

Copyright Abelson 2019
Please consult prior to mass distribution

COLLEGE STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

DATA | TRENDS | RESPONSES

GLCA Presidential Summit

December 2019

Sara Abelson, MPH

Healthy Minds Network Co-Investigator & Lead
for Diversity Equity and Inclusion Projects

ABOUT ME

- 10+ years addressing mental health on college campuses
- Co-Investigator and Lead for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Projects, Healthy Minds Network
- Former Vice President of Student Health & Wellness, Active Minds
- PhD candidate in Public Health, University of Michigan



A G E N D A

SCOPE & TRENDS

How big is the issue?
Is it growing over time?

IMPACT

Who is affected and what are the
consequences?

RESPONSES

To promote & protect student
mental health

HEALTHY MINDS STUDY

- Population data
- Annual, web-based survey
- 2005– Present
- > 300 schools; > 300,000 student participants
- Random sample at each participating institution
- Project of the Healthy Minds Network

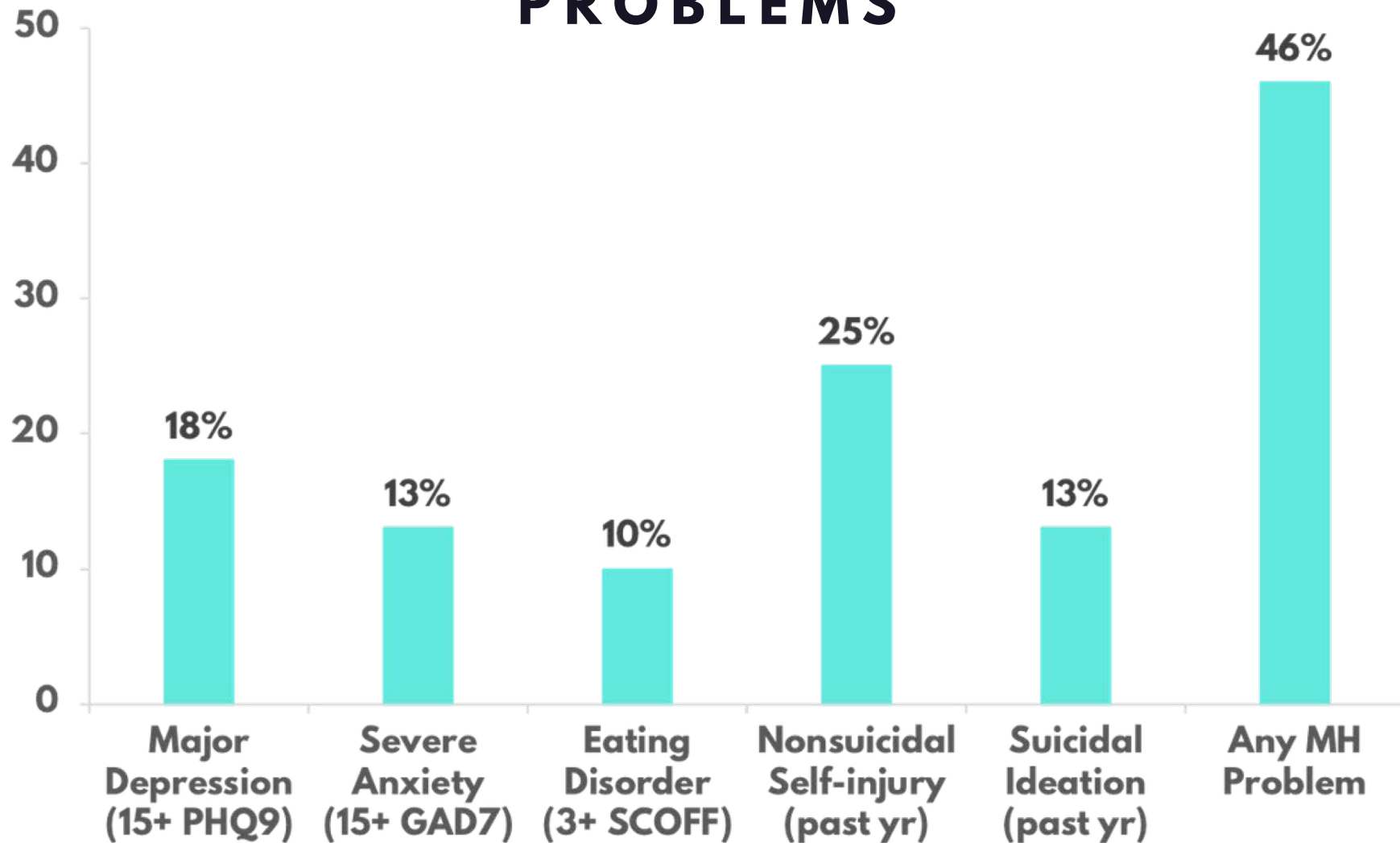


PROBLEM SCOPE

Mental health disorders are common, consequential, and largely untreated on college campuses.

