



**Inside  
Higher  
Ed**

# **Student Perspectives on Their Mental Health & Wellness**

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# Back to Campus 2023: Considerations for Student Health and Wellness

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Michelle Y. Batista, Vice President of Student Services at Lake Tahoe Community College

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# About Our Survey

- 3,000 undergraduate respondents at 158 2- and 4-year institutions
- Conducted in April and May with College Pulse
- Multiple choice and write-in questions on stress, mental health, physical wellness and related campus services and facilities
- Demographic breakdowns and filtering questions

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EXPLORE THE DATA

## Health and Wellness

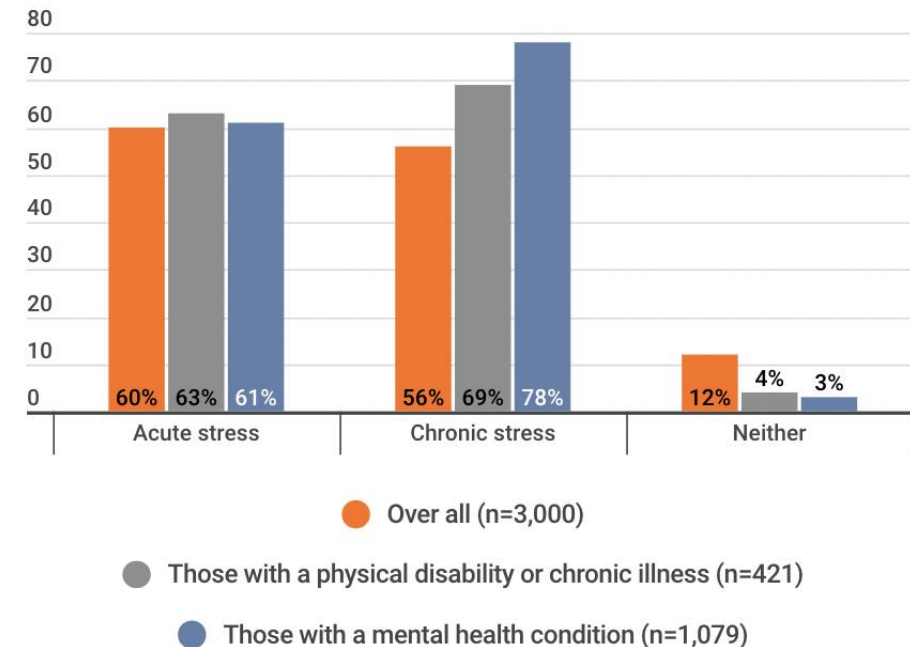
**Back to Campus 2023:  
Top 10 Considerations for Promoting  
Student Health and Wellness**

# 1. Understand the link between chronic stress and student well-being

- 56% of students have experienced chronic stress in college
- No major difference between 4-year and 2-year students
- Elevated chronic stress rates for students with physical disabilities or chronic illnesses (69%) and mental health conditions (78%)
- Chronic stress is associated with a variety of physical and mental health problems

## Experiences With Acute vs. Chronic Stress

Students identify the types of stress they've experienced during college (by share over all and by share of those reporting health issues)



## 2. Identify students' top academic stressors

### Students' top 5 academic stressors (of 10):

1. Exams (59%)
2. Pressure to do well (42%)
3. Balancing school and other obligations (40%)
4. Essays/papers (37%)
5. Getting a bad grade (35%)

