



From Foundering to Flourishing: Strategies That Promote Community College Students' Mental Health and Well-Being in a Post- COVID World

November 2023: East Peoria, IL ICCCA

Fast and Furious: Managing the Speed of Change



J e a n i n e M c M i l l e n , E d . D .

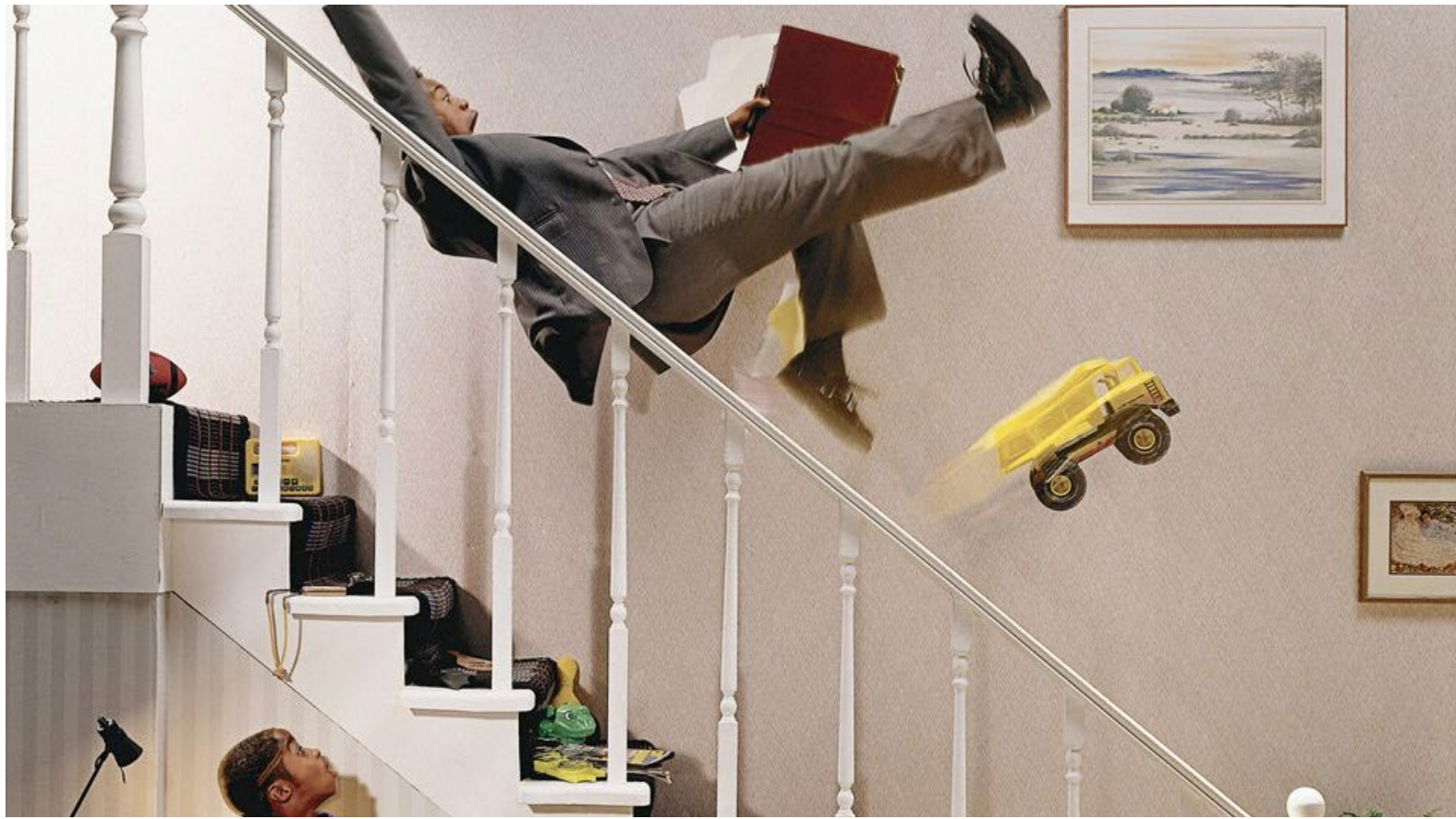
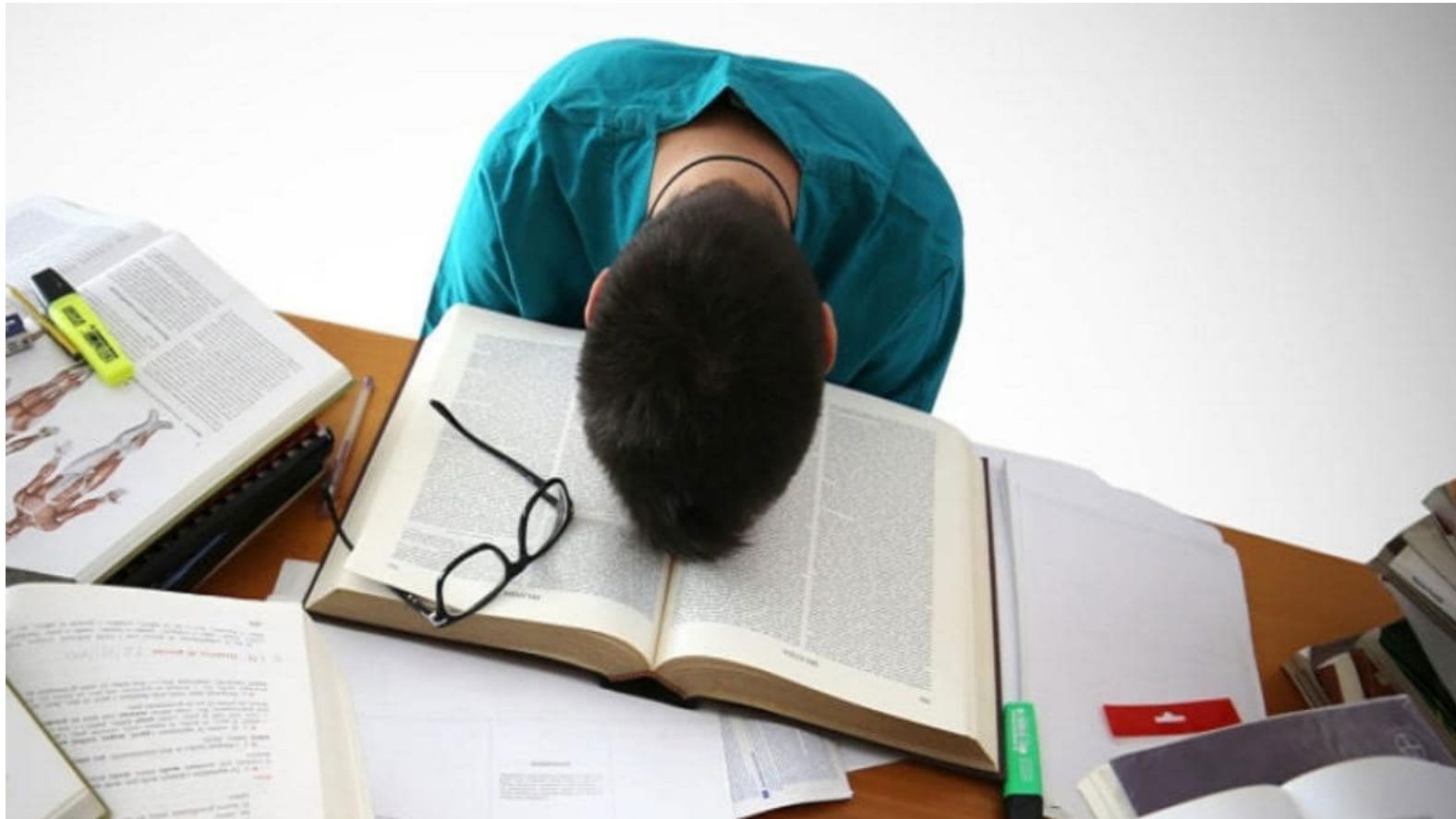
Assistant Dean for Business, Technology, & Workforce Education



