MENTAL HEALTH
STRATEGIC PLAN

VALUE. SUPPORT. TRANSFORM.
OUR VISION

A campus community that values, supports and transforms the mental well-being of all CU Denver students by providing a caring, welcoming environment.

OUR VALUES

The University of Colorado Denver is committed to the values of partnership, integrated wellness, caring environment, and inclusivity and accessibility.

OUR FRAMEWORK

adapted from the Canadian Association of College & University Student Services and Canadian Mental Health Association, 2013
CU Denver is committed to growing collaborative partnerships on campus, in the community and with CU Anschutz, in order to share knowledge, experience and expertise. Collaboration will encourage innovative and effective programs and practices that support student mental well-being.
Creating and implementing holistic strategies across the wellness continuum that CU Denver students can utilize to improve their mental health, while considering diverse factors in the living and learning environment that impact student mental health and well-being.
Create a sense of belonging, connection and community at CU Denver while supporting students in developing coping skills and resiliency.

CORE VALUE
CARING ENVIRONMENT
Foster a safe, supportive, and inclusive campus environment by reducing the stigmatization around mental health and ensuring a commitment to comprehensive practices that meet the different needs of students from diverse backgrounds and identities.
OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Thriving Campus Community

2. Proactive Mental Health Education & Resilience Skill Building

3. Caring and Responsive Campus for Mental Health Support & Crisis Intervention
KEY INITIATIVES

- University Commitment
- Supportive, Inclusive Campus Climate & Environment
- Community Capacity to Respond to Early Indicators of Concern
- Mental Health Awareness
- Self-Management Competencies & Coping Skills
- Accessible Mental Health Services
- Crisis Management
A critical component of the success of this strategic planning process will be creating campus-wide engagement in addressing mental health and creating a culture of caring and shared responsibility for student emotional well-being and success (Keeling, 2018; JED, 2018). In order to promote and demonstrate CU Denver’s commitment to the overall mental health and wellness of students a review of planning, policy and communication is included in the first strategic priority area of this strategic plan (Canadian Association of College & University Student Services and Canadian Mental Health Association, 2013).

**Strategic Activities**

We will initiate a campus wide communication strategy establishing CU Denver’s commitment to mental health and invite the entire CU Denver community to take part in promoting the mental well-being of all CU Denver students.

- Create a strong web presence for mental health support which also promotes healthy habits, resources, training opportunities, workshops and events.
- Engage the campus community in the mental health strategic planning process by utilizing the web to highlight progress, promote opportunities for participation, allow CU Denver community members to ask questions and provide feedback.
- Collect mental health and well-being survey data and coordinate communication and messaging regarding survey results to the CU Denver community (such as the National College Health Assessment and #RealCollege survey results).

We will review and revise all CU Denver policies and protocols which address key aspects of responding to mental health and mental health related crisis on campus.

- Complete a campus wide audit to document and understand current programs, services, policy and protocol related to student mental well-being.
- Administer wellness and mental health surveys to students; including the National College Health Assessment survey (biennially) and introduce the Health Minds Survey (biennially), to determine campus needs.
- Administer wellness surveys to faculty and staff to determine campus needs.
- Establish a CU Denver campus mental health advisory board, which includes diverse faculty, staff & student representation. This advisory board is responsible for implementing the strategic plan initiatives and providing on-going advocacy and support for improving student mental health on campus.

We will develop a fiscal plan to support the efforts and initiatives outlined in the CU Denver Mental Health Strategic Plan.

- Fund evidence-based initiatives and programming.
- Seek external and internal financial support for student training and staff professional development, regarding mental health.
- Seek out internal and external financial support to build infrastructure and sustain direct clinical counseling and related services to meet student needs and service demand.
Have you received the following information from your university?