- 46% of students are experiencing a significant issue
- The prevalence of problems is growing
- Almost half of students with a diagnosable problem are not receiving treatment

PREVALENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS



Source: HMS 2017-2018
N=68,427 students, 60 schools

APPROXIMATELY

9.2 MILLION

**COLLEGE STUDENTS ARE EXPERIENCING A DIAGNOSABLE
MENTAL HEALTH CONCERN**



Abelson 2019

STUDENTS ARE OVERWHELMED

In last 12 months, % who felt:

**Hopeless
(53%)**

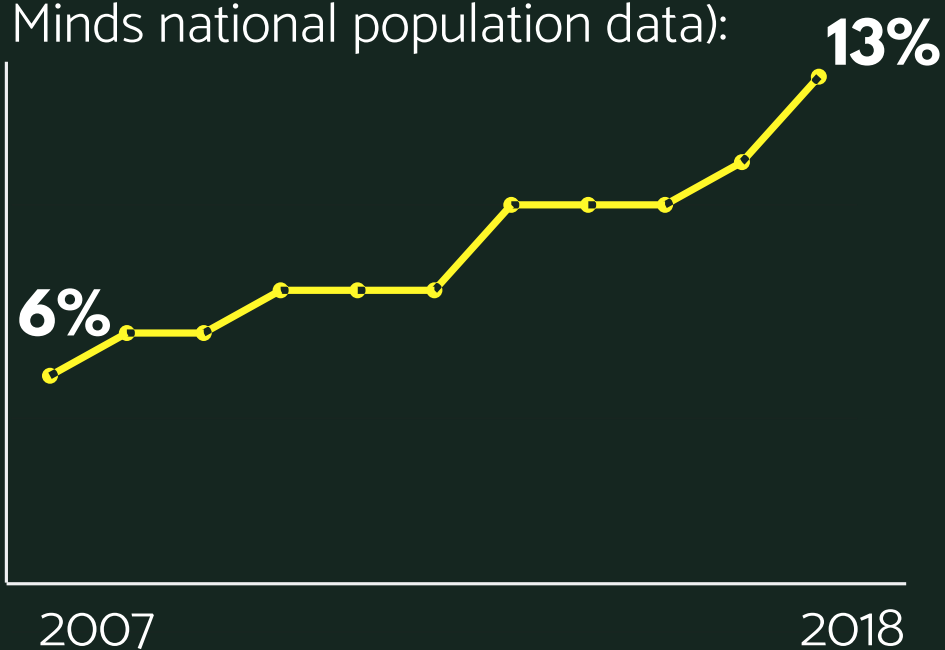
**Overwhelmed
(87%)**

0 % 25 % 50 % 75 % 100 %

NCHA 2018 Data

RISING PREVALENCE

Past year suicidal ideation (Healthy Minds national population data):



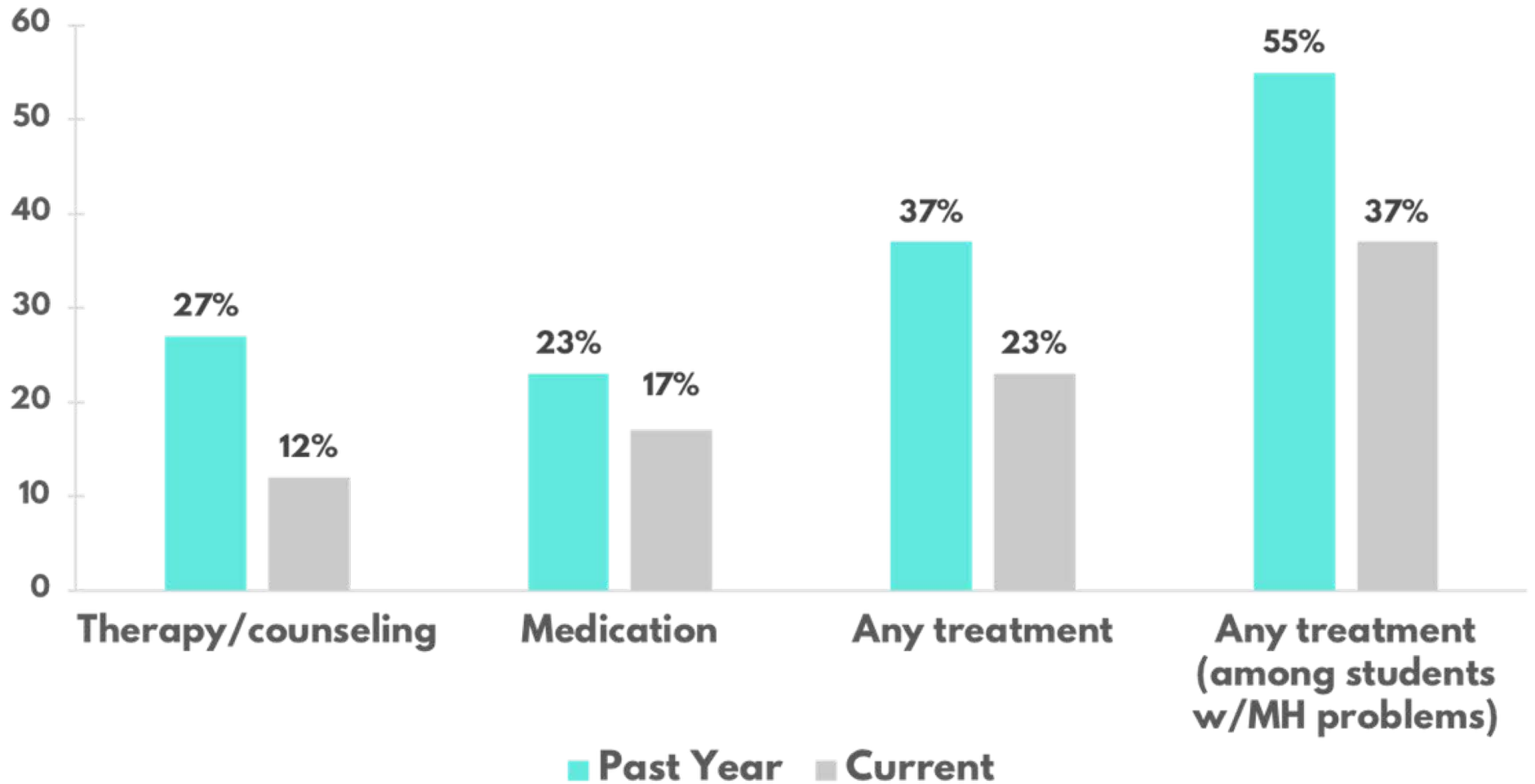
Among students seeking treatment at counseling centers, the percent of students who report having seriously considered attempting suicide rose from 24% in 2010 to 35.8% in 2017 (Center for Collegiate Mental Health)