WAUBONSEE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE



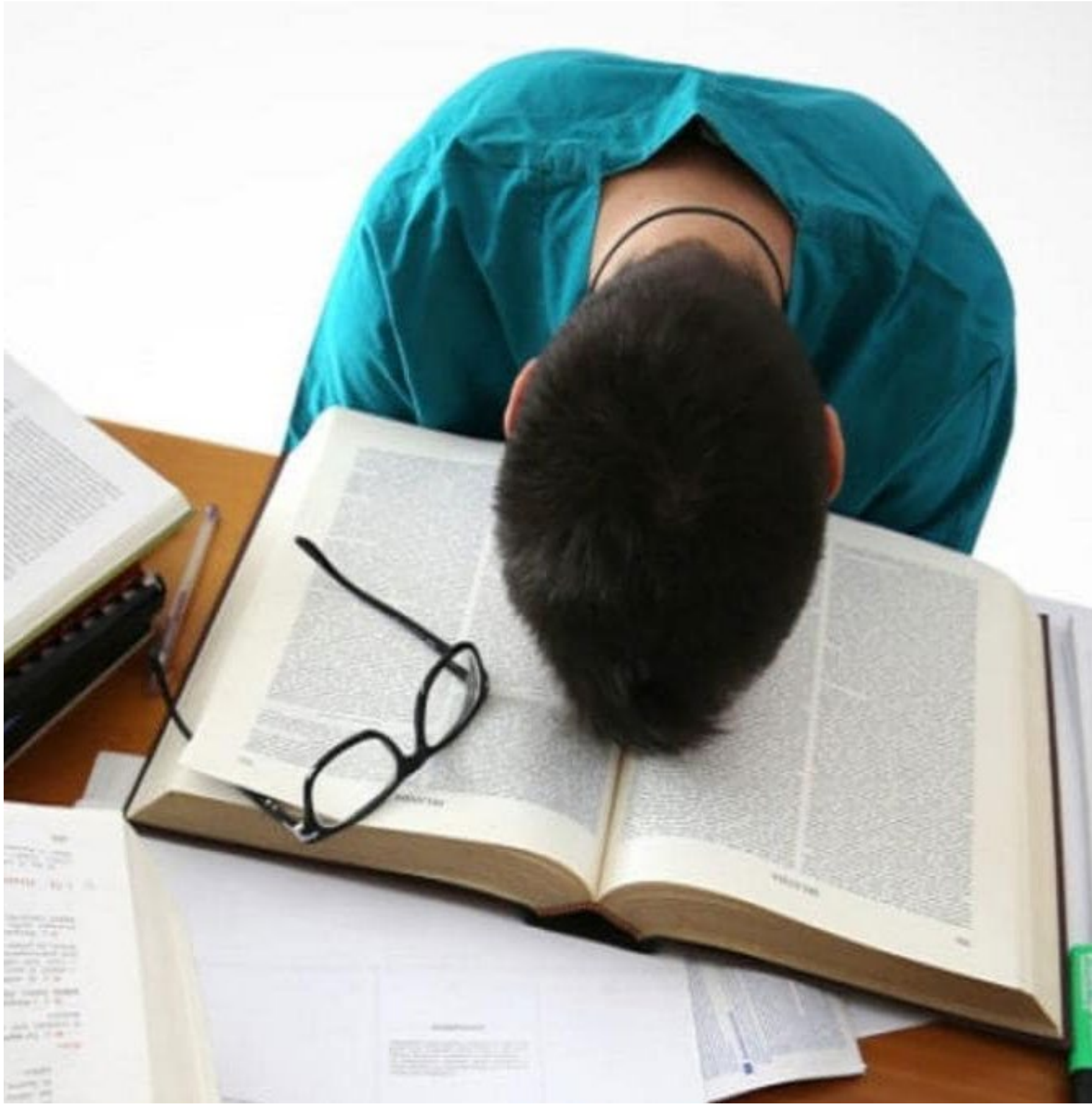
Floundering is like...





