

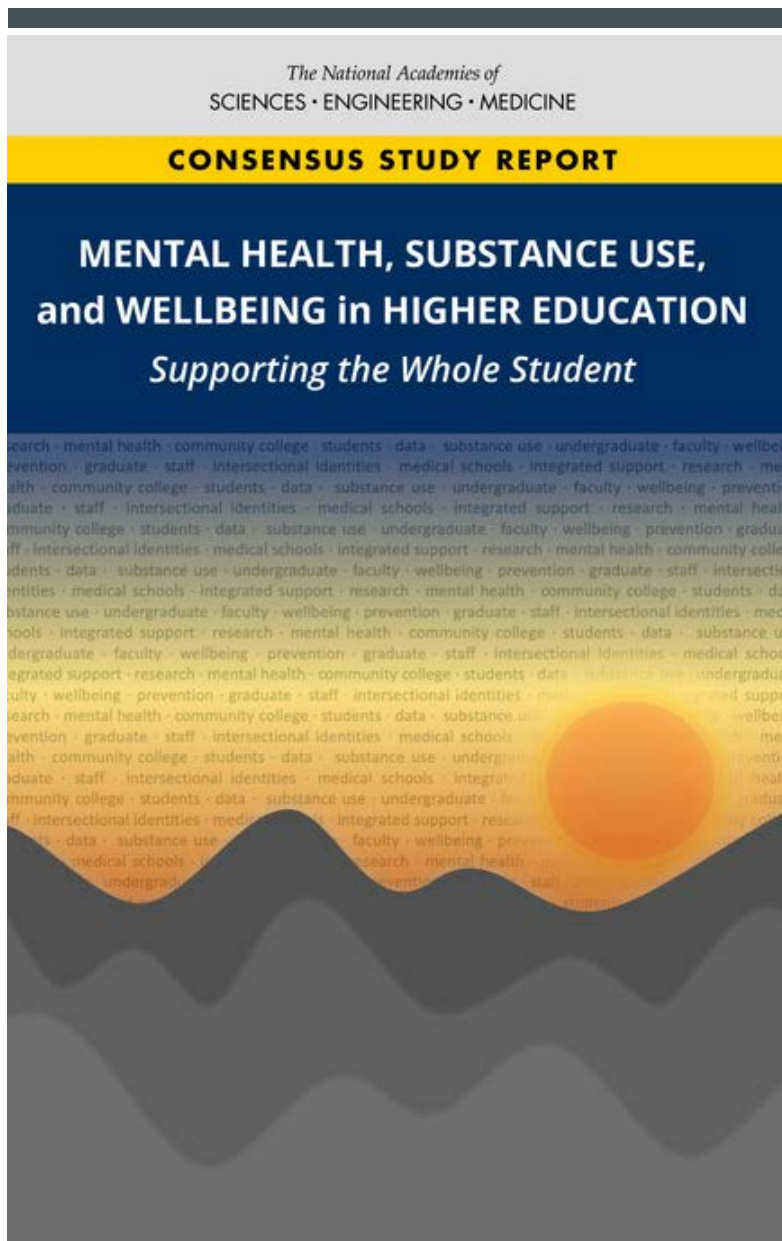


SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF STEMM GRADUATE STUDENTS

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SCIENCES, ENGINEERING, AND
MEDICINE



The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicing thanks...

- ASBMB (host)
- ACS
- AGU
- APS
- ASCB
- PD|Hub
- All of the participants joining today

WHY DID THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES DECIDE TO ADDRESS THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF STUDENTS?

- The 2018-2019 Healthy Minds survey reported **40% of students are experiencing a significant mental health problem**
 - Major depression affected **18% in 2018-19**, compared to 8% in 2007
 - Severe anxiety affected **14% in 2018-19**, compared to 6% in 2007
 - Eating disorders affected **10% in 2018-19**, nearly doubled from 2013
 - **14% reported suicidal ideation** in 2018-19, compared to 6% in 2007
 - **2% made a suicide attempt** in 2018-2019, compared to 0.6% in 2007

MOVING FORWARD: RECOMMENDATION THEMES

1. Institutional culture and policies
2. Prioritizing mental health amid financial constraints
3. Understanding the state of student mental health and wellbeing on each campus
4. Institutional capacity to provide needed services
5. Developing faculty, staff, and student capability to be of help

HOW MUCH DOES THE REPORT FOCUS ON GRADUATE STUDENTS?

