

Key learnings from the Post-Secondary Mental Health and Wellbeing Learning Community

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HERA annual meeting
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41% of college students report experiencing depression, and 36% report experiencing anxiety.



Emotional stress & personal mental health reasons are **the top** reasons why students consider stopping their coursework for both Bachelor's & Associate degree students.



40% of college students who reported experiencing depression did not see a mental health professional or use medication in the past year.

Mental health and wellbeing *significantly impacts* college students.

RFP and Cohort Process

- Landscape scan
- 4 key partners emerged
- Contracted with Meadows Mental Health Institute as the regional expert and included in their grant passthrough dollars for 3 national TA partners
- Released January 2022 and then worked alongside the Meadows Institute to select partners
- Meadows developed a curriculum that braided the expertise of all 4 partners. The learning community officially began fall 2022 and ended December 2024
 - Included two in-person convenings and regular virtual check-ins with Meadows
 - A few partners needed no-cost extensions. Primary due to challenges hiring staff at the beginning.

Cohort Summary

21 applications received; 10 awarded

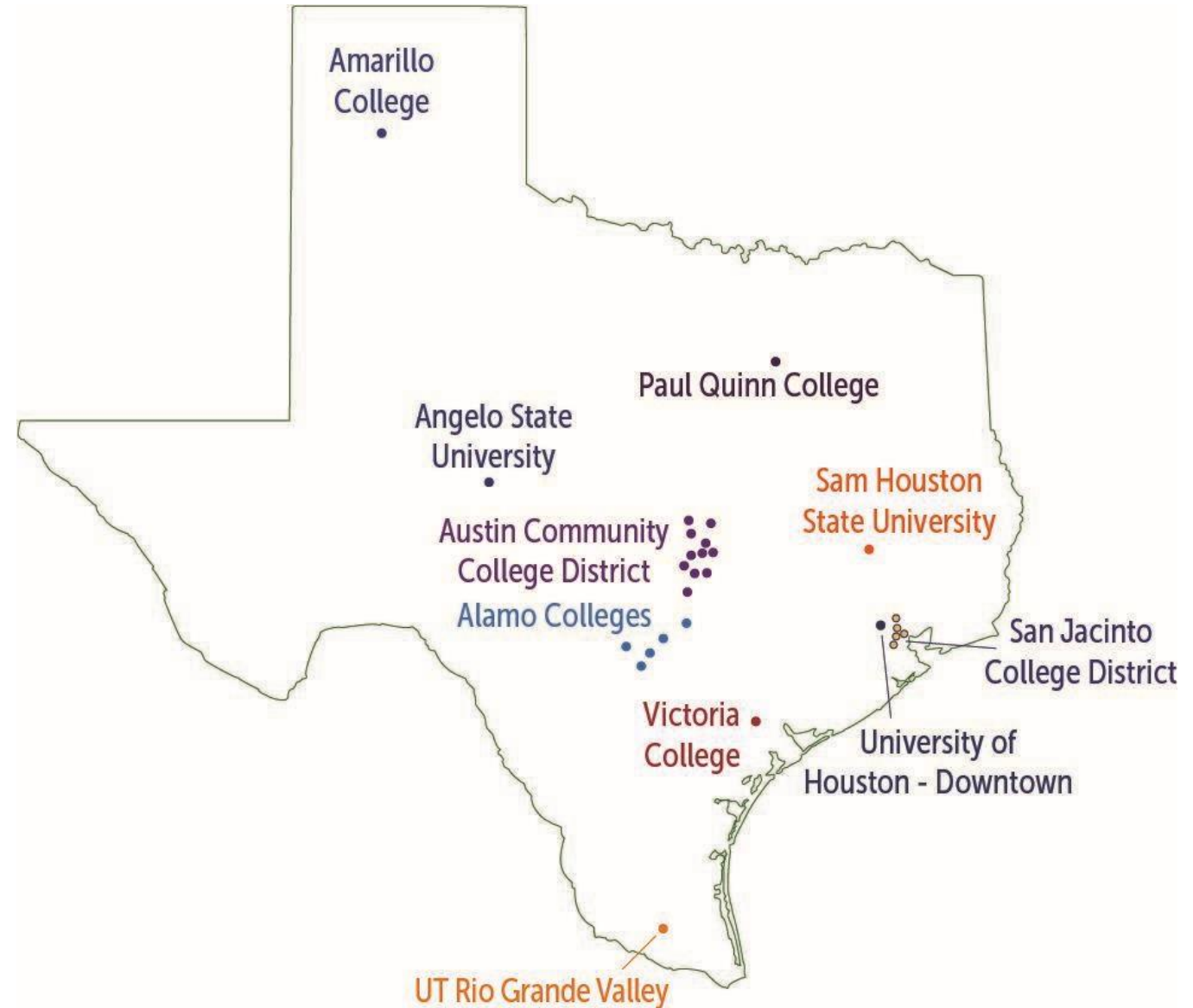
[Directory of all 10](#)