CU Denver NCHA 2019 Survey Data

- A fiscal plan is established to support the efforts and initiatives outlined in the CU Denver Mental Health Strategic Plan.
- Strategic communications plan is established, implemented and reviewed annually.
- Mental health resources are clear and easy to navigate via CU Denver’s website.
- Policy and process throughout the university, from the highest levels of leadership, reflect a commitment to mental health and wellness.
- Strong, long-term budgetary allocations are designated for the improvement of collective mental health at CU Denver.
- The NCHA, FSHA, and Healthy Minds surveys are administered every other year with the goal of achieving a 15% participation rate for students and 25% for faculty and staff, by 2023.
A campus culture of connection, inclusion and caring is a shared responsibility for student emotional well-being. Research has shown that loneliness and isolation are significant risk factors for mental health problems. Therefore, supportive social relationships and feeling connected to campus, family and friends are protective factors that can help reduce risk for suicide and other significant mental health concerns (JED, 2018). In addition to loneliness and isolation as risk factors, Keeling and Associates (2018) have identified that specific characteristics of the learning environment, course curricula and pedagogy, campus culture, availability and access to personal and academic support and learner experience may cause or worsen stress, anxiety and burnout among students.

### Strategic Activities

**We will utilize universal design concepts to create conditions on campus that facilitate meaningful engagement and include warm, welcoming and safe spaces for students to gather, socialize, learn, connect and foster well-being.**

- Establish and widely publish all allocated spaces on campus, in public areas, for students to gather, including student groups, clubs and organizations.
- Intentionally create spaces for student gathering, community building, and socialization during new building projects and redesigning projects.
- Make a commitment to encourage healthy habits and socialization on campus, by offering wellness based vending machines with healthy food options in all CU Denver buildings and widely publish all locations for food storage, microwaves, etc., in public gathering spaces.
- Coordinate with the Auraria Police Department and CU Denver Emergency Preparedness, to review and restrict access to lethal means to prevent suicide on campus.

**We will provide resources for faculty and academic departments on creating course curricula that do not perpetuate mental health stigma, prejudice, and discrimination.**

- Encourage innovative and collaborative educational practices, which foster well-being in the classroom setting and / or meaningful engagement in the community by creating a Wellness Innovator grant program for faculty.
- Collaborate with campus partners to develop a curriculum guide which would infuse wellness and mental well-being into all curriculum and course work.

**We will strongly advertise any and all support services to CU Denver students, with an emphasis on our diverse student populations (students of color, LGBTQ, first generation, international, low income, spiritual communities, students with pre-existing mental health conditions as well as those living on campus).**

- Meet students where they are by offering support services in a variety of formats including; in person, live streamed events, and other digital educational opportunities.
- Consider all service models available for mental health services, including in-person as well as tele-therapy / video conferencing, to meet student need and growing demand for mental health programming and services.
- Widely promote all suicide prevention programs, as well as community building and engagement-based services, on-line, in person, via social media and by using other reliable communication venues such as the student portal.
Have you ever felt very lonely?

CU Denver NCHA 2019 Survey Data

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<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>In the last 30 days</td>
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Within the last 12 months, have academics been traumatic or very difficult for you to handle?

CU Denver NCHA 2019 Survey Data

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<tr>
<th>Response</th>
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What Progress Looks Like by 2023

- The Mental Health Advisory Committee is active on campus and makes significant progress towards fulfilling the strategic plan initiatives, while also staying up-to-date with current trends regarding student and faculty/staff mental health needs. Progress is reported annually.
- CU Denver students, faculty and staff have a sense of ownership for each of their individual and collective roles in addressing student mental health.
- Provide continuous training opportunities on basic mental health strategies, interventions and resources, with the goal to train at least 60% of all undergraduate students, 60% of student facing staff and administrators, 60% of First Year Experience instructors, and 60% of Department Chairs by 2023. The ultimate goal is to train 100% of these populations by 2025.
- CU Denver faculty and staff educate and advocate for student mental health in academic classes and all student staff employee onboarding processes.
Mental health awareness initiatives aim to improve overall student mental well-being by increasing knowledge and understanding of the nature, impact, and management of mental health issues and to increase help seeking behavior. Obstacles to seeking help include a lack of awareness of services offered, skepticism about the effectiveness of treatment, cultural and other prejudices associated with mental illness and fear of costs and/or coverage for mental health services. Resilience factors such as awareness of mental health symptoms and knowledge of coping strategies have been found to be associated with decreased symptoms of depression in university students. Additionally, increased mental health awareness also plays an important role in the de-stigmatization of mental health issues and contributes to more students engaging in help seeking behaviors (Canadian Association of College & University Student Services et. al, 2013; JED, 2018).

