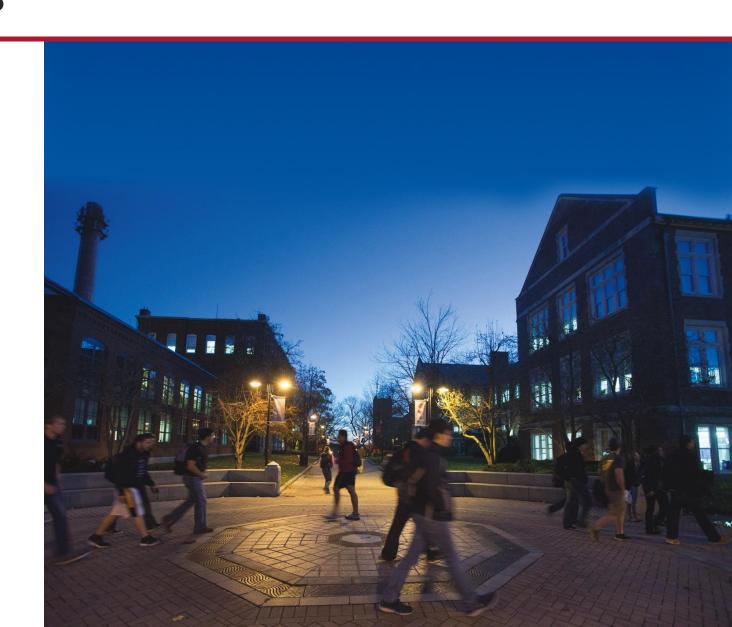


Graduate Student Mental Health and Well Being

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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

Higher Impact

Moderate Impact

Lower Impact

Academic Pressure

3 of the top influences on MHWB

Up to 65% of our graduate students report a fear of failure

Career Preparation and Training Pressure

Poor RA/TA experiences or concerns about career path heavily impact MHWB

57% of grad students concerned about their future plans; 58% of PhDs have mentoring issues

Lack of Resilience

Students who report lower resilience are more likely to be overwhelmed

About half of our graduate students report long term mental health issues

Lack of Self-Care & Balance

Biggest

influence on

MHWB

o r e be d

> 66% of our graduate students say they struggle to balance multiple commitments

Inadequate Communication

Few graduate students report knowing where to find MHWB resources

~1/2 of grad students gave themselves failing grades re: knowledge of MHWB resources

Resource Scarcity

Increased cost of living with already meager finances impacts MHWB

62% of Masters students express concerns about their finances

Lack of Social Connection

1 of the top influences on graduate student MHWB

73% of PhD students said lack of social connections impacts their MHWB

Pandemic Burnout

Pandemic led to online courses for grad students last year and hindered social interactions

Only ~5% of graduate students had issues with COVID rules, but big impact on social connections

- Data collected through a studentwide 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