Abelson 2019



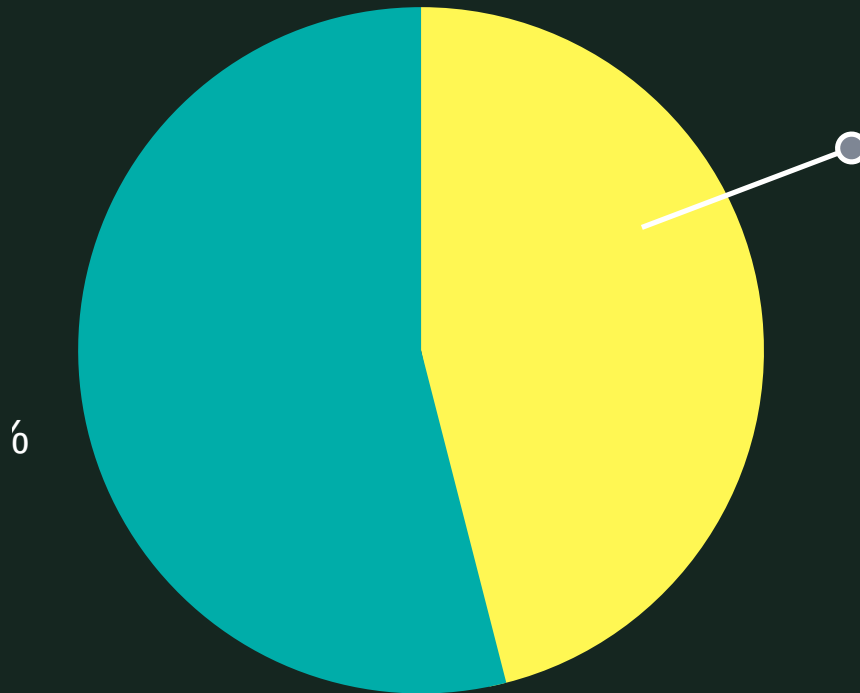
Send Silence Packing Suicide Prevention Exhibit