Strategic Activities

We will actively highlight and advertise all mental health services, resources and programs to the CU Denver community using a variety of web-based and in person tactics to create awareness and reduce stigma about mental health.

- Feature services, programs, resources and available training on the main CU Denver webpage and other highly trafficked CU Denver websites, to ensure mental health resources are easily accessible and to enhance wellness messaging.

- Provide programs at New Student and Transfer Student Orientation to educate new students and their families about college student mental health, coping and resiliency skill building, and provide helpful information to parents and families.

- Feature current wellness and mental well-being tools, such as YOU@CUDenver, to assist students and their families in wellness planning at orientation.

We will organize campus wide symposia, forums and dialogues on mental well-being and mental health issues to decrease stigma and fear, and to increase help seeking behaviors.

- Create integrated programming which features on-going dialogues about mental health.

- Coordinate with CU Denver Events, to publicly advertise featured events that address mental health via a campus wide events calendar.

- Partner with student run organizations, such as Active Minds, to sponsor campus wide mental health events, speaking engagements, forums and symposia.

We will increase training opportunities for the campus community related to mental health, the impact of mental health on student learning, how to support students in crisis, and helping students build coping and resiliency skills.

- Offer Mental Health First Aid certification programs for the CU Denver community at least once per quarter.

- Offer additional in person trainings such as Lynx Connected and CARE Team trainings, as well as on-line trainings such as JED’s How to Help a Student and JED’s How to Help a Friend, and have them available to the entire campus community.
What Progress Looks Like by 2023

- 100% of students know how to access mental health services; preventative care and mental health treatment options.
- 100% of faculty and staff are familiar with at least 1 mental health resource on campus and are comfortable referring students in need to appropriate resources.
- CU Denver students maintain active mental health organizations/chapters at CU Denver, such as Active Minds and act as champions for mental health and peer support.
As expected, students will periodically experience difficulty both personally and academically, and research shows that many college students who need help do not seek it out on their own. Therefore, it is important to take action and identify students at risk for mental health problems and to build CU Denver’s community capacity to support students before their problems escalate and become serious. Faculty and staff who interact with students throughout their day (referred to as gatekeepers) are in the best position to notice early indicators of concern (Canadian Association of College & University Student Services et.al, 2013; Keeling, 2018; JED, 2018).

We will provide base-line mental health training opportunities for all students, faculty and staff (gatekeepers) which includes; information on noticing early indicators of student concerns, options for responding to those concerns via CARE Team reporting, and additional resources such as Navigate for faculty and staff to submit early alerts.

- Ensure all identified “gatekeepers” on campus have access to mental health trainings and resources including Navigate and the CARE Team.
- Provide “gatekeeper” training on multiple platforms and at various skill levels which include; intensive trainings such as Mental Health First Aid (in-person), basic level training such as JED How to Help a Friend or JED How to Help a Student (created by the JED Foundation, under development to be offered on-line), or a customized in-person training such as Lynx Connected.

We will offer readily available well-being and mental health information, assessment and education to all CU Denver Students.

- Host and promote in-person mental well-being assessments, which include in-person meetings with counselors or counseling students in training.
- Promote on-line mental well-being assessments via the student portal which include referrals to the Counseling Center.
- Promote YOU@CUDenver, an on-line well-being tool which offers anonymous well-being assessments and provides resources within the platform as well as on campus.
- Partner with CU Denver Schools and Colleges to identify available coursework that integrates wellness and mental health education.
Have you received information on [how to help others in distress] from your college / university? Are you interested in receiving information on [how to help others in distress] from your college / university?

CU Denver NCHA 2019 Survey Data

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**What Progress Looks Like by 2023**

- All incoming first-year undergraduate students receive baseline mental health training beginning with orientation cycle 2021.
- All incoming faculty and staff (gatekeepers) are offered a baseline mental health training on noticing early indicators of student concerns and tools and resources for responding to student concerns beginning in 2021.
- All incoming student employees, student leaders and peer volunteers complete a baseline mental health training for noticing early indicators of student concerns and tools and resources for responding to student concerns beginning in 2021.
- Faculty and staff increase utilization of the early alert system through Navigate by 15%.
CU Denver students are challenged across multiple domains and identities as they develop the skills to build relationships, learn to live independently, manage work and school, gain self-awareness, make future career and life decisions, all while managing rigorous academic demands. Self-management competences and coping skills strengthen student resilience and teach healthy ways to cope with the stress of college life (JED, 2018; Canadian Association of College & University Student Services et.al, 2013).