Flourishing is like...





Overview



The pandemic is over. Why are we still talking about mental health?



What are the major challenges/current research related to college student mental health and well-being?



How are community colleges responding (e.g., best practices; gaps)?



What are YOUR questions, concerns, and/or strategies?

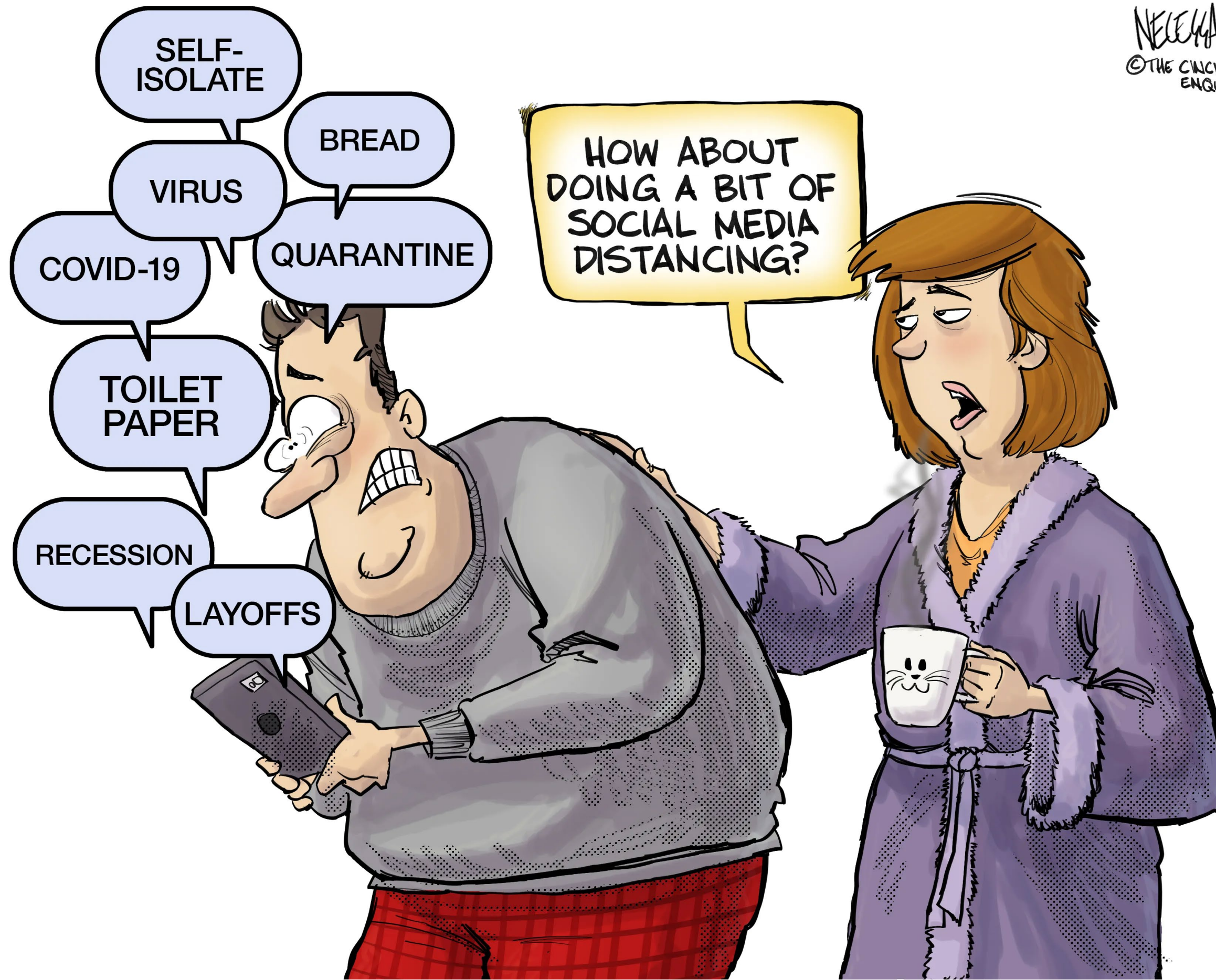


Image: The Cincinnati Inquirer

What May Be
Compromising
Our Students'
Mental Health
and Well-Being?