Institution Type:

- 5 community colleges
- 4 public universities
- 1 private HBCU

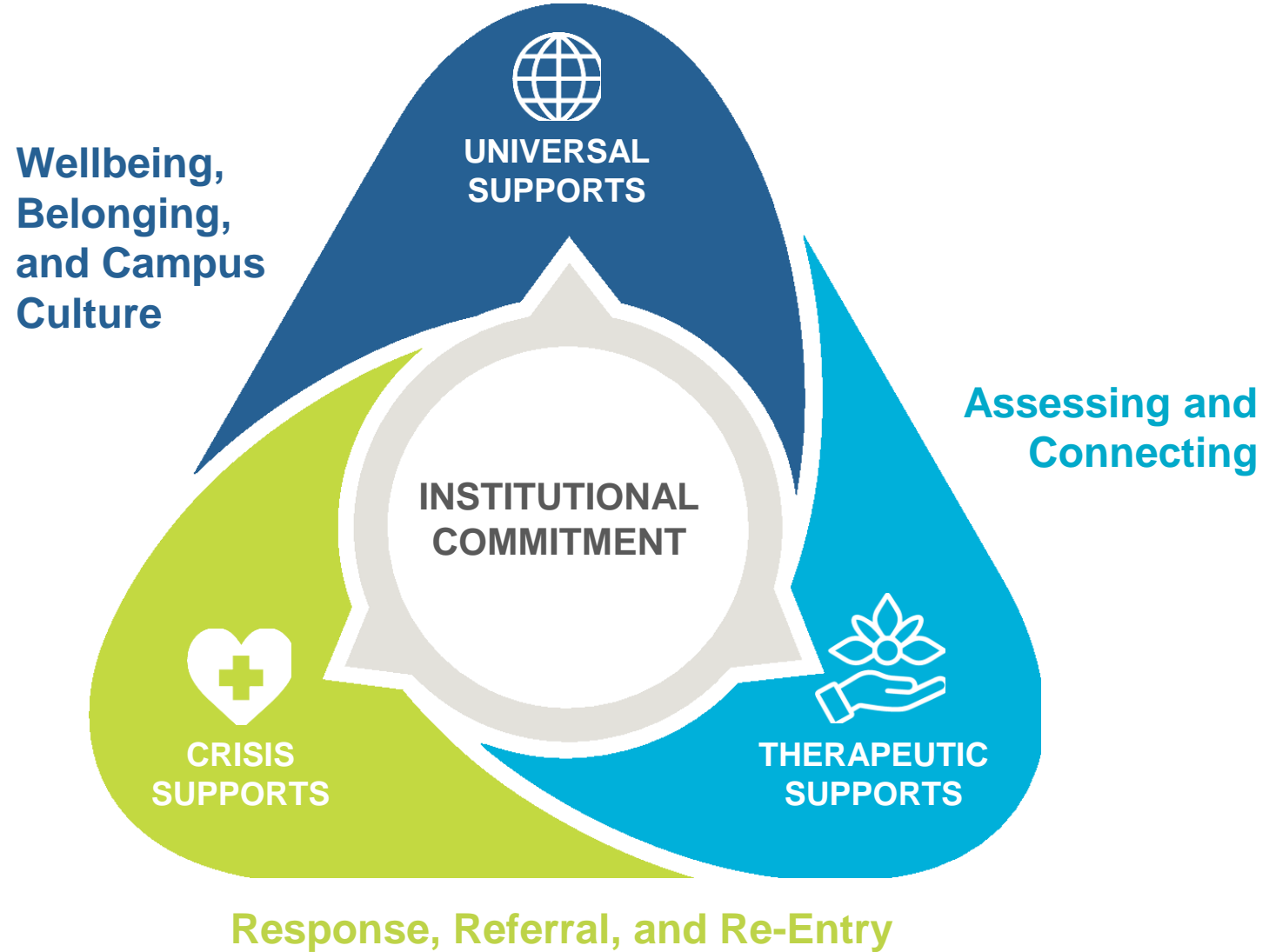
TA Themes that Emerged:

- Needs Assessment
- Peer-Peer Programming
- Community Partnerships
- Policy Review
- Program Design
- Targeted Messaging
- Equity and Access
- Data Learning and Evaluation





Meadows Institute's *Minding College Minds* Framework



Cohort Learnings

- In the following slides, learnings are provided for each campus, organized by how they correspond to the three tiers of supports:
 - Grey bullet points are universal supports
 - Orange font indicates the intervention more closely aligns with therapeutic supports
 - Red font indicates more close alignment with crisis supports
- In the section following campus learnings, the results of the learning community are reported out by intervention, rather than by campus

Campus Learnings: Alamo Colleges

- Healthy Minds Survey
- Drafted strategic plan, with JED Foundation TA
- Trainings for faculty and staff, including ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training), Mental Health First Aid Training and Pedagogy Care Training
- Hosts compelling campuswide events, such as Mental Health Fairs, where students can learn about stress management and community resources through fun student-centered events
- Hired five case managers to work with students on basic needs and mental health, referring them to community resources or counselors as appropriate.
- Used state funding to make teletherapy available at night and on weekend. Contracted with Timely Care for more teletherapy options. Students can select counselors based on affinity and case management information can be shared with counseling staff on campus.
- Case managers have a helpline funded by United Way, in addition to in-person staff referrals at advocacy centers. These exchanges begin with an assessment for services, followed by referral. Case manager serves as ongoing point of contact.
- [Partnered with UT Health San Antonio to offer Wellness360, to offer health services to services on-site or through telehealth.](#)
- Funds from a private donor to pay for a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) for two years to diagnose and treat students with more severe mental illnesses and those who need medication. Partnering with UT Health Center, who employs the NP hired through Wellness 360 and who invoices to Alamo.

Campus Learnings: Amarillo College

- Generating outside support through partnerships with PBS, Panhandle BH Alliance Partnership, sharing information at outreach events in the region to deepen networks and establish partnerships.
- Train and equip faculty with appropriate knowledge on the mental health challenges experienced by students of color and other marginalized student populations—used Mental Health First Aid.
- Identity-based support groups, skill-based workshops, and other initiatives aimed at addressing the diverse needs of the community
- Mentors trained in cultural competency, trauma-informed practices, and ethical guidelines to engage with students from diverse backgrounds
- Community resource mapping of nonprofit mental health nonprofits; Partnered with Texas Panhandle Community Center and another group to do a sequential intercept model to see where gaps in care exist.
- Created a practicum pipeline of graduate and undergraduate-level interns under supervision from West Texas A&M University to provide mental health counseling to students at participating institutions. Recognized a shortage of practicum sites for students in the region--and dearth of paid opportunities--attempted to address both with this clinic.
- Partner at WT A&M has Psychology Grad students performing screening and assessments as part of their coursework at all Panhandle Partnership colleges. Can do ADHD assessments and make referrals for accommodations
- “Let’s Talk” informal chats, to make mental health conversations more approachable
- Mobile clinic location is equipped to provide both in-person counseling sessions and telemedicine appointments (through Timely Care)