TREATMENT RATES



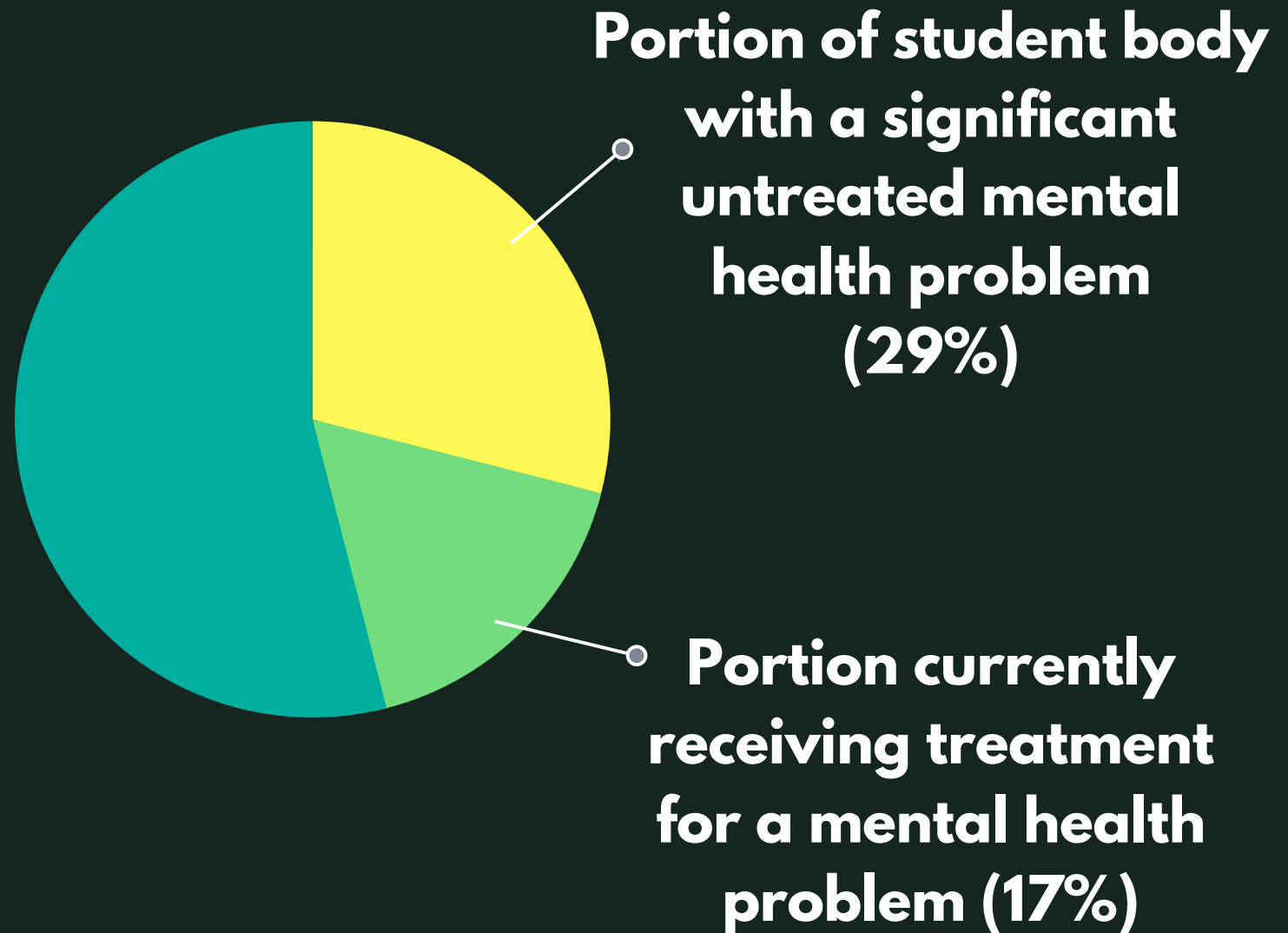
Source: Healthy Minds Survey 2017-2018

PROBLEM SCOPE



**Portion of
student body
with a
significant
mental health
problem
(46%)**

PROBLEM SCOPE





Abelson 2019

WHAT ABOUT US?

Institutional Variation

- Odds of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation are lower at private, residential, and selective schools
- Treatment rates are higher at private, highly residential, and small schools

Lipson et al. (2015)

WHICH STUDENTS ARE EXPERIENCING HIGHER RATES OF CONCERNS?

GENDER MINORITIES

57% meet criteria for
depression compared to
28% of cisgender
students

SEXUAL MINORITIES

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer
students have a substantially
elevated risk for mental health
problems (nearly double) compared
to heterosexual students

LEAST LIKELY TO RECEIVE TREATMENT?