Community College Students & Mental Health

More than 50% screened positive for symptoms of one or more mental health conditions

They are less likely to use mental health services compared to four-year peers

Those from marginalized backgrounds experience greater mental health burden; less likely to access services

Financial stress is a significant predictor

Perceived cost of care poses treatment barrier

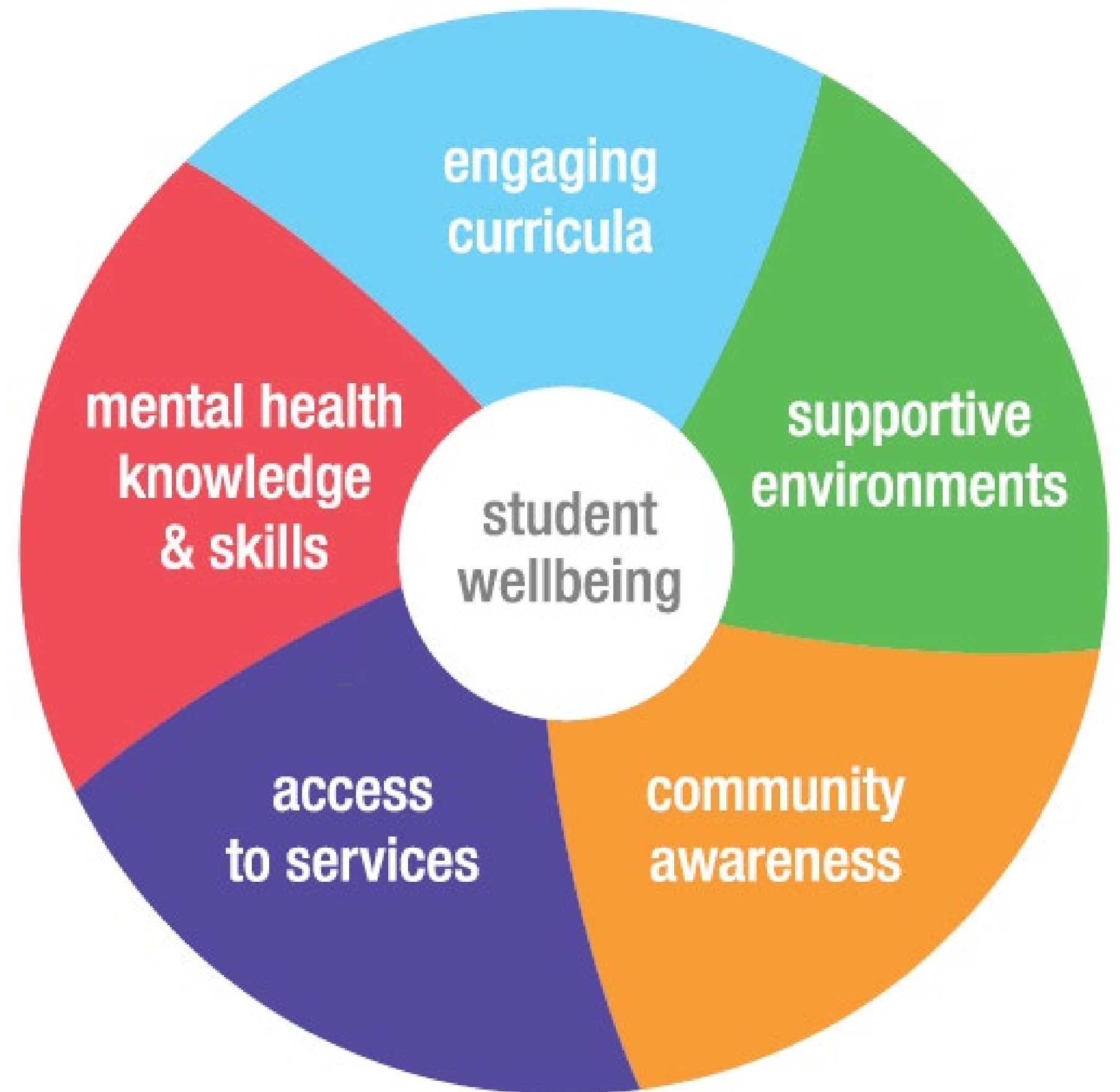
Mixed-Methods Study of Student Mental Health During COVID-19 Pandemic

- Flourishing (or lack thereof) during COVID-19: College students' social-psychological well-being during the Fall 2020 semester
- Students' mental well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic: Exploring ways institutions can foster undergraduate students' mental well-being



Image: Waubensee Community College

A Holistic Framework for Promoting Student Mental Health & Well-Being



Surveys (Fall 2020) & Interviews (Spring 2021)

Flourishing Scale (Diener et al. 2009):

- Brief 8-item summary measure of respondent's **self-perceived success** (eg., in relationships, self-esteem, purpose, optimism)
- Scale provides a single psychological well-being score (8-56 points).
- Flourishing Measures (Fall 2020 Semester):
 - 1) Pre-pandemic scale (**in retrospect**, reported at start of semester)
 - 2) Start of semester scale
 - 3) End of semester scale

Source: Diener et al., 2009



Image: American Medical Student Association

What We Found...