Campus Learnings: Angelo State

- Needs assessment using a variety of validated tools to assess mental health concerns, loneliness, substance use, belonging, myths around mental health, values, and other issues affecting student wellness.
- Based on the concerns identified, they conducted numerous sessions on campus and in the community to inform and reduce stigma. These events included a suicide prevention training.
- Leveraged the wider San Angelo community to host powerful awareness events attended by students, community leaders, and more that centered mental health and wellbeing.
- Use peer mentors for marketing, awareness and referrals; received TA from Active Minds.
- Trained faculty to support students and connect them to resources.
- In-house screening for students at counseling services, including instruments such as the SCL-90-R. Recognizing that assessments can be time-intensive, Angelo State University built a program that allocates sufficient time and resources to allow for robust screening.
- West TX Counseling and Guidance provides services on campus.

Campus Learnings: Austin Community College

- Established an Active Minds campus chapter for peer mentors.
- Increased outreach and marketing for onsite service and community partnerships.
- TA from the Steve Fund for a needs assessment.
- Established advocacy centers with co-located services, such as food banks and access to external partners such as Foundation Communities.
- Had existing counseling options, but needed to expand capacity, so they partnered with local nonprofit Foundation Communities for help enrolling students in health care coverage for long-term mental health and medication support, while also promoting other supportive programming such as Foundation Communities' College Hub and its tax preparation services.
- Partnered with regional providers who offer low-cost psychological testing and evaluations, as well as with other community organizations that offer critically needed wraparound supports.

Campus Learnings: San Jacinto College

- Healthy Minds Survey and other assessments to understand the needs of today's SJCD student. This includes identifying the growing number of virtual attendees and building engaging mental health programming for this cohort.
- Collaborated with other departments on student mental health. This included training faculty and staff to make referrals and also conducting classroom visits to build awareness, with a focus on STEM majors. They saw a significant increase in faculty referrals. Training included Mental Health First Aid and QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) Suicide Prevention Training.
- Held campus wellness events that built mental health awareness through engaging events such as goat yoga, a suicide awareness event with a hands-on activity to create calm-down jars, and “pop-up” counseling across campus.
- **Counseling sessions can be scheduled online and appointments can be virtual.**

Campus Learnings: Paul Quinn College

- Universal screening during Summer Bridge program, to assess needs and provide opportunity to connect to services. Students are screened annually; PQC uses this baseline & annual data to assess efficacy.
- To normalize help-seeking behavior, counseling staff engaged with students in activities such as orchestra and basketball game attendance (mental health talk after with athletes). Increased outreach and marketing.
- PQC incorporated art, such as creating mandalas, into weekly, well-attended stress management workshops.
- Looking at opportunities in workout center on campus that is located near the clinic; lots of signage to support MH includes QR with pre-selected music, may adjust to be short recordings of physical and mental health strategies; hoping to increase promotion in actual workout space.
- Mental Health First Aid Training available for staff and faculty.
- Had an existing counseling center; the now have a partnership with UT-Southwestern, which provides psychiatry services.

Campus Learnings: Sam Houston State University

- Launched a one-week freshman orientation, with peer leaders, to encourage belonging and knowledge of supports on campus, including mental wellness supports. Initial assessment data shows an increase in freshmen utilizing counseling services. Redesigned the freshman seminar class to continue the supports for students.
- Faculty training on how mental health concerns can affect learning.
- Mental health stigma reduction, such as a PSA series on mental health that is played during athletic games and in the student union, as well as the creation of a new student support hub website to improve ease of referrals.
- Timely Care app (not as part of grant)

Campus Learnings: University of Houston- Downtown

- Faculty and staff trained using Mental Health First Aid
- Nursing students conduct sessions on the role of sleep in mental health.
- Established an Active Minds chapter.
- Partnered with Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse (AVDA) for legal advocacy, legal aid, and domestic violence prevention presentations.
- Opened a Wellness and Success Center to centralize a space for mental health supports as well as fitness, recreation, study spaces and community-building.
- Partnered with the Association of Recovery in Higher Education to provide supports for substance abuse disorder recovery.
- Collaborating with the University of St. Thomas to provide interns for mental health care provision.
- Professional counselors co-located at the wellness center.