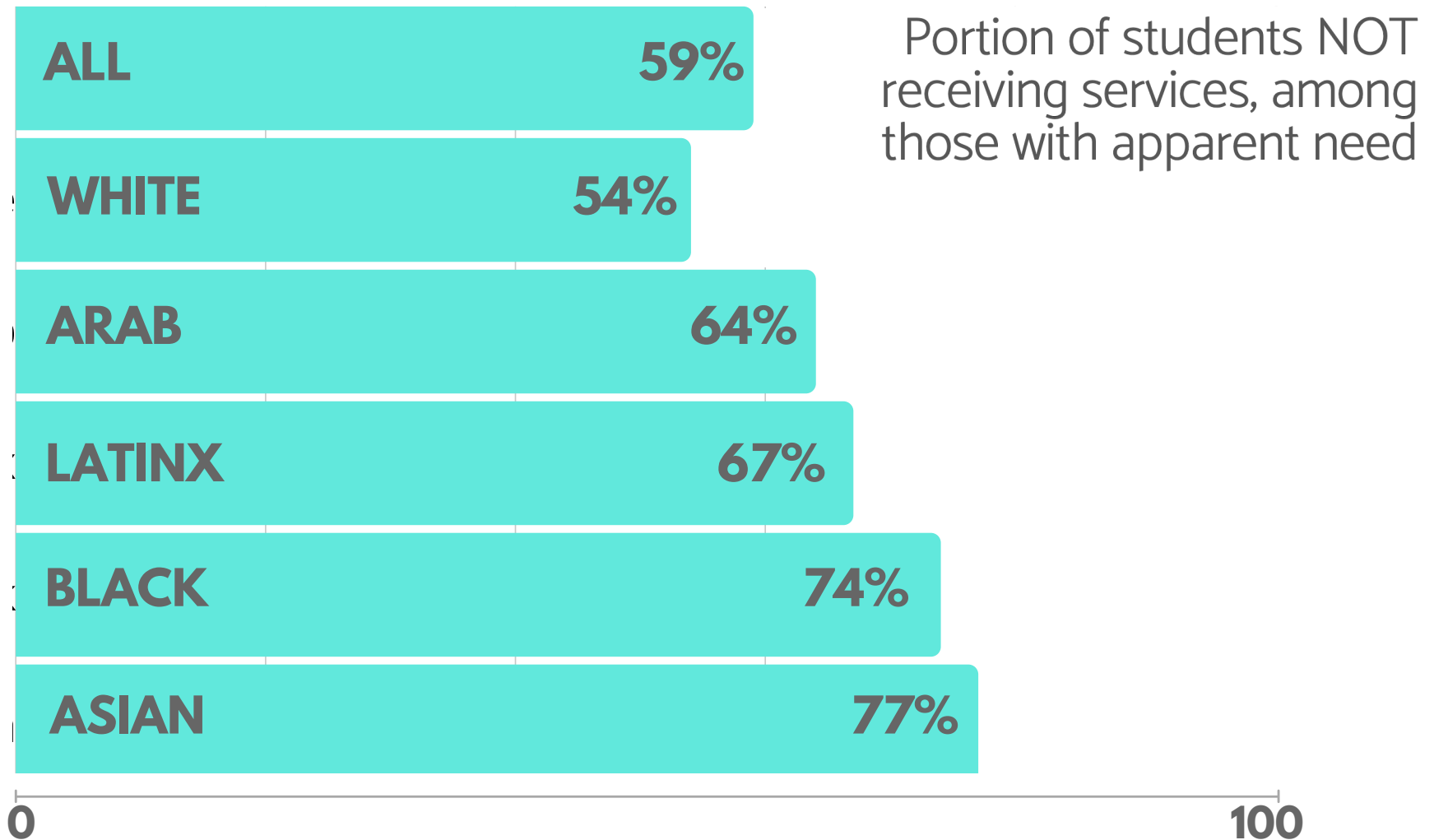
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

In multiple studies, Asian
international students have
shown the lowest rate of help-
seeking of all students

STUDENTS OF COLOR

Of students with symptoms of a
disorder, far fewer Latinx, African
American, and Asian students
are diagnosed and treated than
White students

PAST-YEAR TREATMENT GAP VARIES BY RACE/ETHNICITY



Sample: N = 9,851 students with a positive screen for 1 or more mental health problems (depression, anxiety, eating disorder, past-year non-suicidal self-injury, and/or past-year suicidal ideation).

Data: HMS 2012-2015; 60 campuses

Citation: Lipson et al. (2018) *Journal of Adolescent Health*

RISK FACTORS

(HEALTHY MINDS DATA)

FINANCIAL STRESS

60% prevalence of mental health problems among students experiencing frequent financial stress

ABUSE/ ASSAULT

67% prevalence among students who report having experienced abuse/assault

SLEEP PROBLEMS

17% prevalence among students with minimal to no sleep problems; 88% among students with severe sleep problems

DISCRIMINATION

More frequent experiences of discrimination are associated with significantly more symptoms of depression and anxiety



Abelson 2019

CURRENT ISSUES

**with implications
for mental health**

- Rising costs of college
- Hostile and tense campus climates
- Rising incidence of hate crimes
- Increasing use of social media
- Opioid Crisis
- Campus sexual assault



WHY CARE?

**COLLEGE OFFERS A
CRITICAL TIME AND
UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY
FOR INTERVENTION**

**Early prevention, detection
and treatment:**

- Saves lives
- Improves academic outcomes, career trajectories, lifetime earnings, health, relationship satisfaction and more