A chalkboard illustration of a classroom. A teacher stands at the front, gesturing towards a chalkboard. Several students are seated at desks, some looking towards the teacher. The scene is rendered in a soft, painterly style with muted colors.

Participants

Struggled with lack of social connections

Encountered challenges in adjusting to online learning environment

Were aware of decrease in mental health but hesitant to seek out resources

Reported that housing arrangement impacted well-being

What We
Also Found...

Students' stress was reduced, and well-being was fostered by faculty who...

Provided opportunities for increased engagement

Were flexible and supportive

A Few Final
Thoughts
From the
Study...

Institutions Should:

Craft more authentic
messaging and proactive
outreach

Train faculty to reinforce
messaging, initiate
outreach, and
contextualize instruction

Develop students' mental
health knowledge and
self-regulatory behaviors

Create more inclusive
communities for
students who struggle
academically, feel
isolated, and may be
hesitant to ask for help

What's Waubonsee
Doing at the
Institutional Level?



Promoting Ease of Access to Multiple Services in Collaboration with Community Partners

Community Resources

Students with disabilities can find support on campus and in the community

- + On-Campus Resources
- + Community Agencies
- + Counseling Services
- + Legal Resources
- + Informative Resources

[Community Resources for Students with Disabilities](#)

[Association for Individual Development \(AID\)](#)

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

I am feeling overwhelmed.

I am short on cash.

I need help finding a place to stay.

I just need someone to talk to.

CONNECT WITH WAUBONSEE FOR SUPPORT
Scan the appropriate QR code for more information on how Waubonsee can connect you to the resources you need.

Housing Support Emergency Assistance Mental Health Support Request Additional Assistance

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Waubonsee's Peer Support Leadership Program

- Participate in Peer Support Leader training and other ongoing trainings
- Provide peer support to students around mental health and wellness at special events, workshops, and drop-in hours
- Consult with WCC counselors weekly to support student wellness

Waubonsee's Screening Tool



GET HELP ...

Check-in on your mental health

Take a brief screening with Waubonsee's anonymous, confidential, and free Mental Health Screening Tool to determine if you or someone you care about should connect with a behavioral health professional. Visit waubonsee.edu/counseling to check it out!



**If you already know you're feeling overwhelmed or stressed -
Meet with a Peer Support Leader!**

They may be experiencing some of the same things you are and can offer ideas to help you cope. Peer Support Leaders have been trained in mental health support, stress management, and more. They can provide information about resources available to help you.

For more information on caring for your personal well-being, visit waubonsee.edu/counseling

Training for All!



Mental Health
FIRST AID






from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR
MENTAL WELLBEING

***Do we make it mandatory?**

What's Waubonsee
Doing at the
Instructional Level?



Fitting *College* into the Students' Schedule

	FACE-TO-FACE Schedule Code: By Campus Location 	ONLINE Schedule Code: ONLINE 	HYBRID Schedule Code: Hybrid 	SYNC ONLINE Schedule Code: SYNC ONLINE 	FLEX Schedule Code: FLEX 
On-campus attendance required	X		X		Student's choice
Participation required at a specific time (synchronous)	X		X <i>(For the face-to-face sessions)</i>	X	Student's choice
Heavy use of technology (equipment, Internet, Canvas, Zoom)		X	X	X	X
Ability to work well independently without set meeting schedule (asynchronous)		X	X		Student's choice
Assignments due on specific dates	X	X	X	X	X

Self-Paced or "Hyperflexible" Learning



Image: Shutterstock

For two of my classes, I use "recommended due dates" that keep students on a comfortable pace to complete all of the assignments, but I allow work to be submitted at any time before the end of the semester without penalty. For a third class, I have to stay a bit more structured around the midterm and final exam, so I push most due dates out to be due the week of or week before those exams. I have heard from many that they appreciated the flexibility that allowed them to work around their real lives and still get everything submitted and earn college credit. Flexible due dates don't work for all classes but can be great for some.

- Full-time CTE faculty member, Waubonsee Community College



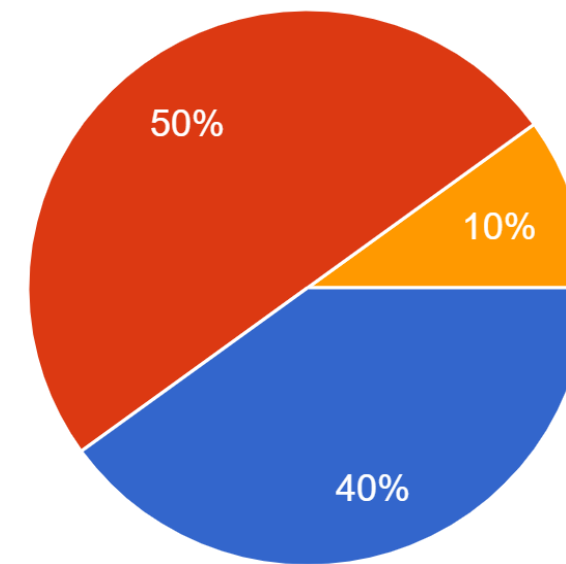
How can I help?

