



Equity in Mental Health Framework

BACKGROUND

The Equity in Mental Health Framework was developed over a 2-year period with input from senior leaders at the Steve Fund and JED Foundation as well as leading national mental health experts. With support from Morgan Stanley, we have fully developed this framework to include input from higher education experts from colleges and universities nationwide.

STATEMENT OF NEED

With over 20 million students enrolled in American colleges and universities, 42% of whom self-identify as students of color, academic institutions face unique challenges in working to serve a variety of student needs. College students on today's campuses face a number of concerns in the social, emotional, financial, and academic spheres. For students of color, their needs are often more acute given that issues like racism, sexism and general discrimination compound these other psychosocial stressors. In fact, students of color report greater feelings of isolation and a significantly reduced likelihood of seeking professional care for mental health and emotional well-being concerns when compared with their white peers (Harris Poll, Steve Fund, and JED Foundation, 2017).

OUR GOAL

Our goal is to support and enhance the academic experience of our students of color by recognizing the unique aspects of their emotional wellbeing and mental health needs and supporting creative mechanisms to enhance their academic environments and improve academic outcomes. To support this aim, we present the 10 recommendations of the Equity in Mental Health Framework below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Identify and Promote the Mental Health and Well-Being of Students of Color as a Campus-Wide Priority**
We encourage institutions of higher learning to center student well-being (and student of color well-being) within the mission of the institution.
- 2 Engage Students to Provide Guidance and Feedback on Matters of Student Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being**
The Steve Fund and Jed Foundation encourage institutions to regularly and systematically survey and conduct focus groups with students of color to understand their needs and wishes regarding emotional wellbeing, sense of belonging on campus, and academic success.



3 Actively Recruit, Train, and Retain a Diverse and Culturally Competent Faculty and Professional Staff

Schools are encouraged to examine whether the identities represented among the student body are also represented in the faculty and professional staff. We also encourage schools to provide education and training in cultural competencies to all individuals engaged in student support roles.

4 Create Opportunities to Engage Around National and International Issues/Events

Current events and cultural movements (e.g. International Travel Ban) profoundly impact members of the campus community even when geographically removed from colleges and universities.

5 Create Dedicated Roles to Support Well-Being and Success of Students of Color

Schools should support staff positions (e.g. multicultural student affairs coordinator; academic diversity officer) with protected time and resources allocated to the development and implementation of culturally relevant student support programming. When these positions do not exist on campuses, it may be useful to create and staff such positions.

6 Support and Promote Accessible, Safe Communication with Campus Administration and an Effective Response System

Create a well-publicized and accessible process by which any student, faculty, or staff member can alert key administrators about incidents, concerns, or issues related to campus climate.

7 Offer A Range of Supportive Programs and Services in Varied Formats

Schools should provide a variety of culturally relevant programs (e.g. mentor networks, discussion groups, workshops, and transition programs) focused on supporting the mental health and well-being of students of color.

8 Help Students Learn about Programs and Services by Advertising and Promoting Through Multiple Channels

Schools should actively and regularly advertise programs on campus, on the web and via social media. Many wonderful national programs and resources are underutilized simply because students are not aware.

9 Identify and Utilize Culturally Relevant and Promising Programs and Practices and Collect Data on Effectiveness

It is important for colleges and universities to build and maintain centralized, accessible resource-sharing repositories to enable effective collaboration.

10 Participate in Resource and Information Sharing (Within and Between Schools)

The Steve Fund/JED Foundation national survey of programs identified a number of college and universities already engaged in feasible, scalable and acceptable programs for students, faculty and staff of color. The community of higher educational institutions can contribute to this knowledge base and help build a set of tested resources to best meet the needs of racially diverse student bodies.