WHAT ARE THE KEY TAKEAWAYS?

- The report contains some information on graduate students and medical students, but it focuses primarily on undergraduate students.
- Many of the recommendations to college and university leadership can benefit graduate students, as well as undergraduate students.
- The needs of graduate students differ in terms of their socioemotional development, life expectations, professional demands, and academic stressors.
- Overall, the research on wellbeing and mental health for graduate students remains limited in comparison to undergraduate students.
- Graduate students are not a monolithic group, and their identities also intersect with others.



Supporting student wellbeing

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*The National
Academies of*

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MEDICINE



USC



**As with the
imperatives for
equity & diversity,
colleges and
universities should
accept institutional
responsibility for
wellbeing.**

PART 1

What do today's students face?

PART 2

What supports are needed?

PART 3

What does faculty support mean,
to STEM PhD students from
underrepresented groups?



Patterns & issues facing students

20%

of college students have been diagnosed with or were treated for mental illness in 2015.

Issues:
Generational shifts: reduced stigma and increased use of counseling, but especially among undergraduates.

85%

of college students are "non-traditional" in age in a system designed for "traditional" students

Issues:
More students are juggling more responsibilities. Academic programs have been slow to adapt.

3.2

times more likely to screen for depression: grad students who frequently endure racial discrimination.

Issues:
Discrimination is associated with anxiety & depression for undergraduates as well. Rarely is this managed systematically.

50%

Of students with mental health disabilities avoid disclosing them, for fear of stigma from teachers or fellow students.

Issues:
Non-disclosure means students are unlikely to get the supports that enable academic success. A normative shift is needed.

20%

said COVID had negatively affected their mental health .

Issues:
Grief; Isolation & social dis-connection; loss of income; anxieties about educational & employment opportunities

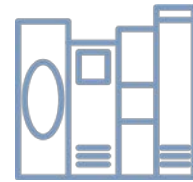


Recommended supports for students from the report



Wellbeing as a cultural value

“Institutional leaders...should articulate the importance of creating a culture of wellbeing on their campus.”



Individual & institutional variation

“Institutions of higher education should recognize that there is no single approach to promoting wellbeing and dealing with mental health and substance use problems that will be appropriate for all student populations.”



When a pause is needed

“Institutions should ensure their leave of absence & reenrollment policies and practices will accommodate the needs of students experiencing mental health and substance use problems and the time needed for effective treatment and recovery.”



Professional development

“As a part of formal orientation to college life, all students should participate in structured opportunities to learn about individual wellbeing and the cultivation of a healthy, respectful campus climate.”



Normalizing Struggle: Dimensions of Faculty Support for Doctoral Students and Implications for Persistence and Well-Being

Julie Posselt

Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California, USA

What does faculty support mean, to STEM PhD students from underrepresented groups?

Findings

What does support from faculty look like in practice?

- ☐ Reframe the difficulty of graduate school & specific situational struggles
 - reduce anxieties
 - disrupt self-doubts
 - provide validation
 - keep it real about race & gender

- ☐ What faculty do to facilitate supportive relationships
 - visibility
 - responsiveness
 - downplay status
 - cultivate trust

