



# Mental health on campus: The critical role of a student-centred community

White Paper

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## Crisis on campus

We've reached a crisis point in mental health on campus. While academic and societal pressures have always contributed to mental health challenges at educational institutions, recent pressures have added to the burden. The stress and uncertainty of lockdowns, the shift to remote learning, and cancellation of shared activities have pushed feelings of isolation, anxiety and hopelessness to new levels. High rents, skyrocketing food prices, tuition costs and other financial worries have only added to the stress.

Mental health issues are affecting students of all ages<sup>1</sup>, as well as parents and teachers.<sup>2</sup> Sadly, this downward trend in mental health is also affecting students' ability to complete their studies. Students who struggle with mental health issues are twice as likely to drop out compared to other students.<sup>3</sup> And many cite mental health concerns as one of the reasons for discontinuing their studies.<sup>4</sup> In Singapore, mental health issues pushed a student to extreme violence on campus.<sup>5</sup>

The severity and urgency of the mental health problem means all academic institutions must look for solutions beyond traditional counselling services to help counter the stress and anxieties of today's campus life reality.

## A reality check

A Healthy Minds Study found more than 60 percent of students surveyed met criteria for one or more mental health challenges during the 2020-2021 academic year, a nearly 50 percent increase from 2013 results.<sup>6</sup> A Fortune survey conducted by The Harris Poll found similar results.<sup>7</sup> In the 2021 National College Health Assessment in the U.S., the number of students reporting moderate or serious physiological stress reached 70 percent.<sup>8</sup>

Globally, the situation is no better, with 76 percent of students in a 10-country survey saying maintaining their wellbeing is a top challenge.<sup>9</sup> In several regions of the world, the number of students with self-diagnosed anxiety and depression have reached all-time highs:

- In Europe, 70 percent of university presidents say students' mental health is their top concern<sup>10</sup>
- In Australia, 93 percent of international students who were stranded overseas during the pandemic experienced significant mental health issues<sup>11</sup>
- Throughout Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam and other countries in Asia, the majority of the online population reported the pandemic had a negative impact on their mental health<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Mental Health Tops Safety Concerns in K-12](#), The Journal, March 2022.

<sup>2</sup> [Mental Health Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teachers and Parents of K-12 Students](#), CDC Foundation, May 2021.

<sup>3</sup> [The Health Minds Study Fall 2020 Data Report](#), The Healthy Minds Network, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> [How America Complete College: Understanding What Helps Students Graduate](#), Sallie Mae, conducted by Ipsos, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> [A year after alleged murder in school, RVHS community has moved forward](#), MOE, TNP, July 2022.

<sup>6</sup> [Trends in college student mental health and help-seeking by race/ethnicity: Findings from the national healthy minds study, 2013-2021](#).

<sup>7</sup> [Crisis on campus: 60% of college kids are living with mental health disorders, and schools are woefully unprepared](#), Fortune, July 2022.

<sup>8</sup> [National College Health Assessment Reference Group Executive Summary](#), American College Health Association, Fall 2021.

<sup>9</sup> [Connected Student Report](#), Salesforce, June 2021.

<sup>10</sup> [How universities can support student mental health and wellbeing](#), The European Sting and the World Economic Forum, March 2022.

<sup>11</sup> [Australia: 93% of stranded students have mental health issues](#), The PIE News, May 2021.

<sup>12</sup> [International study: how badly has COVID-19 affected people's mental health?](#) YouGov Australia, 2021 data.





## Digital technologies can improve the student experience

While a number of new digital technologies were quickly introduced over the last couple of years to enable online learning, unfortunately, in many cases, the lack of adequate reliability and engagement opportunities only added to students' stress.<sup>13</sup> However, with the right strategy and solutions, digital technologies can give institutions new opportunities to:

- Create a more supportive and nurturing environment where students feel heard and understood and better connected to campus life and their fellow students
- Proactively reach out to students to interact with them, encourage participation and identify those struggling academically and personally
- Provide broader awareness of, and access to, resources to address food and housing insecurity
- Help students feel their personal safety is protected while on campus
- Accelerate awareness of, and responses to, emergencies on campus

To realise these opportunities, institutions must implement digital technologies that are ubiquitous and easy-to-use across all aspects of the education spectrum, whether students are on-campus, remote or some combination thereof.

<sup>13</sup> [Half of college students are stressed out by tech issues](#), Edscoop, October 2022.