being depressed in college is
associated with

2X

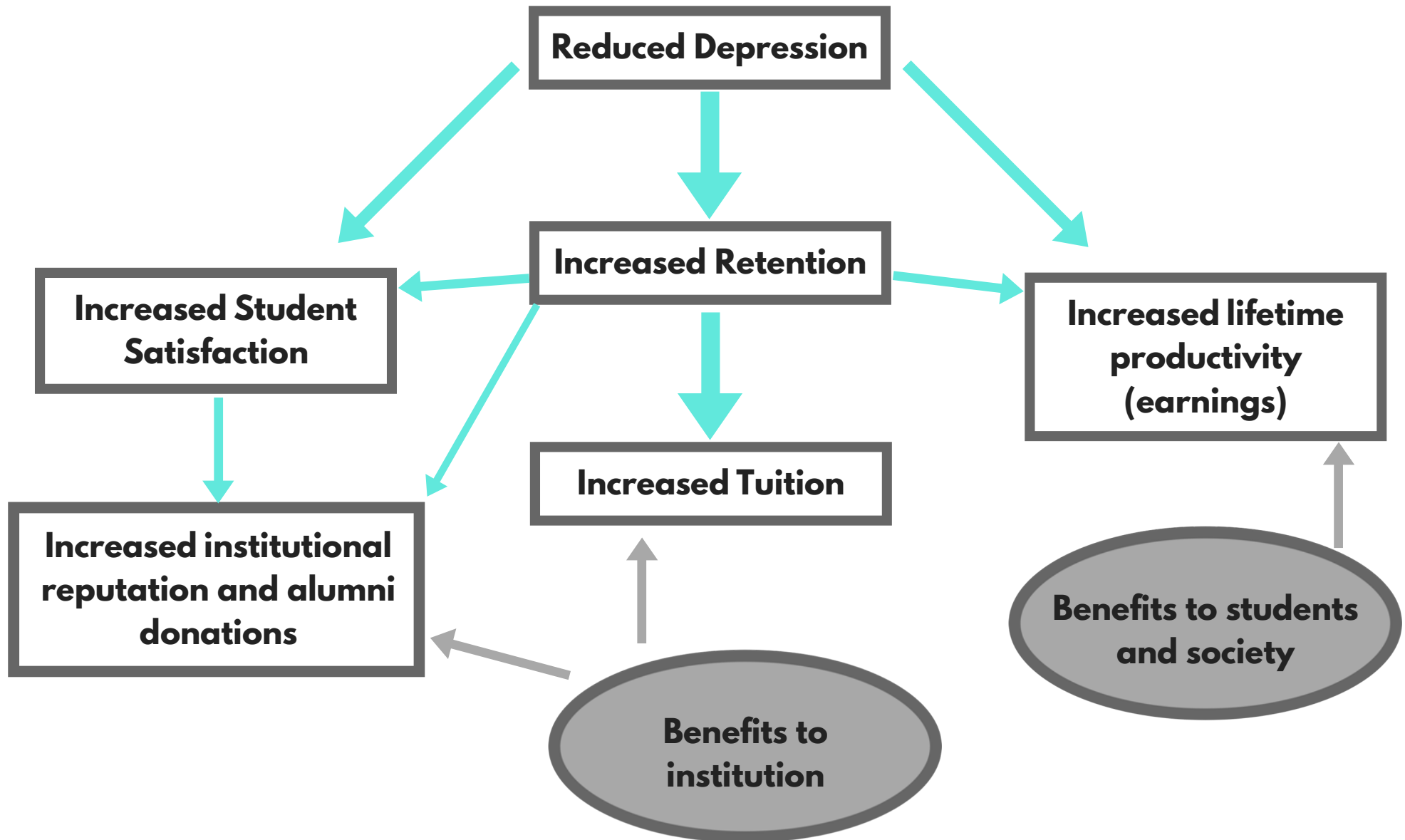
greater risk of departing without
graduating.

