



WPI

GRADUATE
STUDIES

Graduate Student Mental Health and Well Being

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WPI By The Numbers

- Situated in Central MA
- Engineering and Sciences School
- Significant Grad Population Growth in last 15 years
- Around 2000 Grad Students
- Around 6000 UGs
- ~28% PhDs, ~71% Masters
- 40% international from 69 countries



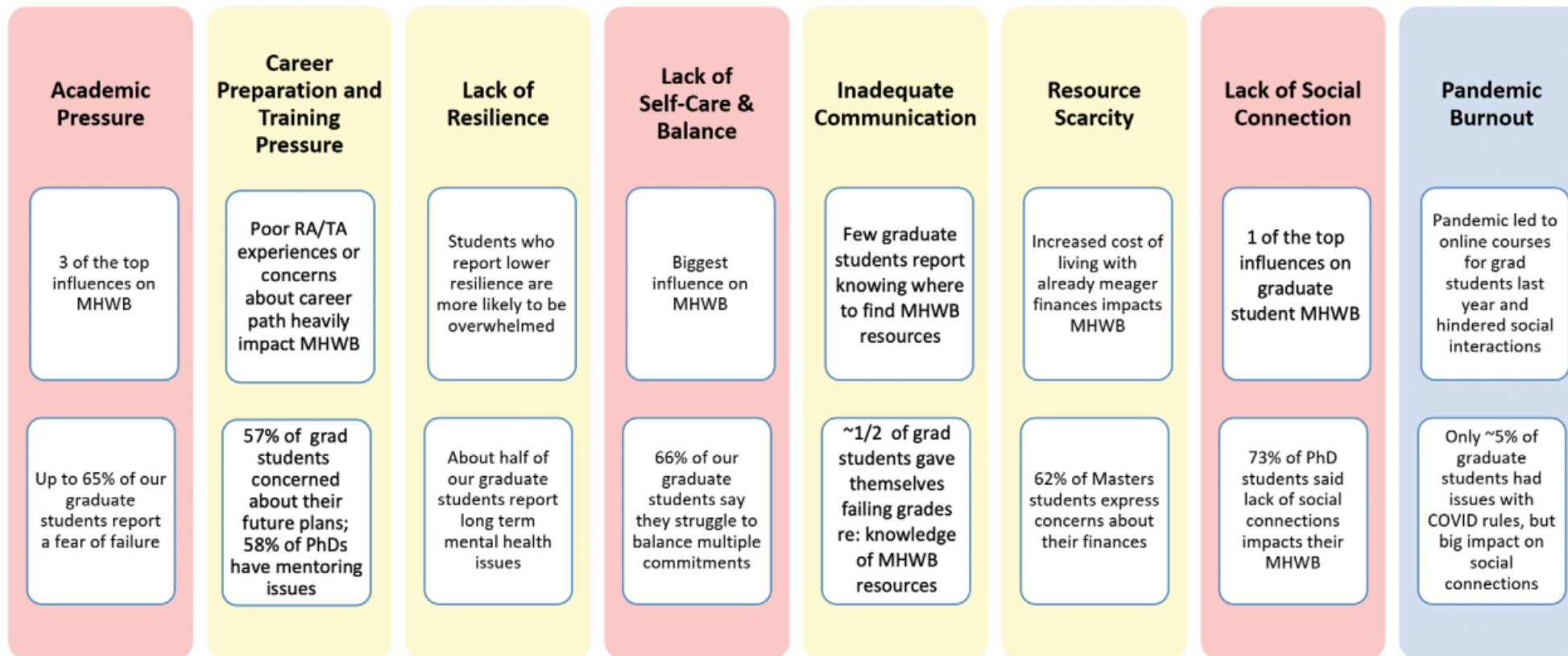
A Mental Health Crisis on Campus

- From 2006-2021, WPI experienced 2 student deaths
- From July 2021-Jan 2022, 7 WPI students, including 1 Graduate Student died
- In September 2021, WPI established a Mental Health and Well Being Taskforce



Task Force Findings – Graduate Student Stressors

Overview: Graduate Students



- Data collected through a student-wide survey
- 9.3% of graduate students completed the survey
- Townhalls and listening sessions helped provide qualitative data

WPI Graduate Student Survey – Spring 2022

- 38.7% response rate, representative sample across all demographics with slight oversample of PhDs, international students, and women
- Factors students reported as having a net negative influence on academic progress: **social isolation, health issues (mental), and cost of living.**
- Factors external to WPI that students reported as significant stressors: **finances, lack of time for self-care, and confusion/uncertainty about professional life after WPI.**
- **49% indicated their mental/emotional health was poor or fair**
- 47% reported often or very often feeling overwhelmed by all they must do
- **18% reported feeling so depressed and 25% being so anxious that they struggled with functioning**
- 17% reported feeling like they do not fit in on campus
- **8% reported having only one close friend and 4% reported having zero close friends**

From Crisis to Action

- Institutional-wide response – all completed MHWB training and now required for onboarding for all, more vigilant and responsive CARE team
- 4 Wellness days added to each academic year and the WPI Center for Well Being (CWB) was launched in 2023
- Extensive MHWB programming, including ones specifically for grad students run on wellness days and beyond
- Grad Health and Wellness Series run each Spring and CWB runs a connections program to facilitate friend making among students
- More academic and administrative support – student success managers expanded to support all our graduate students
- Expanded grad orientations to focus more on making connections and MHWB, as well as more social programming from the Grad Student Government throughout year
- More communications on MHWB resources, counseling services and CWB
- WPI Grad Students formed Union with UAW, and contract agreed to with WPI in 2023, addressing a number of student concerns around finances, job security, and workload

Monitoring Progress – Spring 2025 Survey

- Social isolation, health issues (mental), and cost of living are still factors students report as negatively impacting their academic progress
- Finances, lack of time for self-care, and confusion/uncertainty about professional life after WPI are all still significant stressors, with immigration matters now added as well
- **41% of grad students now indicate their mental/emotional health is fair or poor, down from 49% in 2022**
- 37% report often or very often feeling overwhelmed by all they must do, down from 47% in 2022
- **12% reported feeling so depressed and 15% being so anxious that they struggled with functioning, down from 18% and 25% in 2022**
- 15% report feeling like they do not fit in on campus, down from 17% in 2022
- **Similar to 2022, 8% report having only one close friend and 3% report having zero close friends**
- 78% and 80% report good to excellent sense of community in their program and in general at WPI, respectively, increased from 2022, at 64% and 66%, respectively

Future Directions

- Monitor MHWB metrics through surveys (2028 next survey)
- Increase focus on improving social isolation among graduate students
- Continue to offer robust MHWB programming aimed at graduate students, promote MHWB resources, and increase communications and trainings