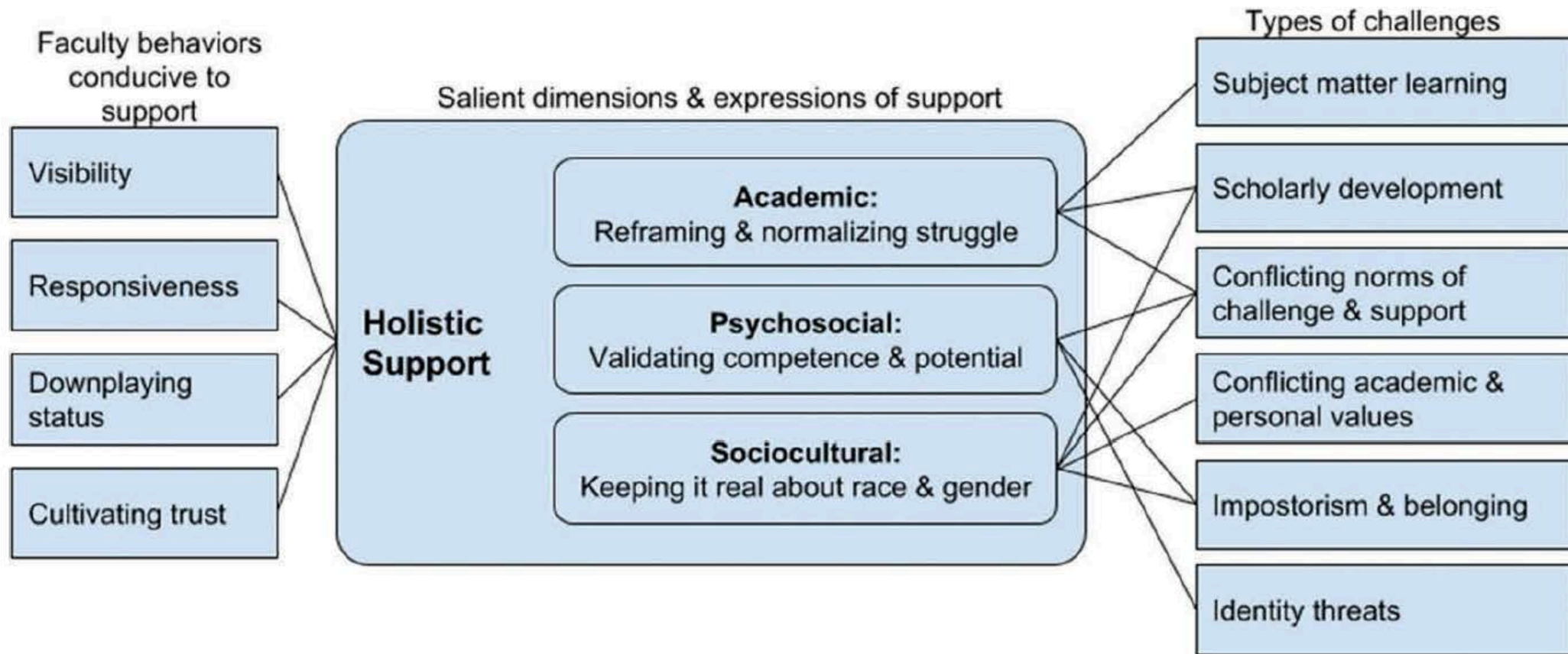


Figure 2. Holistic faculty support in doctoral education.

