



# Campus Wellness: Emerging Best Practices

Supporting student health and wellness is central to student development and contributes to the well-being of the entire campus community, including faculty and staff.

With students citing mental health as one of the top reasons for dropping out of school and growing concerns about staff burnout making campus community mental health issues even more prominent, institutions must maintain a continuous presence and emphasis on mental health for students, faculty, and staff.

Increased student demand for mental health services over the last decade has outpaced available resources on nearly every campus in the U.S. as illustrated in figure 1.

In May 2022, the U.S. Department of Education took the unusual step to urge colleges to [use leftover funds from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund \(HEERF\)](#) to support campus mental health. And the U.S. surgeon general advised college administrators to hire more counselors and establish programs where students can help each other cope with mental health struggles.

Amid the concern, best practices for supporting mental health across campus are beginning to emerge, including:

## Demand for Mental Health Services

**30%** Rate of increase in annual U.S. suicides between 2000 and 2020.

**73%** U.S. university presidents indicating that the mental health of their students is a “pressing concern.”

**24%** Proportion of people with substance use disorder among traditional college-aged populations (18 to 25) in 2020.

### Figure 1. Increased demand for mental health services

Credit: [Department of Education, “Supporting Child and Student Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Mental Health Needs”](#)

**Leveraging existing resources:**

- The [Vanderbilt University Student Care Network](#) is a one-stop shop combining services for all student mental, physical, financial, sexual, and other wellness needs.
- The University of North Carolina [Heels Care Network](#) is a central hub connecting multiple campus resources to provide 24/7 support, suicide prevention resources, a live student-to-student chat, and more.

**Expanding the approach:**

- Some schools are adopting the public health model, a multilevel, communitywide approach that engages every campus function and all members — not just clinicians — in support of student mental health and well-being. For example, the [University of West Georgia](#) has hired a chief wellness officer to manage end-to-end service delivery for all campus constituents.

- Recognizing that the health and wellness of faculty and staff is critical to preventing employee burnout, managing healthcare costs, and delivering an excellent student experience, institutions, including the [University of Montana](#), are creating employee wellness days and expanding the success of wellness programs aimed at individuals to promote well-being for all employees.

**Providing additional touch points and accommodations:**

- [The Ohio State University](#) and [Michigan State University](#), among others, are integrating student health services into the residential experience to reduce costs and improve outcomes.
- The University of California, San Francisco offers [“release time,”](#) which allows students to leave classrooms or labs without penalty for medical appointments, including therapy.



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