

The Well-Being in Academic Environments Toolkit provides strategies and implementation tips for faculty and staff to support student mental health and cultivate well-being in academic environments and/or in their spheres of influence. It addresses how to create a more accessible learning space specifically for those struggling with mental health. It also provides guidance for assisting a student in distress and referral pathways.

Rationale

- Increases in self-reported mental health struggles by college students. (Duffy et al., 2019; Flaherty, 2023; Krendl, 2023)
- Mental health struggles are top reasons for either not enrolling in or dropping out of college. (Gallup, 2023a, Gallup 2023b)
- Strong relationship between academic performance and mental health. (Eisenberg et al., 2009; El Ansari & Stock, 2010; El Ansari & Stock, 2010; Keyes et al., 2012; Lipson et al., 2019; Renshaw et al., 2016)
- Increased demand at college counseling centers for low-risk concerns, such as general anxiety and stress, loneliness, and isolation. (EAB, 2018)
- UT students indicate faculty members often seen as "missing link" when it comes to their own well-being. (Stuart & Lee, 2013)
- Call to Action: Embedding well-being into all aspects of campus culture, across the administration, operations and academics. (Okanagan Charter, 2015)



UT Austin Toolkit

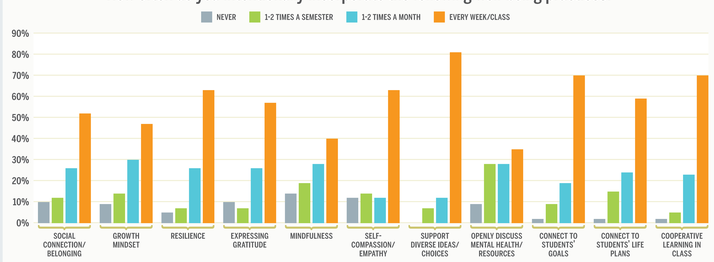
CSU Toolkit

Implementation

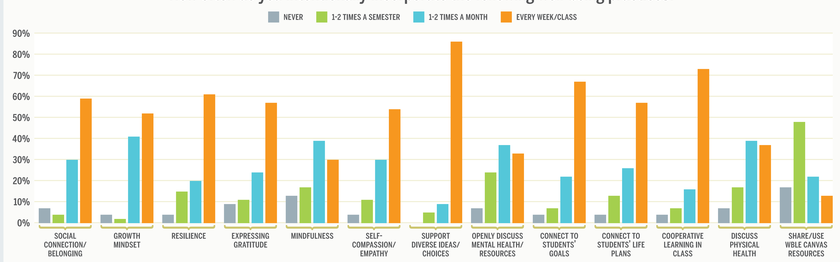
- Used Brofenbrenner's (1977) ecological model to guide implementation approach.
- Piloted in three UT Austin colleges starting in 2017:
  - Focus groups and interviews with students and faculty
  - Classroom observations with feedback
  - Presentations to faculty groups
  - Student survey
- Creation of toolkit and support materials (guidebook, website, Canvas course, quick response cards for student in distress) based on focus group, interview and observation data. UT Austin has collaborated with or helped 60 universities, like CSU, in the process of implementing their own toolkits.
- Expansion to other classrooms:
  - Observations and meetings with more than 150 faculty across 13 colleges.
  - More than 480 participants in our Canvas course.
- Expansion at the department and college levels:
  - Faculty departmental workshops and presentations.
  - Creation of mental health and wellness committees.
  - Creation of college wellness centers and wellness coordinator positions.
  - CSU has been educating about the toolkit in through faculty staff training opportunities, and this initiative is supported by the CSU Health Network Health Education and Prevention Services department.
- Expansion at the institutional level:
  - Collaboration with other departments, such as the Center for Teaching and Learning, SHIFT, Sanger Learning Center, Texas Global. CSU has integrated the toolkit into their Teaching and Learning Framework.
  - Collaboration with Provost's Office.
- Future plans:
  - Continue building relationships with academic affairs for integration and consider awards and/or incentivize use.
  - Continue to position well-being and belonging as important factors to student success.

UT Austin Toolkit Use Results

Percent of Texas Well-being Faculty Responses 2020
How often do you intentionally incorporate the following well-being practices?



Percent of Texas Well-being Faculty Responses 2021
How often do you intentionally incorporate the following well-being practices?



Significant Between-group Mean Differences
Non-Texas Well-being vs. Texas Well-being