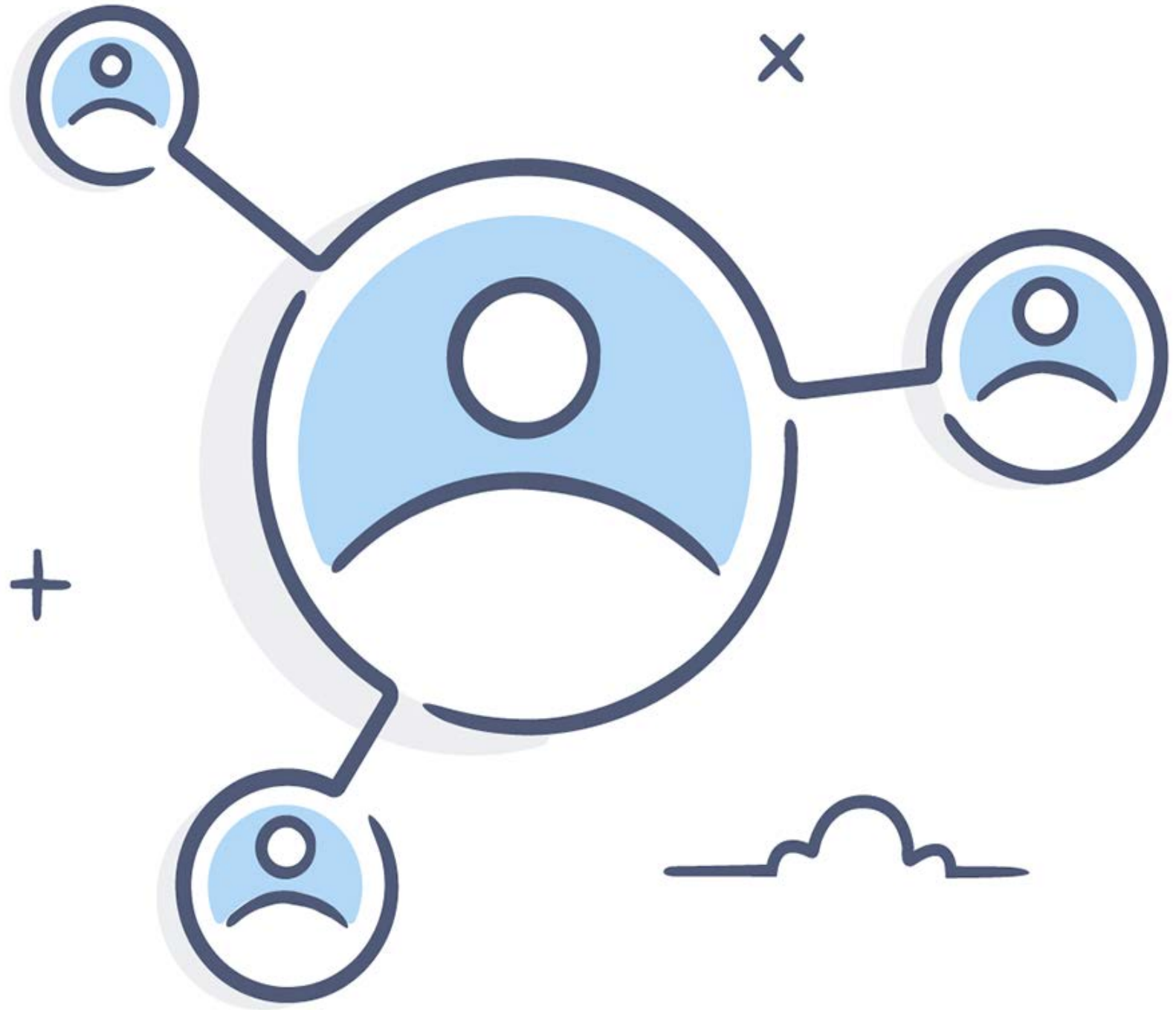
Julie Posselt (2018). Normalizing Struggle: Dimensions of Faculty Support for Doctoral Students and Implications for Persistence and Well-Being, *The Journal of Higher Education*, DOI: 10.1080/00221546.2018.1449080



Cutting across the conditions that facilitate supportive faculty-student mentoring is effort by faculty to humanize the mentoring relationship and engage on common ground.

Thank you!

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Institutional support mechanisms for student well-being

