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News Release

For Release: Oct. 14, 2014

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College mental health primer published by higher education and psychological organizations

Publication points out myths about mental health, provides resources for campuses

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Common myths about mental health, the important role it plays in college students' success and resources to help address issues specific to college and universities are presented in a new primer published by NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, the American Psychological Association (APA) and the American Council on Education (ACE).

“[A Strategic Primer on College Student Mental Health](#)” explains why mental health is such a critical component for students to be successful at learning. Institutions of higher education focus significant attention on college access, retention and completion and on ensuring their graduates have gained the academic, social and emotional skills to be leaders in their post-secondary lives. Mental-health wellness is central to ensuring that success, the primer states.

“Mental health problems such as stress, anxiety and depression and harmful health behaviors such as substance abuse can impair the quality and quantity of learning. They decrease students' intellectual and emotional flexibility, weaken their creativity and undermine their interest in new knowledge, ideas and experiences,” says Richard Keeling, MD, primer co-author and principal of Keeling and Associates, of Provincetown, Massachusetts.

The authors also note that mental health is central to students' academic achievement and that college and university health and counseling centers have an important role to play in boosting student success and college completion rates.

“Multiple studies have found an increase in student persistence and retention associated with counseling services,” the report states. “Students who participate in counseling report improvements in their satisfaction with their quality of life—a more predictive measure of student retention than GPA alone.”

The primer highlights several college and university campuses that have programs that address mental health issues from a variety of angles, including peer counseling, peer coaching and behavioral intervention teams.

“Mental and behavioral health problems are also learning problems,” said co-author Louise Douce, PhD, psychologist, APA board member and chair of The Ohio State University’s crisis support team for 25 years.

“Given the complex relationships among mental health, problematic health behaviors, learning, campus safety and the quality of the learning environment, mental and behavioral health should be a strategic priority on every campus.”

Other contributors to the primer were: Jan Collins-Eaglin, PhD, Pomona College (CA); Dan Jones, PhD, Appalachian State University (NC); Jason Kilmer, PhD, University of Washington-Seattle; and Todd Olson, PhD, Georgetown University (DC).

To read the full primer, visit the [RPI page](#).

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About NASPA:

NASPA is the leading association for the advancement, health, and sustainability of the student affairs profession. Our work provides high-quality professional development, advocacy, and research for 13,000 members in all 50 states, 25 countries, and 8 U.S. territories.

About APA:

The American Psychological Association, in Washington, D.C., is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States. APA's membership includes nearly 130,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 54 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 60 state, territorial and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance the creation, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people's lives.

About ACE:

Founded in 1918, ACE is the major coordinating body for all the nation's higher education institutions, representing more than 1,600 college and university presidents, and more than 200 related associations, nationwide. It provides leadership on key higher education issues and influences public policy through advocacy. For more information, please visit www.acenet.edu or follow ACE on Twitter [@ACEducation](#).