# Supporting and nurturing mental health

As institutions explore how they can use digital technologies to better support and assist students, it's extremely important to remember the focus shouldn't be just about adding new technologies and equipment to schools. Rather, it's about using digital technologies to enable higher levels of wellbeing and success — for students, faculty, staff and ultimately, the institution itself. The digitally transformed campus makes technology decisions based on academic and business goals and understands that students' mental health and educational success are key to achieving these goals.

A holistic approach is essential to create a safer, healthier and more productive learning environment that helps students, faculty and staff be more engaged and connected. All technology solutions deployed must support all individuals within the academic institution.

## Online communities connect students, faculty and staff

A platform that allows every student to easily find campus groups and activities they're interested in, as well as healthcare, mental wellness and other support resources, is a great way to help address feelings of depression and isolation. Students can:

- Find friendship with other students who speak the same language, have the same interests, or are experiencing similar challenges
- Engage in projects, activities and initiatives meaningful to them
- Learn about campus and neighbourhood programs that provide emotional, financial, housing, food and other support services

Students can also use the platform to participate in more creative and engaging social learning activities that help them achieve greater academic success. They can easily connect with one another and collaborate on class projects, and they have an interactive forum to exchange ideas and information with teachers and professors. Studies confirm students enjoy working with social learning tools<sup>14</sup> and are more likely to complete their courses.<sup>15</sup>

Faculty and staff can also use the platform to create online communities where they can share challenges and insights and support one another. With these connections, faculty and staff can improve their own mental wellbeing so they can be more effective in their jobs and better understand how to support students, especially those who are struggling.

<sup>14</sup> [Reflecting on Social Learning Tools to Enhance the Teaching-Learning Experience of Generation Z Learners](#), Frontiers in Education, January 2021

<sup>15</sup> [What Harvard Business School Has Learned About Online Collaboration From HBX](#), Harvard Business Review, April 2015.

### White Paper

Mental health on campus







## Letting students know someone cares

Proactive communications using nudge technologies provide timely and gentle ways to reach out to students through text messages, emails and alerts, and let them know they're not alone.

Nudges can be used to congratulate students for achievements in the classroom and in extracurricular activities, and even offer a small reward, such as a free coffee or juice at a campus café. They can also be used to encourage students to participate in classroom and school activities, such as an upcoming field trip, guest lecture, or sports event where they're likely to find enrichment and camaraderie. Nudges can also be used to let students know about critical services related to food, clothing and financial aid.

Timely and reassuring reminders about assignments that are coming due, exam dates and availability of study resources can be very helpful for students, especially those who are overwhelmed and struggling to manage their many time requirements. Simply knowing that people care about their success, recognise the challenges they face, and are actively helping them succeed, contributes to feelings of support and inclusion that can reduce stress.

When data analytics are added, institutions can identify students who are at the highest risk of failing or dropping out. They can send these students personalised messages and reminders to encourage better class participation and performance, and to offer access to academic and mental health resources.





## A safer campus alleviates anxiety

In a student-centred school community, individuals feel safe and protected no matter where they are — in buildings, on a sports field, on walking paths, or in a remote parking lot. There are a number of ways technology help increase safety on campus:

- Mass notification systems accelerate awareness of potentially dangerous situations ranging from approaching storms, fires, floods and hazardous leaks to accidents and threats to personal safety
- Automated alarm systems can trigger students and authorities to immediately take protective actions, and can automatically alert emergency response teams to dangerous situations
- Safety hotlines give everyone on campus a direct line to resources that can provide physical and mental wellness support services when needed
- Emergency call buttons located in buildings, and on outdoor infrastructure such as light poles, increase peace of mind no matter where people are on campus
- Automated lighting systems increase visibility and provide an important sense of security, particularly in parking lots, along campus perimeters and in dark spaces between buildings

## An opportunity to thrive

When digital technologies are used to deliver support services such as those described above, students enjoy better mental health and personal safety throughout their academic journey.

Students are more productive because they lose less time due to stress or illness. They can see that people care for them and that the institution is actively focused on helping them achieve their educational goals. With increased awareness and easy access to resources for assistance, there's less risk students will engage in self-harm and self-destructive behaviours.

This strong support system gives students a better chance of staying in school, obtaining their degree, and realising a return on their significant investment. The positive experiences and strong connections students make with fellow students, professors, and the school persist, even after graduation, benefiting students and the institution.



## A strategy for student-centred success

Academic institutions that embrace digital transformation can provide collaborative solutions and services that are accessible to all and customised for the unique needs of the student population. As a result, the institution can create a comprehensive support system that intuitively reaches out and interacts with students before they reach crisis levels.