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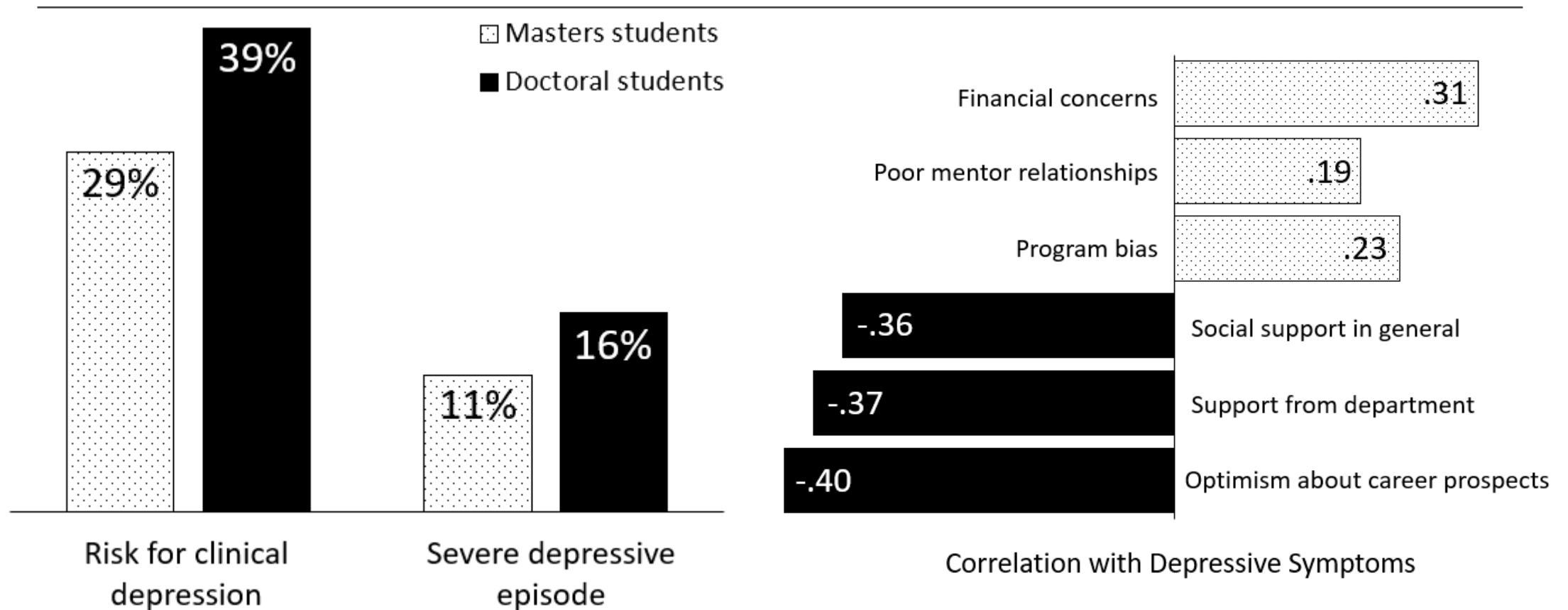
UNDERSTANDING THE STATE OF STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING ON EACH CAMPUS

RECOMMENDATION 5-6

Institutions of higher education should conduct a regular assessment (preferably at least every two years) that addresses student mental health, substance use, wellbeing, and campus climate.



UC systemwide survey: Winter and Spring 2016



Creating and Sustaining Cross-Campus Coordination, Collaboration, and Leadership That Supports a Culture of Wellbeing

RECOMMENDATION 5-2

Leadership from all segments of the campus community is needed to promote a culture of wellbeing.

- Institutions of higher education should establish and/or maintain a team or teams that involves all sectors of the institution's community that coordinates, reviews, and addresses mental health, substance use and wellbeing concerns.
- Any approach should have shared responsibility for addressing issues that negatively affect student wellbeing, a clear leadership structure and mandate, appropriate access to financial resources, and a charge to develop and implement an action plan to promote and support student wellbeing.



UCI Policy Initiatives

- ❖ Reviewed all graduate policies to ensure language that supported students
- ❖ Mandated that all doctoral students complete an IDP with their faculty annually (was initially controversial but buy-in increased)
- ❖ Required that faculty write explicit expectations for grades in research units (lack of clarity has been a major cause of stress for students)
- ❖ Graduate Division released student satisfaction data from mandatory exit surveys broadly to all faculty
- ❖ Encouraged programs to implement codes of conduct
- ❖ Implemented 5-year funding guarantee for all PhD students

DEVELOPING FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENT CAPABILITY TO SUPPORT EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH

RECOMMENDATION 5-8

Provide and require faculty training on how to create an inclusive and healthy learning environment.

- Provide mentor training, starting in graduate school, for all faculty, recognizing that good mentorship practices serve as a protective factor for student mental health.