Get to Know Your Students

- Create a "Getting to Know You" Google form assignment to quickly gather and assess course-level student data
- Share general findings to encourage social connections/community building
- Use findings to identify needs and support students' flourishing

Cats or dogs?

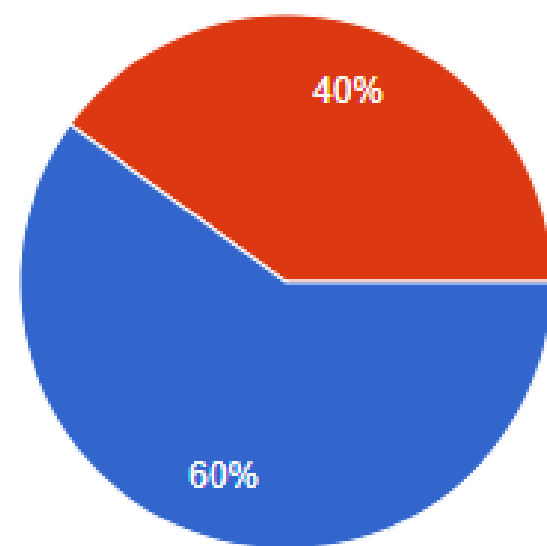
20 responses



- Option 1
- Option 2
- Option 3

Are you a first-generation college student (ie, parents did not graduate from four-year institution)?

20 responses



- Yes
- No

Favorite thing(s) about school/learning:

19 responses

Greatest challenge(s) with school/learning (This could be related to how you learn in general or specific to the pandemic, etc. Any information is helpful here!).

19 responses

Unraveling Faculty Burnout



*Pathways to
Reckoning and Renewal*

REBECCA POPE-RUARK, PhD

Acknowledge Instructors' Mental Health Concerns & Invisible Labor

[Gauging Faculty on Their Roles Post-Covid](#)

[Teaching in Higher Ed Podcast: Interview with
Rebecca Pope-Ruark, PhD](#)

Other Areas We're Proud of...

- More clinical mental health counselors on board; 3 bilingual counselors
- One counselor assigned to each academic division for greater visibility/personability
- Course "Navigators" embedded in targeted courses
- Academic Coaches to help with executive functioning skills
- 24/7 Tutoring Support
- Latinx-specific programming and support; more collegewide messaging/resources available in Spanish
- Formation of Family Initiatives Committee



What We're Still Working On...

- Disaggregate student data and ACT on it
- Engage a diversity of student voices and perspectives in our planning
- Encourage greater participation among faculty in mental health support training
- Provide more visible, realistic support for students with specific needs (e.g., designated parking for pregnant students; gender neutral restrooms)
- Contextualize services, programming, and messaging (e.g., student parent peer support group; messaging catered to students with re-entry backgrounds)



How might we change this messaging so that we transcend the "traditional" student?



*Stress got you down?
Feeling overwhelmed?
Not sure where to turn?*



Waubonsee Talk Line (630) 264-0394

24/7 Support Line for Waubonsee Students

We listen! Our trained, professional staff will hear you out and help you out. Referral services include family/relationship issues, mental health, financial/credit concerns, addiction, services for veterans, domestic violence, medical/health care, legal services, child and elder care, and more.



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Counseling

Waubonsee does not discriminate on the basis of any individual's actual or perceived characteristic protected by law in its programs or activities. Inquiries regarding this policy may be directed to: Michele Needham, Title IX/ADA/Section 504 Coordinator, Route 47 at Waubonsee Drive, Sugar Grove, IL 60554, compliance@waubonsee.edu.