Campus Learnings: UT-RGV

- Baseline survey of faculty, staff and students on perceived needs.
- Incorporated presentation on mental health supports led by Active Minds members into orientation.
- UTRGV's Counseling Center strategically partners with departments across campus and with student leaders to build a robust community of supportive experts. Counseling staff and other faculty/staff trainers provide workshops to student advisors, athletic department personnel, teaching and lab assistants, academic tutors, psychology students, and others.
- Trainings include: culturally sensitive training, suicide prevention and Active Minds' A.S.K.
- Launched Active Minds chapter.
- Received funding from UT system to implement teletherapy providers, such as Timely Care, and exploring options. Timely Care offers help with long wait for psychiatric appointments (currently 6 months).
- At the Counseling center, grad student interns and counselors complete a screening session with an assessment to determine need and triage to appropriate resources. This helps reduce waitlists.
- Through this project recognized that behavioral and academic alerts were separate but they are often interconnected—adjusted policies to foster more communication across both.
- Using Timely Care to decrease waitlist for psychiatric care.

Campus Learnings: Victoria College

- Conducted the Hope Center Student Basic Needs Survey to understand the needs of their students and used findings to design service offerings when launching their first-ever comprehensive mental health counseling program in early 2023.
- With targeted awareness campaigns and the addition of graduate-level interns, the counseling center tripled the number of VC students served from Spring 2023 to Fall 2023.
- 77% of students who utilized counseling services indicated they would not have been able to obtain mental health support or intervention without these free services integrated within VC through this Trellis Foundation project.
- Data showed that the counseling center provided proportionally more services to special target populations at VC, demonstrating the effectiveness of efforts to reach students with increased risk for mental health concerns.

Key programmatic levers

- Increased availability of counseling
- Teletherapy
- Mental health screening
- Training for faculty and staff/awareness campaigns
- Campus needs assessment
- Community partnerships/referral networks
- Access to psychiatric services/crisis protocols
- Peer supports/mentors

Increased availability of counseling

- Increased staff: Alamo Colleges, Amarillo College, San Jacinto College, Victoria College
 - Distinct from advising or other roles when possible
 - Hiring was a challenge
- Practicum students to create pipeline: Amarillo College, Angelo State University, San Jacinto College, U of H—Downtown, UT-RGV, Victoria College
 - Graduate students from their institution or partnered with a university
- Available outside business hours: Alamo Colleges, Amarillo College, San Jacinto College, Victoria College, U of H—Downtown
 - Levers used: teletherapy, longer clinic hours, pool of funding for appointments with partner org in off-hours

Teletherapy

- Alamo Colleges, Amarillo College, Paul Quinn College, Sam Houston State, San Jacinto College, UT-RGV, Victoria College
 - Timely Care
 - BetterMynd

Mental health screening

- All campuses used screening instruments at different points of service. From universal screening at orientation (PQC), to screening by case managers to connect students seeking basic needs supports with mental health services (Alamo Colleges), to clinical screening in the counselor offices using clinical tools like the PHQ-9.

NOTE: Research has shown that a screening with no follow-up can cause more harm. Be sure to have follow-up protocol in place if you screen students and create an expectation of support.

Training for faculty and staff/awareness campaigns

- All institutions incorporated faculty and staff training. Examples included:
 - Mental Health First Aid
 - QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer)
 - Active Minds workshop to become trainers for V-A-R (Validate-Appreciate-Refer)
- Nearly all campuses had awareness campaigns, in-person events, and/or extensive advertising and outreach. Examples included:
 - Incorporating into orientation, targeted outreach, social media campaigns, tabling
 - Goat yoga, Stress-Less Fair, panels, suicide prevention trainings, “coffee with a counselor” or “pop-up counseling”

Campus needs assessment

- Alamo Colleges, Angelo State, Austin Community College, Paul Quinn College, Sam Houston State, San Jacinto, UT-RGV
- Most did in conjunction with TA providers The Steve Fund (using The Steve Fund's equity-focused assessment) or JED Foundation (using Healthy Minds).
- Other assessments included:
 - Hanover Research
 - Instrument developed in-house
 - Trellis Strategies Student Financial Wellness Survey