Mentoring Excellence Certificate

Certificate Overview

Effective mentoring is a crucial part of the academic experience. Mentors provide support and connect students to academic and campus resources to aid in the students' success. The Mentoring Excellence Program (MEP) is a 6-week certificate program intended for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars interested in becoming a mentor or seek to enhance their mentoring skills.

What You'll Learn

- Understand strategies and techniques for effective mentoring
- Gain familiarity with relevant campus resources
- Develop a personalized mentoring philosophy and mentoring plan
- Mentoring students from diverse backgrounds
- Conflict resolution in mentoring

The Imperative to Provide Equitable Support to Students of All Identities

RECOMMENDATION 5-7

Institutions of higher education should work to ensure students have access to high-quality mental health and substance use treatment services.



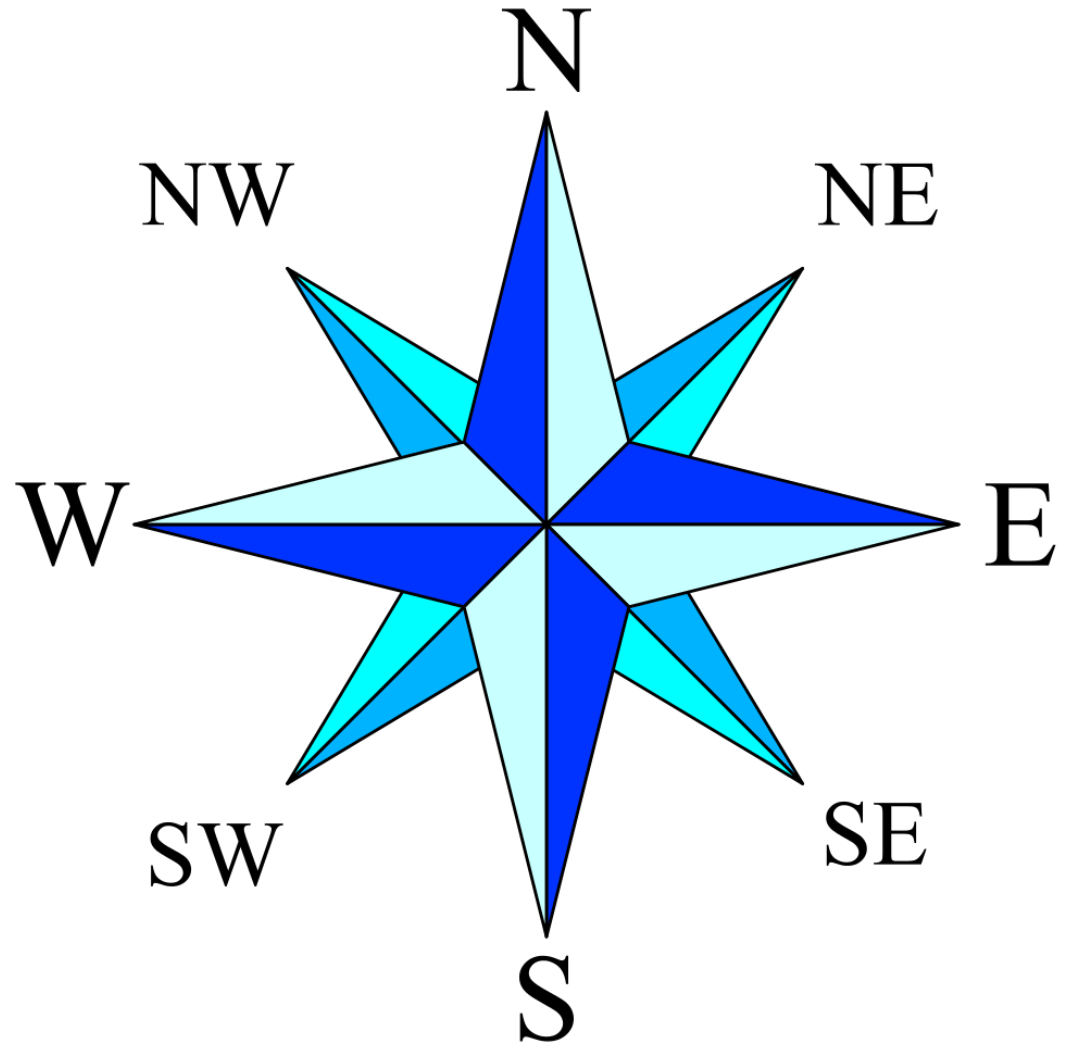
Graduate Division Counselor Offers Zen-Like Experiences to Students