Institutional & Societal Benefits

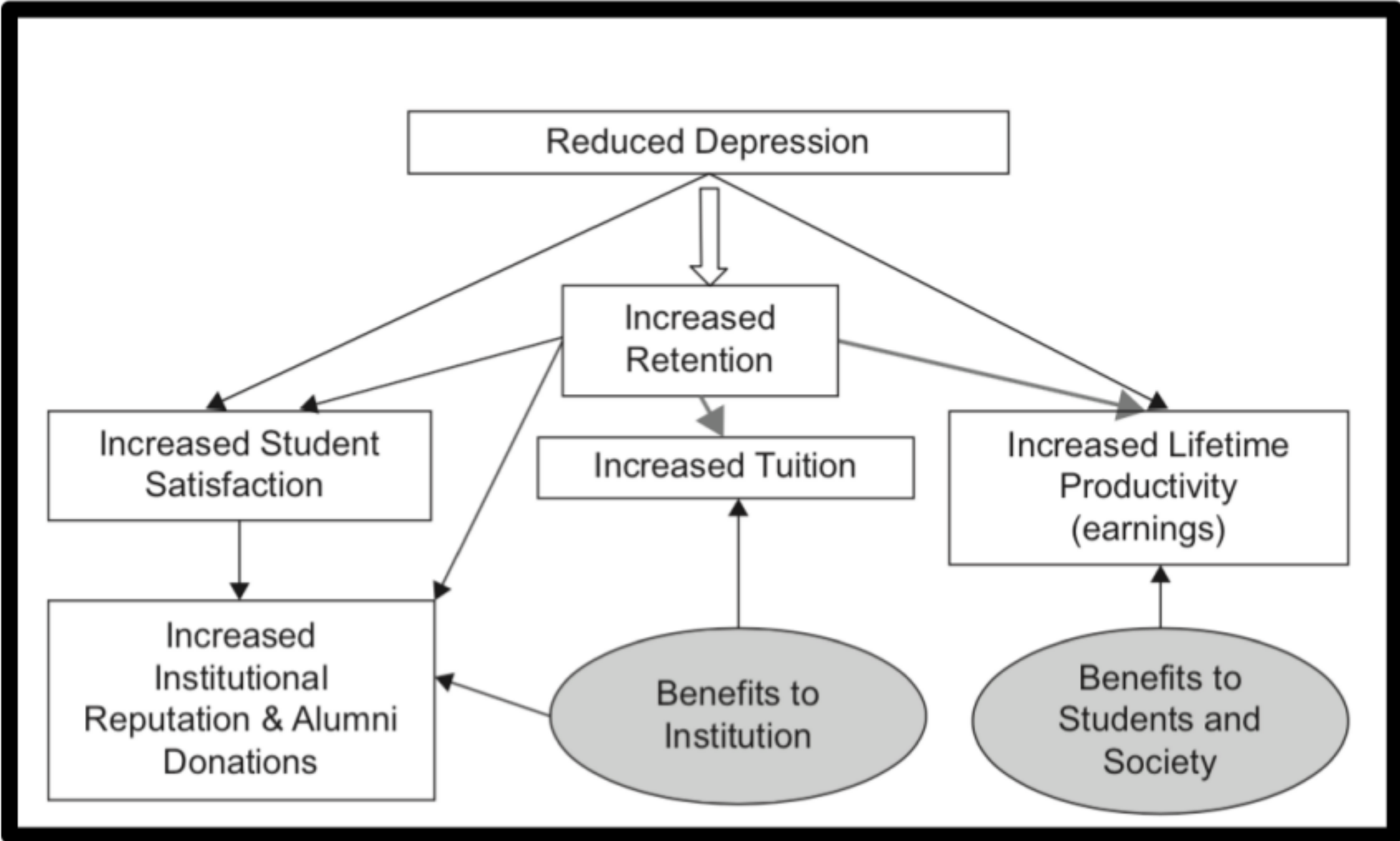


Image: The Healthy Minds Network

On succeeding holistically:

It's the emotional support too. It's the mental stability and me physically being healthy, and it is this big puzzle that it comes together, and when the pieces fit into the right places, you become whole and you are able to move forward to the next day.

- Waubonsee student mother





We Need to Talk...

- Does your institution engage the voices of students who are "on the margins" or may have some insights to share about mental health challenges?
- What internal or community resources does your institution provide to students who may be struggling with mental health?
- What, if any, training is offered to faculty, our "front line" employees?
- Are there any "high-visibility" messages/resources at your institution to support special student populations, such as caregiving students?
- Are there any smaller "day-to-day" practices at your institution that promote mental health and well-being?

Key Takeaways...

Community college students flounder for a variety of reasons, and in combination, these challenges can diminish one's mental health and well-being

Flourishing occurs through practices that promote social connections, academic success, access to services, and contextualized messaging and support

There is no ONE solution to addressing student mental health challenges; institutional, instructional, and interpersonal practices play integral roles

A holistic framework is needed to guide institutions as they seek to integrate, contextualize, and expand resources