Community partnerships/referral networks

- Nearly all institutions partnered in some way
- Examples included:
 - Healthcare and/or mental health supports through partner 4-year university
 - Community counseling centers
 - Community healthcare providers
 - Community basic needs support organizations
- Example to highlight:
 - Austin Community College partnered with a local nonprofit counseling center and also partnered with Foundation Communities, a local nonprofit that was able to help students enroll in health insurance options that included mental health coverage

Access to psychiatric services/crisis protocols

- Campuses including a partnership to provide psychiatric services, either on or off campus: Alamo Colleges, Angelo State, Paul Quinn College, UT-RGV (through TimelyCare)
- Crisis identification:
 - San Jacinto Community College developed a crisis protocol
 - UT-RGV updated their behavioral and academic alert systems, to foster improved communication across both

Peer support/mentors

- Angelo State, Austin Community College, Sam Houston State University, San Jacinto Community College, U of H-Downtown, UT-RGV
- Most campuses used Active Minds trainings and/or established an Active Minds chapter on their campuses

TA providers

All colleges received implementation-focused support from the Meadows Institute throughout the grant period. The cohort's curriculum included trainings and content from all TA providers available to the entire learning community. Each institution further received deep engagement from one of the three national providers, based on needs identified during the RFP.

- Partnered with the JED Foundation:
 - Alamo Colleges, Amarillo College San Jacinto College, Victoria College
- Partnered with the Steve Fund
 - Austin Community College, Paul Quinn College, Sam Houston State University, University of Houston-Downtown,
- Partnered with Active Minds:
 - Angelo State University, UT-RGV

3 Key Themes Emerged

- Community partnerships benefit from a strategic sharing of existing resources.
- Community partnerships thrive when there is structure and sufficient room for innovation.
- Partnerships between departments within institutions are often the key to success for both new and existing mental health supports.



BRIEF 2 OF 4

Supporting Postsecondary Mental Health and Wellbeing Through Partnership: Three Key Themes

In 2022, five community colleges and five universities across Texas were selected to join the groundbreaking Trellis Foundation Postsecondary Mental Health and Wellbeing Learning Community. Each member institution received Trellis Foundation grant funding to implement mental health and wellbeing supports unique to the institution's needs and goals. Over the two-year period, the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute facilitated the learning community, engaging members in breaking down the siloes persistent in postsecondary education and collectively tackling barriers to implementing mental health services and supports. As challenges and opportunities emerged, members worked closely with technical assistance providers from the Meadows Institute, Active Minds, The Jed Foundation, and The Steve Fund to further develop efforts to improve mental health and wellbeing on campus.

MEADOWS
MENTAL HEALTH
POLICY INSTITUTE



HOLLY KOSIEWICZ, HEIDI KANE, TREY MILLER, LISA SONTAG-PADILLA, DENISE WILLIAMS

Understanding How Texas Community College Campuses Are Supporting Student Mental Health