For more insight into how digital transformation connects students to their education, read our white paper, [Empower student success with digital transformation](#).

### Connecting, communicating and collaborating

Communications and collaboration solutions that let people quickly and easily find one another and connect, within the greater campus community, are the cornerstone for addressing mental health issues on campus.

A secure, all-in-one communications platform connects people, machines and processes, and makes it easy for students, faculty and staff to collaborate using voice, video and text. Institutions can create a communications channel for each community within the school, whether the community is focused on academics, extracurricular activities, support services, or other aspects of campus life.

The platform can be used to deliver digital nudges that help students stay on track and feel valued. And it can be combined with data analytics applications to create a baseline of successful students so it's easier to pinpoint those who are missing classes, missing assignments and doing poorly on exams. This insight allows Institutions to develop and deliver communications tailored for the student's unique academic and mental health challenges.

Contact centre solutions provide students with a single point of contact for all types of topics, ensuring they have fast and easy access to assistance from their personal devices, school computers and emergency call boxes on campus. They also allow students to engage in interactive chat sessions with mental health professionals and chatbots. These text-based conversations are often the most natural way for a generation of students that grew up texting to seek assistance. Text conversations can also encourage students to come forward with sensitive issues they don't feel comfortable sharing through voice, video or face-to-face conversations.

And finally, a mobile app gives students, faculty and staff, anytime, anywhere access to the online communities they participate in, helpful nudges and alerts, and support resources.

#### White Paper

Cybersecurity for world-class teaching and learning



## A foundation to support students

A smart, campus-wide network provides the backbone for delivering all student-centred services. The network foundation must be robust and flexible, and composed of secure networking solutions, technologies and capabilities that work seamlessly together to reliably deliver services throughout the campus.

The network must include:

- High-performance networking and Wi-Fi solutions that support communications and collaboration across tens of thousands of students, faculty and staff
- Automation technologies to simplify network deployments and operations
- Artificial intelligence technologies that allow predictive network management
- Unified security policies and robust, granular cybersecurity mechanisms that protect the sensitive personal information students might communicate

For more insight into cybersecurity considerations and technologies at academic institutions, see our white paper *Cybersecurity for world-class teaching and learning*.

## The result: A resilient campus

With robust and secure communications, collaboration and networking solutions, the entire campus and everyone on it can access the people and services they need to maintain their mental health and achieve greater academic and career success.

Additionally, all forms of emergency and non-emergency communications and collaboration are available campus-wide. And online access to communities is available whether students and faculty are on campus or attending and teaching classes remotely.



# Mental health at the centre of technology decisions

Addressing mental health issues on campus must be part of every academic institution's core strategy for student success. A knowledgeable partner who understands how digital technologies can be used to support mental health plays a critical role in helping institutions execute on that core strategy.

At Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise, we recognise the unprecedented mental health challenges students are facing, and we know the path schools must take to address those issues in a way that meets today's requirements and supports future goals including:

- Identifying the issues and acknowledging the extent of the problem
- Creating the institutional resources to support students who are suffering
- Providing a safe, non-judgemental digital community to deliver those services
- Offering a safe learning and working environment for everyone on campus



## Partner with an experienced leader

We provide the digital platforms and secure networking technologies needed to create a safer, more supportive and nurturing campus community. And we have extensive experience helping academic institutions globally achieve their goals using digital technologies. For example:

- At [Loughborough University](#) in London, England, our [Rainbow™ by Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise](#) unified communications and collaboration platform is helping postgraduate students work alongside industry leaders to develop real-world solutions that address real-life challenges. With Rainbow, Loughborough University can continue its successful industry partnerships and strengthen its internationally renowned reputation as a leading postgraduate university globally.

- At [University of Sriwijaya](#) in South Sumatra, Indonesia, our highly available and secure networking solutions provide an agile, world-class network for all four campuses and two data centres. Students, faculty and staff have the high-capacity, high-quality Wi-Fi they need to learn, teach and work. The school is also trialling our Rainbow unified communications and collaboration platform to better connect students to the university and improve communications.
- At [West Liberty University](#) in West Virginia, U.S.A., our efficient and powerful networking solutions have doubled network capacity indoors and outdoors. The network enables state-of-the-art Wi-Fi in classrooms and across campus. Students can reliably connect more devices to the school's network, faculty can implement new teaching tools and take teaching outside the classroom, and students and alumni can better participate in school activities, such as Homecoming.





## Learn more

To learn how we can help your institution improve students' mental health with digital technologies, check out our [website](#) or [contact us today](#) to discuss your specific needs.

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