ACADEMIC IMPACTS

**Untreated mental health disorders
are associated with lower GPA,
enrollment discontinuity, and
drop-out**

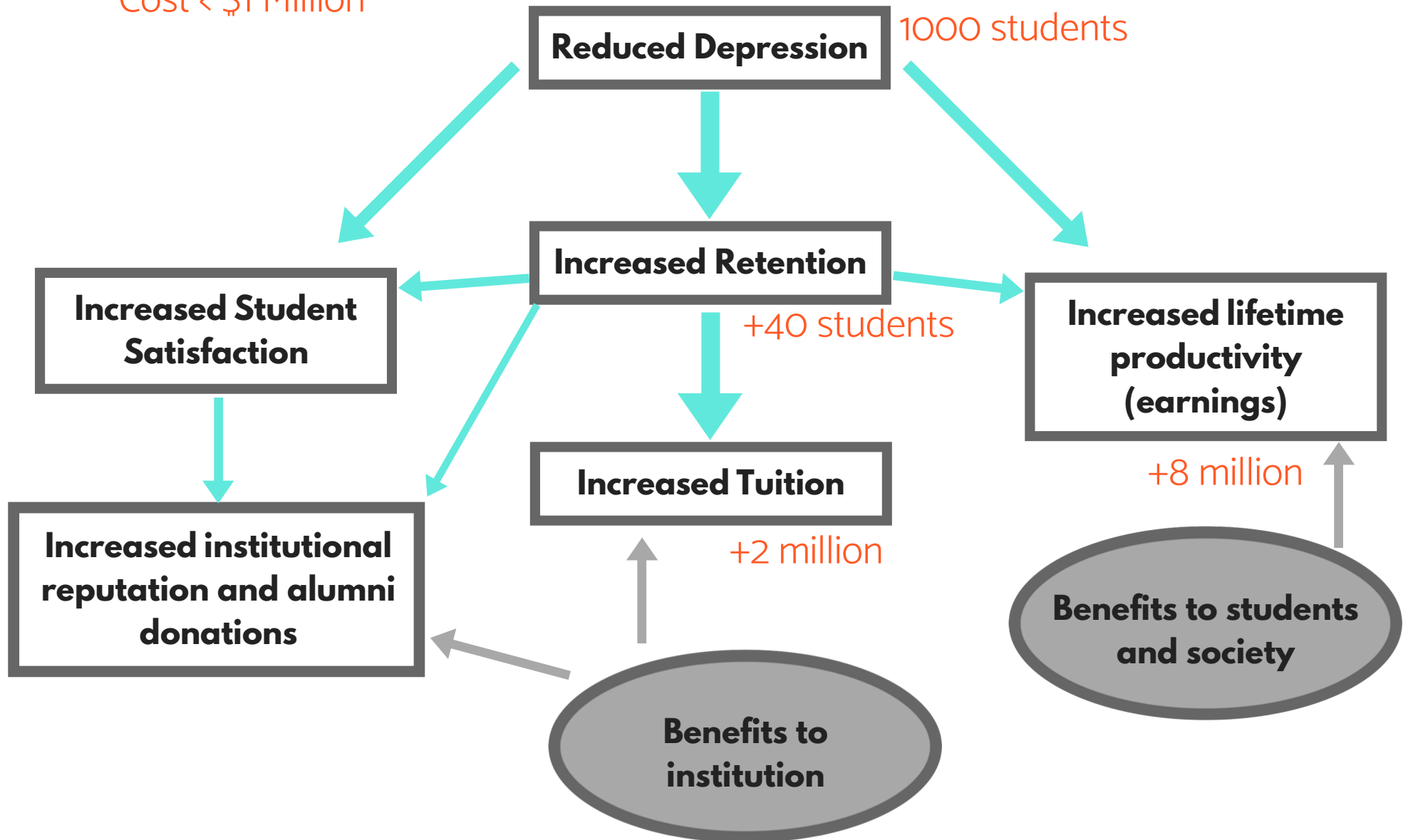
76% of students report their mental health
interfered with their academics 1 or more
days in the last month

ECONOMIC CASE FOR INVESTING IN STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH



ECONOMIC CASE FOR INVESTING IN STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

Cost < \$1 Million





RESPONSES NATIONALLY

KEY PLAYERS

Campus Mental Health

Active Minds
Jed
Steve Fund
AUCCCD/ACCA
HEMHA

Mental Health Nationally

MHA
NAMI
AFSP
ACA/APA
Crisis Text Line/NSPL
Trevor Project
MHFA
QPR
Kognito

Health/ Well-being

ACHA
20x30
NIRSA
Campus Well-being
Initiative: ACS/PHA
Everfi
BHAC
NCAC

Higher Ed


ACE
AAC&U
ACUE
BToP
GLCA
NASEM

Funders

SAMHSA GLS
NIMH
RWJF
Peg's Foundation
BCBS Foundation

Measurement

Healthy Minds
CCMH
AUCCCD
NCHA
HERI CIRP
NRCCCHE

A photograph of a campus scene. In the foreground, a paved path leads towards a large, historic stone building with many windows. The path is flanked by green grass. In the upper left and right corners, there are branches with pink cherry blossoms, some in focus and some blurred. The overall image has a slightly muted, artistic feel.

CAMPUS RESPONSES

To promote & protect student mental health

PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH

- Address basic needs
- Develop life skills
- Promote social networks
- Identify students at-risk
- Encourage help-seeking
- Enhance mental health services
- Restrict access to potentially lethal means
- Crisis management