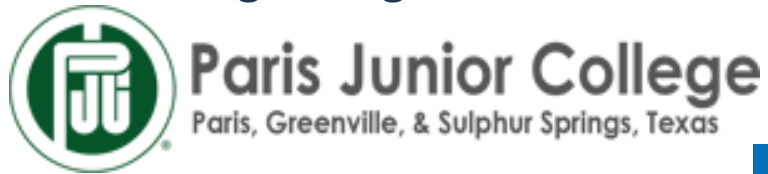


Key Recommendations

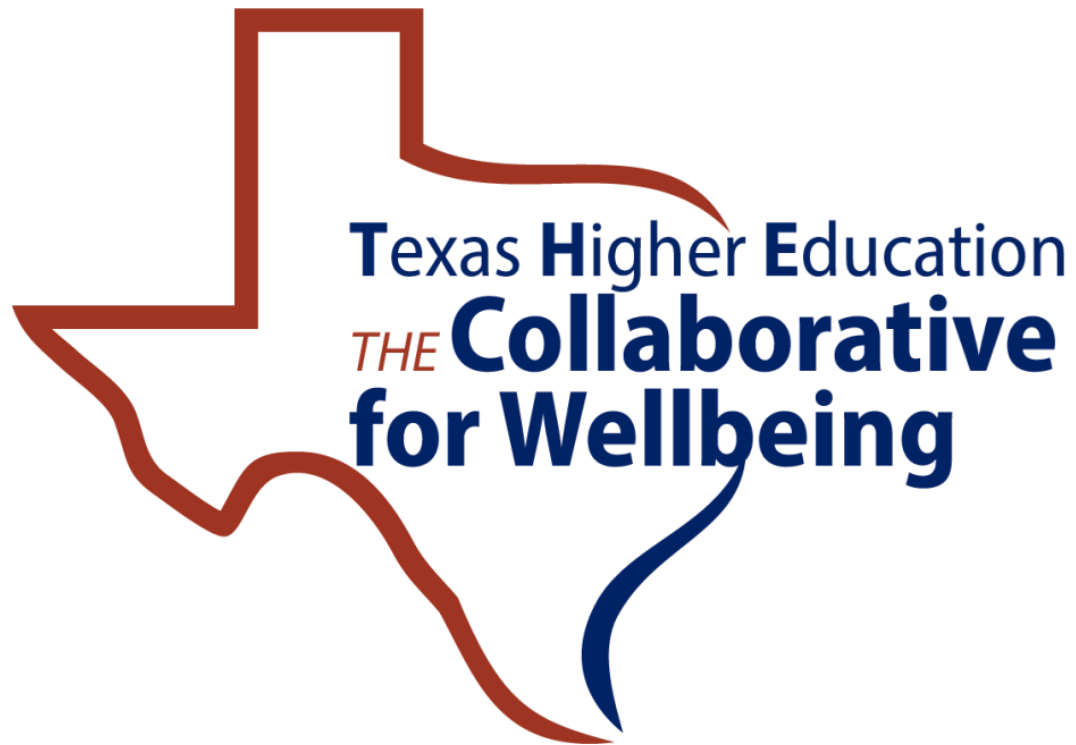
- Develop a formal, comprehensive plan to expand evidence-based supports for student mental health.
- Develop a communication plan that repeatedly disseminates information about mental health resources to increase student awareness of those resources.
- Develop and formalize agreements with external health providers to ensure that the wide diversity of student mental health needs is met.
- Develop a sustainable funding model to support institutional efforts to address student mental health.

Next steps: 2024-2025 Minding College Minds Learning Community

Offered by the Meadows Institute, in partnership with Texas Success Center, thirteen community colleges will develop a comprehensive postsecondary mental health action plan for their system using the Minding College Minds Postsecondary Mental Health Framework.



Next steps: Partnership with ANEW



With the supports of THE Collaborative for Wellbeing, by June 2026, participating institutions can expect to:

- Deepen collaboration across campus and with students with lived experience
- Administer and use the Wellbeing Improvement Survey for Higher Education Settings (WISHES) at least twice per semester
- Build an understanding of the norms, processes, and structures that perpetuate disparities in wellbeing and mental health for a specific group of students
- Define and advance 2-5 specific concrete change projects and generate learnings to inform scale and spread
- Develop an intentional, holistic, and systematic measurement approach to inspire and drive large-scale impact
- Create a path forward to voluntarily continue the work upon the conclusion of the 2024-2026 cohort. Institutions that make sufficient progress on the Changemaking Pathways milestones will be invited to join the National Pacesetters Action Community (PAC), an ongoing community of pioneering institutions that routinely administer WISHES and are relentlessly focused on achieving better outcomes at scale

Text and image source: [How it Works - THE Collaborative for Wellbeing](#)