Strategic Activities

We will prepare all students for the transition to college life by providing orientation and adaptation skills, for both undergraduate and graduate students, which include relationship building, emotion management, and resilience and coping skills.

- Provide workshops across campus and within academic programs, that emphasize resiliency and coping skills.
- Utilize New Student Orientation as a developmental platform to provide a brief orientation to campus, highlighting academic and behavioral expectations for all students as well as identifying campus resources.
- Ensure that all CU Denver students have access to First Year Experience (FYE) courses, which include wellness and mental health curriculum and skill building.
- Engage Graduate Program Directors to integrate mindfulness, emotional well-being, transitional, and additional mental health initiatives into their graduate New Student Orientations.

We will ensure that all CU Denver students have access to campus-wide programming that promotes resiliency skill building and tools for maintaining daily self-care.

- Gather information on all campus programming related to; the effects of wellness and lifestyle (e.g. adequate sleep, exercise, nutrition, etc.), programs aimed at helping students experiencing distress and crisis, programs teaching coping mechanisms and promoting campus resources. Promote these programs widely across campus using trusted communication sources.
- Conduct a gap analysis of wellness and lifestyle programming and use survey data to analyze the impact of current programs as well as identify future programming needs.
- Implement national educational campaigns that inform the campus community about the links between physical and emotional health and academic success.
- Create a web presence for parents and other student support systems, that provides information and resources on mental health and other means of supporting students.
CU Denver Prevention and Programming Data
Coping Skills & Resiliency Programming

What Progress Looks Like by 2023

- CU Denver students demonstrate a 20% increase in coping and resiliency skills after attending related programs.
- CU Denver students demonstrate a 60% increase in their baseline understanding of mental health support and resources available on campus after attending related programs.
- Student attendance and participation in workshops on relationship building and emotional management/regulation increases by 30%.
- 100% of students, faculty and staff have access to materials via CU Denver’s website, that identify the top mental health concerns for students and how to navigate those concerns.
Providing comprehensive clinical counseling support services to CU Denver students is vital. Having exceptionally trained staff and qualified licensed clinicians is essential to meeting the growing acuity and diverse needs of the CU Denver student population (JED, 2018). It is also essential to review current staffing patterns and clinical service models to ensure mental health services are easily accessible, sufficiently resourced and comprehensive (Keeling, 2018). Mental health services must be viewed as a critical part of the systemic approach to supporting student mental health (Canadian Association of College & University Student Services et.al, 2013).

**Strategic Activities**

We will create a shared approach to the treatment of mental health issues which includes; routine health screenings, accessible mental health assessments and referrals to the appropriate level of treatment (either on campus or in the community), formal partnerships with local mental health care providers including after hours and alternative care sites, to streamline and coordinate student mental health care.

- Coordinate with the Health Center at Auraria to conduct comprehensive medical intakes which include mental health and substance use history.
- Partner with the Psychology Clinic, Student and Community Counseling Center and Health Center at Auraria to identify appropriate on campus and community based referral sources for all levels of clinical care.
- Identify community mental health care partners, research and understand their scope of care, and explore formal agreements for referrals and treatment (i.e. MHCD, Denver Health, etc.).
- Offer alternative modalities of treatment and provide satellite locations on campus, to address diverse student needs (telehealth, crisis intervention, satellite offices located in on-campus housing units, the Wellness Center or Center for Identity and Inclusion, etc.).

We will offer peer support and wellness coaching provided by trained and supervised students with lived experience (e.g. support groups, individual peer support).

- Lead the Auraria campus in establishing an active Collegiate Recovery Community (CRC).
- Develop a peer to peer support program specific to the needs of CU Denver students.
- Create a wellness coaching program to provide individualized support in goal setting and self-management skills.

We will maintain an inter-disciplinary team of mental health care providers to collaborate on providing support to students experiencing serious on-going mental health issues.

- Maintain the Auraria campus mental health providers meeting to ensure seamless access to care and psychiatric medication.
- Explore coordinated care options with off-campus services, including CU Anschutz, regarding psychiatric care for students with severe mental health issues.