Abelson 2019



BASIC NEEDS

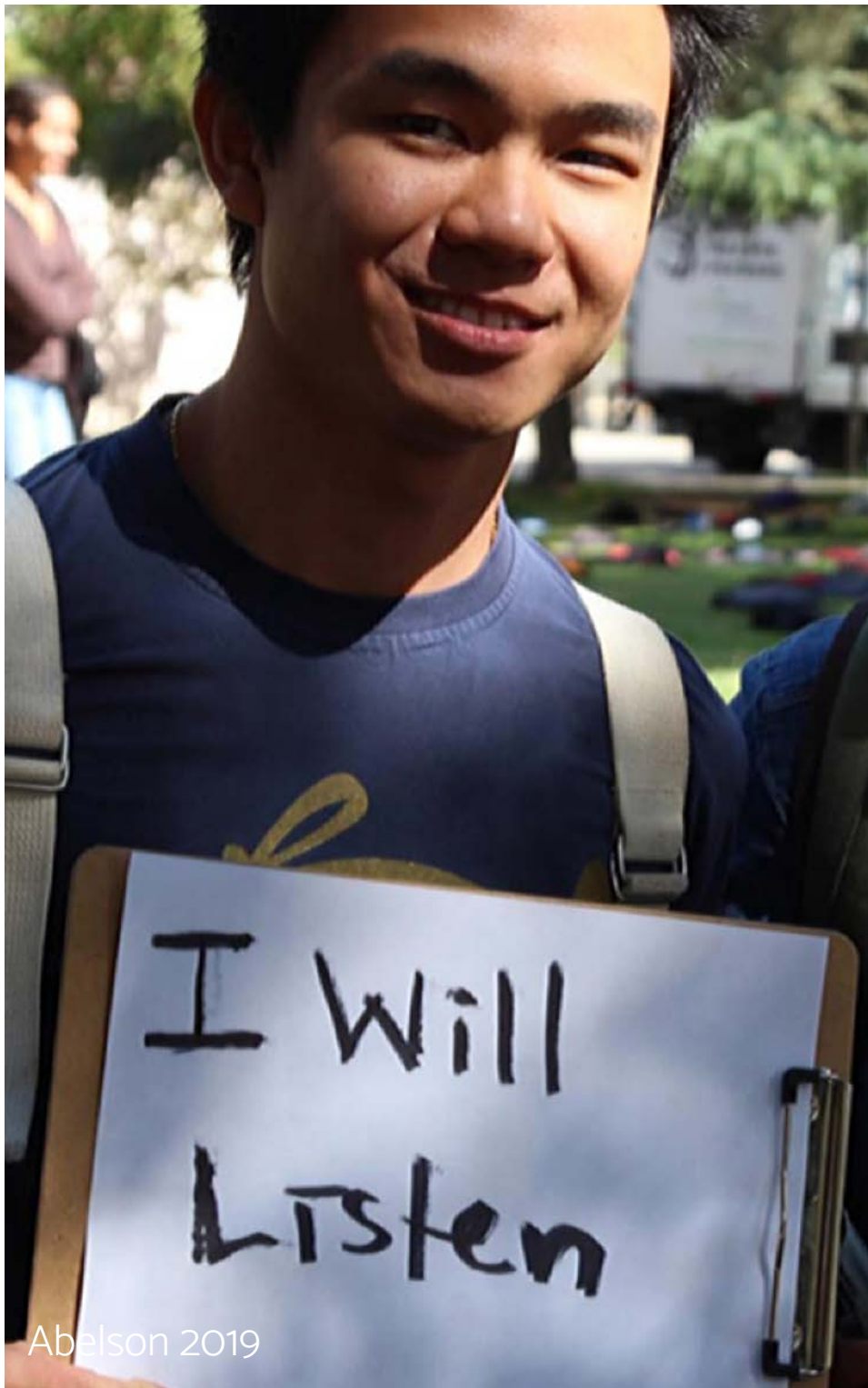
Food and Housing Insecurity:

- Experienced by about 45% of students at 4yr colleges
- Undermines educational experiences & credential attainment
- Associated with poor physical health, symptoms of depression, & higher perceived stress

PROMOTE SOCIAL NETWORKS

- Important protective factor
- Students turn to each other when in distress
- Peer outreach reduces stigma, enhances knowledge, improves climate & increases help-seeking

Efforts include Active Minds, peer-support programs, ResLife efforts, cultural centers, experienced-based support resources (e.g. for first-generation or DACA students), and more



PROVIDE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Campuses are:

- Embedding counselors in units & departments across campus
- Expanding screening & treatment through Stepped Care and triage models
- Harnessing technology and mobile options
- Addressing inequities

RESTRICT ACCESS TO LETHAL MEANS

May involve building design, bridge barriers, parking structure signage, gun policies, medicine take back/buy back events, and more

www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/



Abelson 2019



CAMPUS RESPONSES

LIFE-COURSE APPROACH



Pre-enrollment



Matriculation



Orientation



Transition out

Abelson 2019



Advising Years 1-4



Stress points/Risk periods

CAMPUS RESPONSES

EMBEDDING ACROSS SETTINGS



Physical spaces



Learning environments



Campus culture & climate



Policies

A night-time photograph of a multi-lane highway. In the foreground and middle ground, several semi-trucks are stopped or moving slowly, their headlights and taillights glowing. The trucks are of various colors, including white, blue, and red. In the background, more trucks are visible, and the highway stretches into the distance under a dark sky. Streetlights are visible along the road. The overall scene suggests a traffic jam or a significant delay on the highway.

WE CAN DO MORE

The background image shows a wooden desk with several laptops, notebooks, and a small potted cactus. In the center, two hands are shaking, symbolizing a partnership or agreement. The text is overlaid on this image.

RESOURCES:

HEALTHY MINDS WHITE PAPERS, ANNUAL DATA REPORTS & DATA INTERFACE

healthymindsnetwork.org/research

HEALTHY MINDS ROI CALCULATOR

healthymindsnetwork.org/research/roi-calculator

AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION "INVESTING IN STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH" BRIEF

<https://tinyurl.com/yxkrzo3l>

THANK YOU

FOR INVESTING IN STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

**SARA ABELSON, MPH: SABELSON@UMICH.EDU
HEALTHYMINDSNETWORK.ORG**

Photos credits to Juan Ramos, Ron Dyar, Helloquence, Franki Chamaki & Marcos Luiz on Unsplash