Best practices

- Data—survey options to provide baseline and program assessment data
 - Healthy Minds
 - [WISHES](#)
- Assess the efficacy—ongoing data collection to make sure an intervention is working well for your campus and your students. We are still developing a body of best practices so much is still unknown, and context and fidelity to implementation will always be key.
- Get technical assistance
 - ANEW—can help train you in their survey administration, data analysis, and rapid prototyping. Works within your available resources, rather than seeking project-based grant funding for implementation
 - The Meadows Institute facilitates statewide learning communities on postsecondary mental health, in addition to working broadly across systems and deeply within campus communities implementing services and supports.
 - The Steve Fund and the JED Foundation—both have ad hoc services as well as comprehensive frameworks and support for institutions
 - Active Minds is a great resource for building out ongoing student peer groups

Best practices

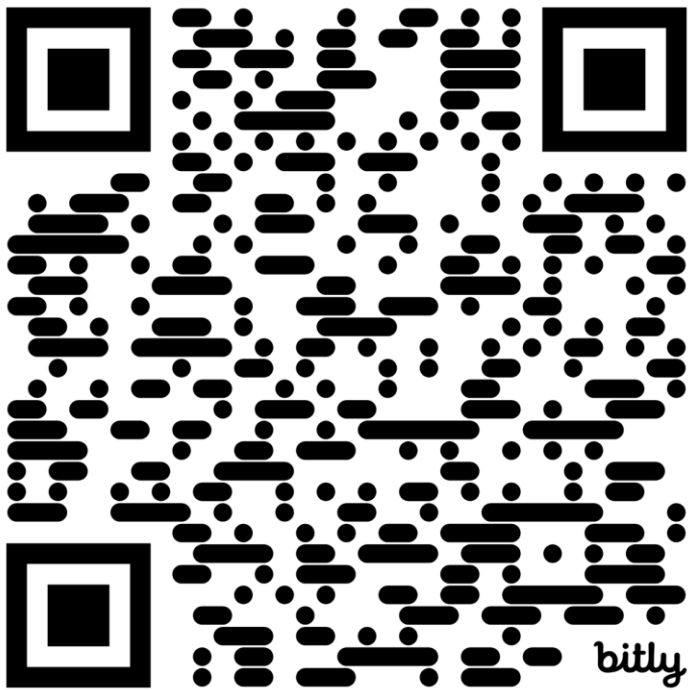
- For campus-wide, aligned initiatives:
 - Make sure you have buy-in across the institution
 - Align to your strategic plan and your president's goals
 - Help staff and faculty understand
 - Include your business officers in budget planning for anything you implement
 - NACUBO [Student Success Hub Toolkit](#)
- As an individual or a department:
 - Be welcoming/listen to students
 - Help your students establish an Active Minds chapter on your campus
 - Trainings for yourself like Mental Health First Aid
 - Encourage additional basic needs support at your campus

Additional resources

The following list of resources is not comprehensive; however, many of these organizations and their publications have informed the Foundation's thinking on mental wellbeing:

- Trellis Foundation [Learning Community](#), including student voices video, key learnings from each campus, key learnings from the full cohort, and a guide to thinking through [teletherapy vendors](#).
- Trellis Foundation/Trellis Company [self-care webinar series and guide](#).
- Active Minds – [recommendations and lessons learned](#) in building healthy campus communities
- American Council on Education – [examples of strategies and frameworks](#) for higher education leaders to support the wellbeing of students with minoritized identities
- American Council on Education – [examples and reflections from college presidents](#) on prioritizing student mental health
- The Hope Center – report assessing [Texas students' basic needs security and their wellbeing](#) during the ongoing pandemic
- The Steve Fund – [recommendations](#) for higher education institutions and employers on how to mitigate mental health risks for students of color
- The Steve Fund and The JED Foundation – [resources, recommendations, and implementation strategies](#) to support higher education leaders in implementing the [Equity in Mental Health Framework](#) on their campus

Mental Health and Wellbeing Learning Community



*Alamo Colleges District
Amarillo College
Angelo State University
Austin Community College
Paul Quinn College*

*Sam Houston State University
San Jacinto College District
Victoria College
University of Houston-Downtown
University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley*

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All campus learnings presented reflect the work of the Meadows Institute with the campus and are drawn directly from published documents as well as internal notes.

We also thank our technical assistance partners at The JED Foundation, Active Minds, and The Steve Fund.



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