### More to know:

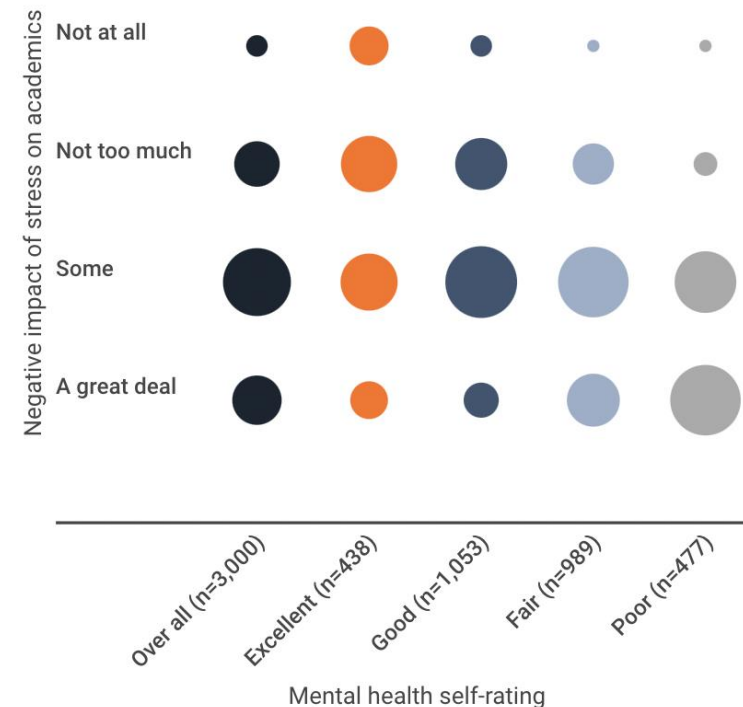
- Students who rate their mental health lower cite pressure to do well at higher rates, e.g. it's the No. 1 stressor for students who rate their mental health as poor
- By major, 69% of natural sciences students cite exams as top stressor, compared to 54% of social sciences students and 37% of arts and humanities students

# 3. Know that stress is hurting student performance

- 74% of students say stress is negatively impacting their ability to focus, learn and do well in class, either somewhat or a great deal
- Just 4% say stress has no negative impact on academics
- 86% of the 1,466 students who rate their mental health as fair or poor (versus excellent or good) say stress is negatively affecting their academic success somewhat or a great deal

## When Stress Undercuts Academic Success

Students say how much stress is negatively impacting their ability to focus, learn and do well in class (by percentage of students over all and by students' mental health self-rating)

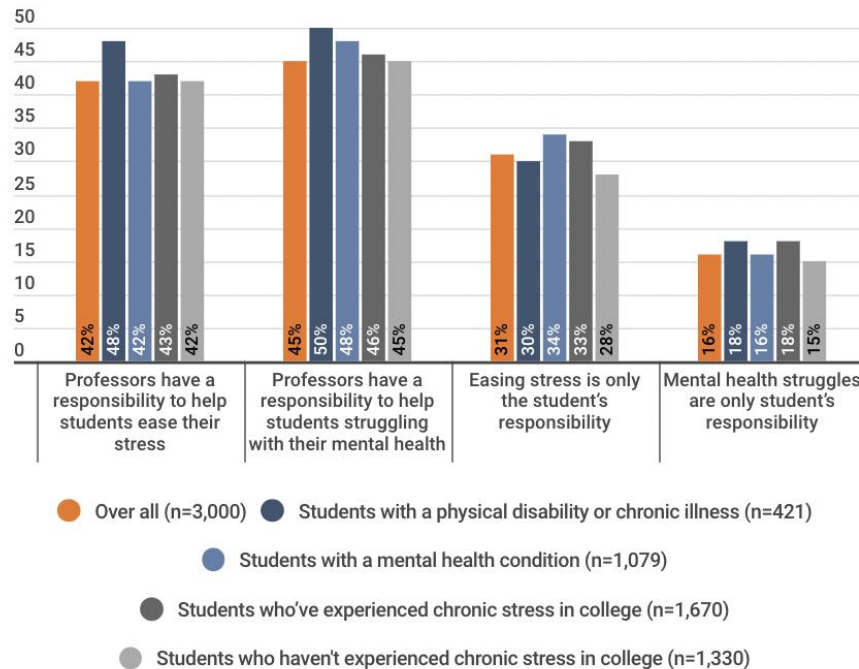




# 4. Empower faculty members and other campus groups to support student well-being

Share of respondents over all and by group who say:

- 1) **Professors** have a responsibility to help students *ease their stress*.
- 2) **Professors** have a responsibility to help students *struggling with their mental health*.
- 3) *Easing stress* is **only the student's** responsibility.
- 4) *Mental health struggles* are **only the student's** responsibility.