We will review and manage the client intake and triage processes to ensure timely access to an initial assessment and referrals to mental health services both on and off campus, and establish a therapy group service model for the Student and Community Counseling Center.

- Review and revise the triage and intake process at the Student and Community Counseling Center and the Psychology Clinic; implement any recommendations for improvement.
- Review staffing patterns at the Counseling Center, including diversity in discipline and licensure, to adequately address the clinical needs of students and increased demand in services.
- Establish a robust group therapy program at the Counseling Center, that is widely publicized and includes open and drop-in groups available across campus.
CU Denver Counseling Center Data
Student & Community Counseling Center High-Risk Client Data

What Progress Looks Like by 2023

- Any CU Denver student who seeks mental health services, regardless of level of need, receives appropriate services by CU Denver mental health clinicians, or via referral to community resources with the appropriate level of care.
- Student and Community Counseling Center establishes relationships and MOUs with Denver Metro community behavioral health partners regarding referral and treatment.
- Counseling Center Group Treatment program is fully operational.
- CU Denver students have access to health insurance plans which include robust mental health coverage.
Trends in student mental health show students are presenting with greater acuity, complexity and severity. This has a significant impact on a student’s academic success, can potentially impact others and even affect the entire campus community. Therefore, it is critical to have policies and protocols in place to respond effectively to crises on campus and to ensure the safety of everyone at CU Denver (Keeling, 2018; Canadian Association of College & University Student Services et.al, 2013; JED, 2018).

Strategic Activities

We will provide CU Denver faculty and staff with accessible campus wide training regarding (a) mental health (b) emergency procedures and (c) crisis response.

- Identify internal opportunities for mental health training (i.e. canvas, skill soft) and also explore external vendors with products that offer mental health training.
- Develop a plan for training CU Denver faculty and staff on mental health response, which includes a variety of training options (format, length, availability, etc.).
- Partner with Auraria Police and CU Denver Emergency Preparedness staff to create a plan for supervisors and department chairs regarding emergency procedures and crisis response in their areas.
- Maintain current up-to-date protocols for responding to attempted or completed suicide.
- Develop protocols for responding to on-campus alcohol / drug (AOD) overdoses.
- Promote information about how to report/get help for an on-campus student emergency for both daytime and after-hours.

We will coordinate cross-training sessions between police, emergency preparedness, CARE Team and related campus partners.

- CARE Team will coordinate an annual emergency response training between police, emergency preparedness, CARE Team and units impacted by mental health emergencies (which include; Disability, Veterans, Counseling, Housing, and International Students).

We will maintain a Cross-functional team (CARE Team) with (a) protocols for communications and (b) decision-making to support students with serious on-going mental health issues.

- Maintain the Campus Assessment, Response & Evaluation Team.
- Review and update the team’s protocols annually to ensure best practices are incorporated and up-to-date.
- Annually review campus policies which support the CARE team’s efforts and decision making authority which include but are not limited to the Threatening Student Behavior Policy and CARE Team policy.
CU Denver Campus Assessment, Response & Evaluation Team Data

CARE Team

What Progress Looks Like by 2023

- Mental health training options are available for faculty, staff and students, and are tiered and adaptable to the specific needs of the participants and campus.
- An emergency response plan is developed, distributed to campus stakeholders, and includes annual training/tabletop exercises.
THANK YOU!

[Image]
With sincerest appreciation and gratitude, we would like to thank all of the Mental Health Action Advisory group members for their time, commitment and expertise towards developing this strategic plan.

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- Brittany Bohl, Dean of Students
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- Julie DeWoody, Senior Director of Philanthropic and Partner Relations
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- Dr. Diane Estrada, Associate Professor & Couples & Family Therapy Program Director
- Karyn Hardy, Assistant University Counsel
- Genia Herndon, Associate Vice Chancellor of Student & Community Engagement
- Dr. Regina Kilkenny, Chief of Staff, Office of the Chancellor
- Brittany Moyer, Student Representative
- Lydia Rhino, Student Representative
- Kade Ross, Director of Housing & Dining
- Clair Sims, Undergraduate Academic Advisor for the Business School
- James Speed, Coordinator for the Center for Identity & Inclusion
- Dr. Inge Wefes, Senior Associate Dean of the Graduate School & Director of the BSBT program
References