- ❖ Clinically trained counselor, but NOT working as a clinician. Reduces the stigma of mental health.
- ❖ Academic departments can require students to meet with the counselor – especially if academic need is demonstrated
- ❖ Can be accessed by students, faculty and staff alike
- ❖ The UCI graduate counselor model has been adopted by sister schools UCSB, UCLA and UCM
- ❖ “Phong believes that the difficulties we encounter are meant to impart wisdom and he shares this philosophy with each student he meets. Within these counseling sessions, he also provides additional academic support, time management skills, effective communication skills, and referrals to campus and community resources as needed.”

Provide All Students with Formal Instruction on How to Develop and Maintain Wellbeing

RECOMMENDATION 5-9

As a part of formal orientation to college life, all students should participate in structured opportunities to learn about individual wellbeing and the cultivation of a healthy, respectful campus climate.



Life management course extended to all UC students



Life 101 course creator
Dr. Mahtab Jafari

Social support



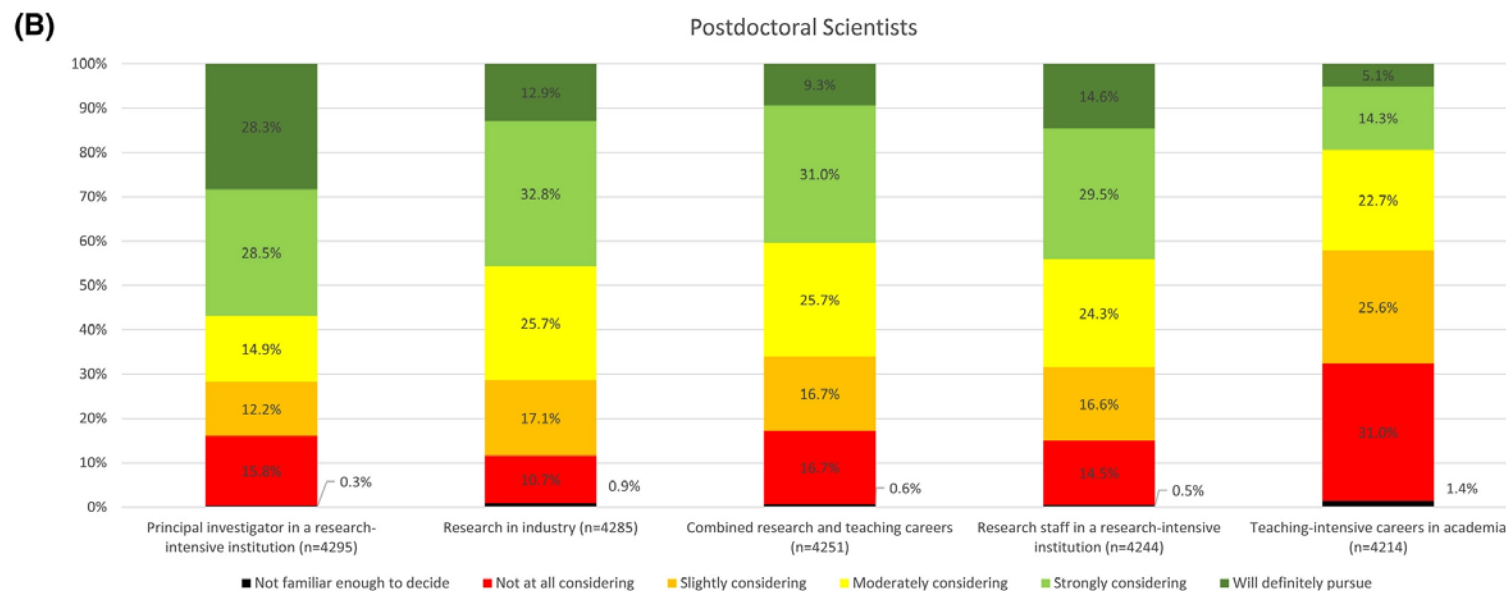
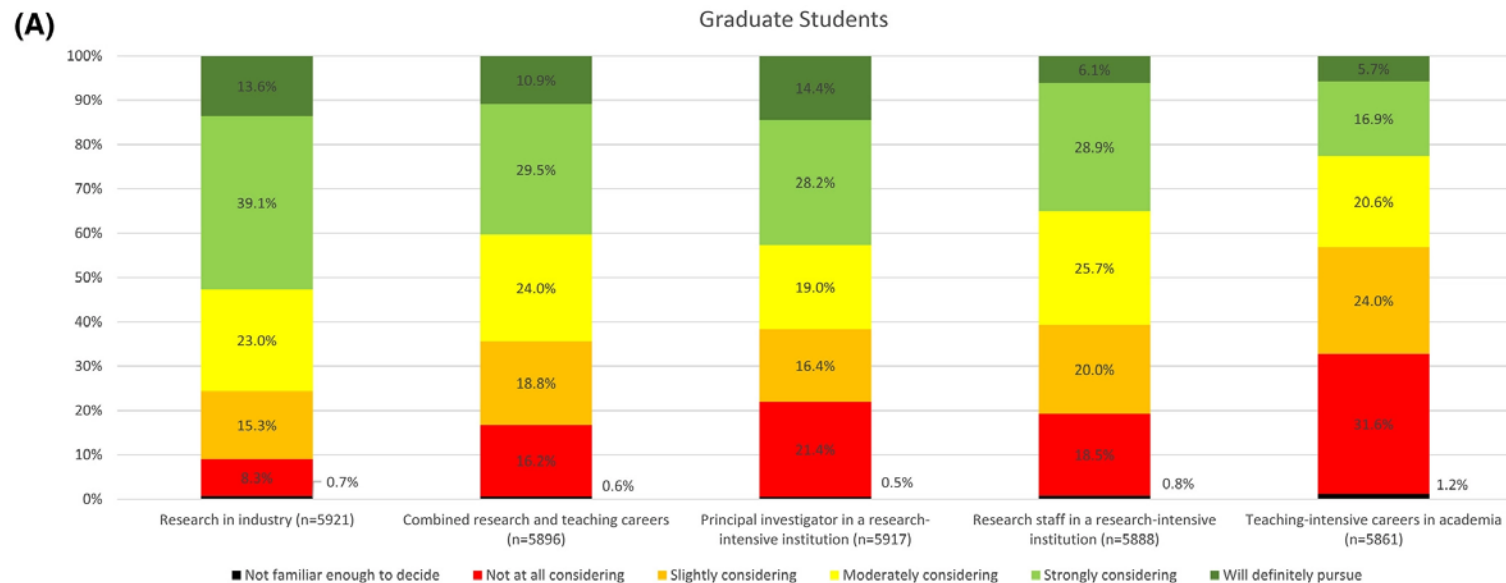
DECADE program

"DECADE offers an opportunity for professional development while fueling an imperative mission for students who are passionate about our country's social climate."

DECADE stands for the Diverse Educational Community and Doctoral Experience. This program provides a diverse group of UCI graduate students with a supportive community consisting of faculty, staff, and students; resources tailored to fit specific needs; and a wide variety of professional development and leadership opportunities. DECADE seeks to improve inclusive excellence by increasing the participation and retention of women and underrepresented minorities in graduate programs. As part of the program's mission to promote inclusive excellence in graduate education, DECADE provides a wide range of resources and leadership opportunities that all graduate students are welcomed to take advantage of.

Career development





Professional development does not impact time to degree

Graduate student weighted elapsed median time to PhD

	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Awardee sites reporting (n)	9	14	9
Treatment	5.91 years (n = 82)	5.51 years (n = 176)	5.70 years (n = 135)
Comparison	5.76 years (n = 200)	5.59 years (n = 502)	5.69 years (n = 316)

Questions?



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