The Barriers and Facilitators to Mental Health Care in a University Student Population

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OVERVIEW OF TODAY’S PRESENTATION
Context of Students Seeking Mental Health Care at a large Canadian PSE Institution
Growing Mental Health Service Usage at Western

Proportion of students reporting having a psychiatric condition:

2013: 6.2%
2017: 9.2%

3 percentage point delta, ↑50%

National College Health Assessment: Western University
Alignment with provincial and national trends:

### Areas of Greatest Change from 2013 to 2016
(NCHA Canadian Reference Group)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Change Direction</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students feel that they are part of a community</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>6.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student experiencing both anxiety and depression</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>4.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety negatively impacting academic performance</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>4.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who have seriously considered suicide</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students experiencing a psychiatric condition</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>2.00%</td>
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</table>
Vastly increased reporting and service demands indicate:

1. Increased access to postsecondary education for individuals experiencing mental health challenges

2. Reduced stigma related to mental health issues

3. Increased help-seeking behaviours among students
Reasons Why Students who Experienced a Mental Health Challenge Did Not Access Supports (Western FYE Study)

- Didn't want to share: 53%
- Too busy: 48%
- Worried about confidentiality: 20%
- Cost: 18%
- No appointment times: 16%
- No service to meet needs: 14%
- Waitlist too long: 12%
- Inaccessible services hours: 11%
- Currently on waitlist: 10%
- Other: 1%
METHODOLOGY
CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

• What does Western do well with respect to supporting student mental health and wellness?

• What barriers exist to supporting student mental health and wellness?
Facilitators to Supporting Student Mental Health and Wellness

• Access to a large number of support services
• Effective mental health promotion and education
• A caring and inclusive campus environment
• Supportive faculty and staff of student mental health needs
• A culture of help-seeking on campus
• Peer leadership and first year orientation
Barriers to Supporting Student Mental Health and Wellness

- Inadequate access, responsiveness, and effectiveness of support services on campus
- No time
- Lack of student understanding and awareness of how, when, and where to seek support
- Stigma associated with mental health
- Previous negative experience with support services on campus
Barriers to Supporting Student Mental Health and Wellness

• Difficulty navigating mental health information online; misinformation shared through social media
• A university culture and climate that does not support mental health and wellness
• Academic calendar, stress, and competition
• Physical environment of campus
Western's Mental Health and Wellness Strategic Plan

• Broad Strategic Directions
  – Promote and Support a Resilient Campus Community
  – Develop and Deliver Effective Mental Health and Wellness Education
  – Inclusive Curriculum and Pedagogy to Support Student
  – Provide Accessible and Effective Mental Health and Wellness Services