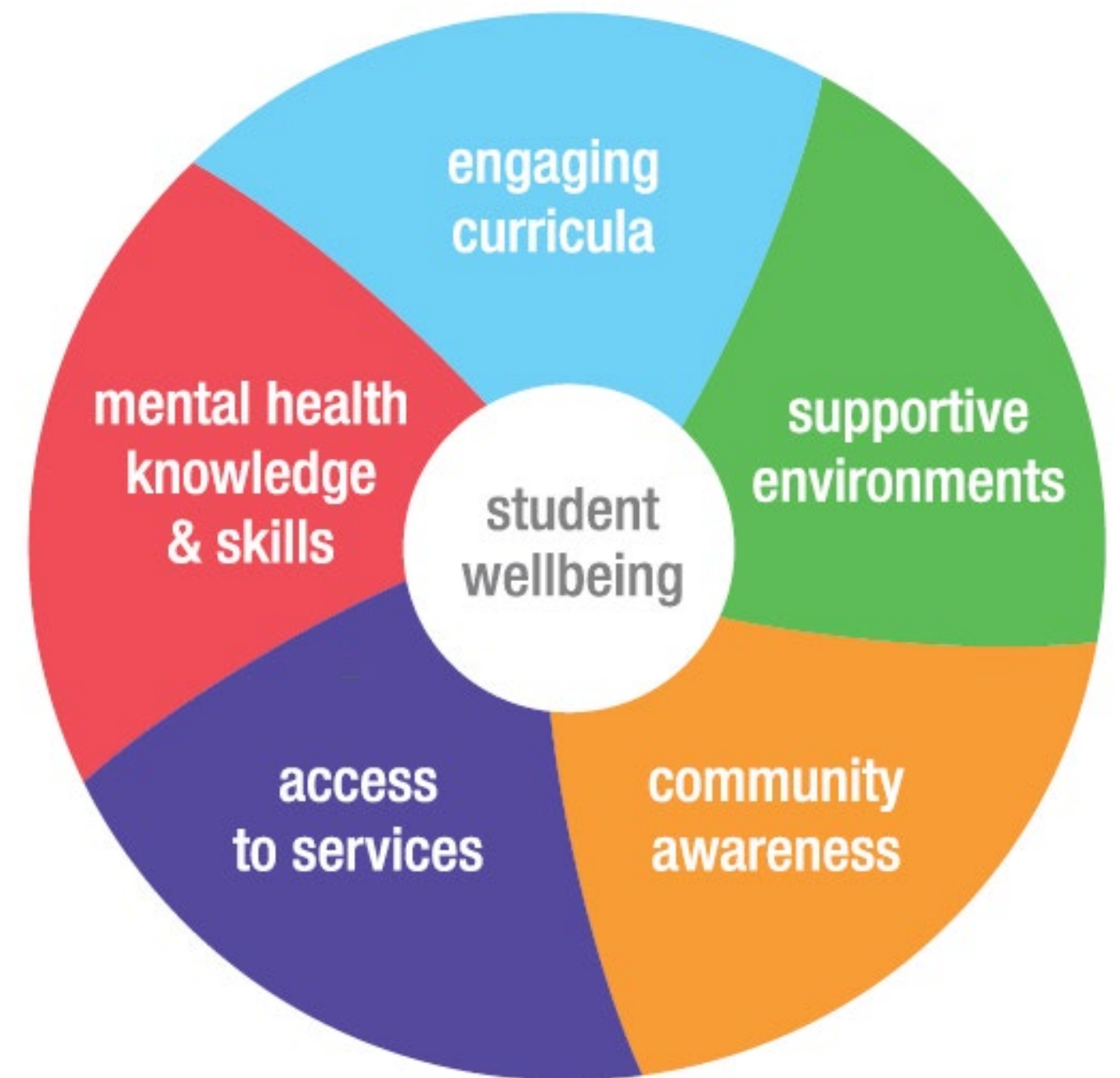



Image: unistudentwellbeing.edu.au

The background of the slide features a soft-focus photograph of cherry blossom trees in full bloom, with delicate pink and white flowers hanging from dark branches. In the lower portion of the image, a person wearing a light blue shirt is visible, though they are out of focus. The overall lighting is natural and slightly dim, creating a serene and contemplative atmosphere.

Helping Students FLOURISH:
What is **ONE** new approach you
plan to tackle after attending this
presentation?



Contact me at jmcmillen@waubonsee.edu
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/jeaninemcmillen/>

Research & Resources:

[A Framework for Promoting Student Mental Wellbeing in Universities](#)

[Gauging Faculty on Their Roles, Post-Covid](#)

[How Community Colleges Can Support Student Mental Health Needs \(Rand\)](#)

[Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act](#)

[Mental Health First Aid Training](#)

[Mental Health Resources \(American College Health Association\)](#)

[Mental Health Support for Community College Students \(Community College Review\)](#)

[Teaching in Higher Ed Podcast: Interview with Rebecca Pope-Ruark, PhD](#)

[The Growing Mental Health Crisis in Community Colleges \(The New America\)](#)

[The Healthy Minds Study \(2021-2022 Data Report\)](#)

[We Took Away Due Dates for University Assignments. Here's What We Found](#)



Research & Resources, cont.

Diener, E., Wirtz, D., Tov, W., Kim-Prieto, C., Choi, D., Oishi, S., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2009). New measures of well-being: Flourishing and positive and negative feelings. *Social Indicators Research*, 39, 247-266. DOI: [10.1007/s11205-009-9493-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-009-9493-y)

Lipson, S. K., Lattie, E. G., & Eisenberg, D. (2019). Increased rates of mental health service utilization by US college students: 10-year population-level trends (2007–2017). *Psychiatric Services*, 70(1), 60-63 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.201800332>

Lipson S.K., Kern A., Eisenberg D., Breland-Noble A.M. (2018). Mental Health Disparities Among College Students of Color. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 63(3), 348-356. DOI: [10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.04.014](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.04.014)

Nyunt, G., McMillen, J., Oplt, K., & Beckham, V. (2023). Students' mental well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic: Exploring ways institutions can foster undergraduate students' mental well-being. *Journal of Student Affairs Inquiry*, 6(1), 59-82. <http://www.studentaffairsassessment.org/jsai-volume-6>

Nyunt, G., McMillen, J., Oplt, K., & Beckham, V. (2022): Flourishing (or lack thereof) during COVID-19: College students' social-psychological well-being during the Fall 2020 semester, *Journal of American College Health* DOI: [10.1080/07448481.2021.2024548](https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2021.2024548)



Image: Alamy Stock Photo