

# Graduate Student Mental Health and Well-being: Evidence-Informed Recommendations for the Graduate Community



A Virtual Report Release  
April 29, 2021, 2:00-3:15 p.m. Eastern



@CGSGradEd  
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#GradStudentMentalHealth

# Before we get started...



- Please note this event is being recorded.
- Questions can be submitted at any time via the GoToWebinar Q&A Panel.
- Access to the webinar recording and slides will be made available in the coming days.



## Supporting Graduate Student Mental Health and Well-being

EVIDENCE-INFORMED RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR THE GRADUATE COMMUNITY

*A Report by the Council of Graduate Schools and The Jed Foundation*



## Project Goal:

To create an evidence base to inform policies, programs, and resources on graduate student mental health and well-being.

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# Five Key Takeaways

- As early as 2018 nearly two-thirds of graduate deans reported graduate students were struggling more with mental health challenges than 5 years earlier.
- One-third of graduate students report symptoms consistent with PTSD anxiety or depression. Anti-blackness, COVID related disruptions, and career uncertainty are all factors.
- Stressors are unevenly distributed across race, ethnicity, gender, and identity. BUT, also across stages of graduate student life cycle.
- While nearly 60% of graduate deans report that their university has a framework for promoting the mental health and well-being of graduate students, less than half of those report the availability of resources specific to the needs of students from marginalized racial, ethnic, or identity groups.
- Graduate Deans and Mentors have a key role to play in supporting graduate students. However, all key stakeholders have a stake and role in creating healthier program and university environments.

**Vision:** A graduate education system that supports the academic success and wellbeing of all students.



- Values
- Principles
- Commitments
- Accountability

# Values: We believe in...



- Student-centered education
- Educational environments that support the whole student
- Diversity, equity, inclusion
- Transparency

# Principles:



- Wellbeing is a foundation of student success
- Thriving, not surviving is the goal
- The challenges experienced by graduate students vary widely and differ in important way from the experiences of undergraduates
- Faculty, staff, and administrators who work with graduate student may also themselves experience significant stress

# The Broader Call to Action: Presidents and Provosts

- Presidents, Provosts, and others set the tone for the university. They can and should:
  - Ensure campus mental health plans address graduate student needs
  - Prioritize diversity equity and inclusion
  - Explore ways to alter/mitigate the effects of hyper-competition



# The Broader Call to Action: Graduate Deans

- Graduate Deans provide leadership in university wide policy discussions impacting graduate students, faculty, and programs. They can and should:
  - Consider becoming a signatory to the framework document
  - Review all long-standing policies that might adversely affect graduate student mental health and success
  - Serve as advocates for the graduate student voice on campus-wide initiatives and task forces

# The Broader Call to Action: Graduate Program Directors and Department Chairs

- Graduate Program Directors and Department Chairs are situated to understand and lead change based in disciplinary culture and program requirements. They can and should:
  - Develop mechanisms for recognizing and rewarding high quality mentoring
  - Ensure program expectations, resources and processes are transparent
  - Identify stress points associated with program milestones and develop mechanisms to support students at points of transition

# The Broader Call to Action: Graduate Faculty and Supervisors

- Graduate Faculty and Supervisors are the major touchstone in a student's academic progress. They can and should:
  - Model work/life balance and be clear about expectations for students' academic performance and well being
  - Recognize and support students' diverse career goals
  - Express concern for those who may be struggling

# The Broader Call to Action: Graduate Students

- Graduate Students have a role to play in helping faculty and administrators understand and address unnecessary stressors and in supporting their peers and the undergraduate students they teach. They can and should:
  - Connect fellow graduate students and the undergraduate students they teach to the professionals and resources that can support them in periods of distress
  - Embody principles of self-care and compassionate mentoring

# The Broader Call to Action: Funding Agencies

- Funding Agencies can provide additional incentives for university and systems change. They can and should:
  - Analyze how current grant review practices exacerbate hyper-competitiveness and faculty, postdoc, and graduate student stress
  - Support research to better understand graduate student health and well-being particularly for those sub-groups about whom little is currently known



# Welcome to our Panelists and Members of the Project Advisory Board



**Michael Cunningham**

Associate Provost of Graduate  
Education and Research  
Tulane University



**Tammi Vacha-Haase**

Dean of the Graduate College  
Boise State University



**Susanna Harris**

CEO Founder  
PhD Balance



**Barry Schreier**

Director  
University Counseling Center  
The University of Iowa



*Panel discussion  
facilitated by*



**Nance Roy**  
Chief Clinical Officer  
The Jed Foundation

# Questions?

- Please submit your question in the GoToWebinar Q&A Panel.
- We are also happy to answer questions by email after the webinar. Please email Enyu Zhou at [ezhou@cgs.nche.edu](mailto:ezhou@cgs.nche.edu).

# Join our Campaign to Support Graduate Student Mental Health and Well-being

Look in the Chat for a link to materials you can adapt and share.



**Sample social media posts**



**Sample blurbs for your newsletter or website**



**Press release template for signatory universities**



**Infographics**

Thank you for participating!

We look forward to sharing the  
webinar slides and recording.



[www.cgsnet.org](http://www.cgsnet.org)

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