- 42% of students say professors have a responsibility to ease their stress, followed by “it’s only my responsibility” (31%), campus counselors (29%), advisers (26%), peers (25%), administrators (18%)...
- 45% of 4-year students say professors have this responsibility (easing stress) versus 33% of 2-year students
- 45% of students say professors have a responsibility to help students struggling with their mental health, followed by advisers (38%), administrators (32%), residential life staff (27%), peers (25%)...
- On mental health, no major difference between 4-year and 2-year students



# 5. Support students' wellness goals

## Students' top wellness goals (of 13):

1. Reduce stress (72%)
2. Eat a healthier diet (60%)
3. Get more sleep (60%)
4. Get more exercise (57%)
5. Stick to a regular sleep schedule (47%)

## More to know:

Relatively more students receiving financial aid than not receiving it want to do the following:

- Reduce stress (74 percent versus 67 percent, respectively)
- Get more sleep (62 percent versus 54 percent)
- Stick to a regular sleep schedule (49 percent versus 39 percent)

*Editor's note:* Not quite half of students receiving some form of financial aid (n=1,826) rate their mental health as excellent or good, as do 56% of students with no financial aid (n=791)

# 6. Invest in food and wellness services and facilities

*“In the science of how we think about mental health today, one component is clearly psychological services, but those tend to be reactive and sort of downstream solutions. So much of the conversation right now is about getting upstream of this problem. And upstream solutions are all about well-being.”*

—Kevin Kruger, president of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators

- 52% of students say they have access to campus dining halls when they need and want food
- 40% of students agree there are healthy options in their campus dining halls
- Top 3 areas students say colleges are getting right: fitness facilities (51%), dining facilities (31%) and wellness facilities (27%)
- Top 3 areas students say need improvement: dining food hall options (45%), dining facilities (37%) and disordered eating resources (28%)

# 7. Promote mental health care services

- 63% of students haven't accessed any mental health care through their colleges or universities, from on-campus counseling to referrals to off-campus providers to hot lines
- 24% have used on-campus counseling
- 12% have used telecounseling
- 50% of students with mental health conditions haven't used any of these services, nor have 49% of students who rate their mental health as poor



# 8. Gauge students' satisfaction with campus mental health care

**Among students who have accessed campus care (n=1,110):**

- Top 4 things that went well (of 8 options): appointment availability (47%), quality of care (41%) and follow-up care (29%) and “ability to schedule with a counselor I could relate to” (24%)
- Top 4 things that need improvement are THE SAME

Q: How does telecounseling compare to on-campus counseling?

A: Relatively more students who've used telecounseling than students who've used on-campus counseling say quality of care needs work, (43% versus 29%, respectively)

## 9. Boost crisis care awareness

- 27% percent of students strongly agree with the statement “I know where I can seek help on campus if I or a friend is experiencing a mental health crisis”
- Students with excellent or good mental health are more likely than those with lower mental health self-ratings to say they know where to turn in case of a mental health crisis: 71% versus 61% respectively
- Awareness rates higher for certain demographics

*“It’s widespread, it’s frequent and it’s big, because they have to see it at the point they need it. Otherwise they’ll forget it.”*

—Angela M. Stowe, director of student counseling services at the University of Alabama at Birmingham

# 10. Recognize that mental health offerings may be increasingly informing college choice

- 29% of students say mental health offerings mattered most to them in terms of campus health and wellness facilities and services when making the decision to enroll in their college, putting mental health ahead of fitness, dining and physical health
- Not isolated to students with preexisting mental health concerns
- Admissions and counseling experts say that parents and students alike are interested in this issue

*“There’s a national mental health conversation happening now at every level in higher education.”*

— Logan Powell, associate provost for enrollment and dean of undergraduate admission at Brown University

# Students' write-in ideas for reducing stress on their campuses:

- Mental health check-ins/ask students what would help
- Schedule “stress less” days
- Rethink final exams
- Increase financial assistance for struggling students
- Offer de-stressing activities—and free food
- Teach time management and healthy coping skills
- Facilitate group study sessions
- Create relaxation spaces





# **Guest Q &A**

**Michelle Y. Batista  
Sragvi Pattanaik**

# Audience Q&A

- What else would you like to know?
- How are you approaching student health and wellness this year on your campus?

# Thank you!

