



Campus

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Final Progress Report



2025



The University
of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

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INTRODUCTION

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC Chapel Hill) has demonstrated a strong commitment to student mental health and well-being since launching the JED Campus program in Spring 2022.

This JED Campus Final Progress Report serves several key purposes: it compares the findings of the two Healthy Minds Study (HMS) administrations, (*Fall 2022: 10.21% Response Rate | N=1225 and Fall 2025: 5.5% | N=659*), tracks the progress made on the JED Campus Strategic Plan, and offers recommendations for the sustainability of this work.

We recommend that UNC Chapel Hill utilize this data comparison as a starting point, recognizing the constraints of limited sample sizes. Continuous collection and analysis of student wellness data should be prioritized to effectively guide this work moving forward.

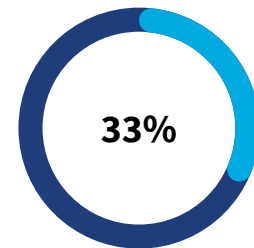
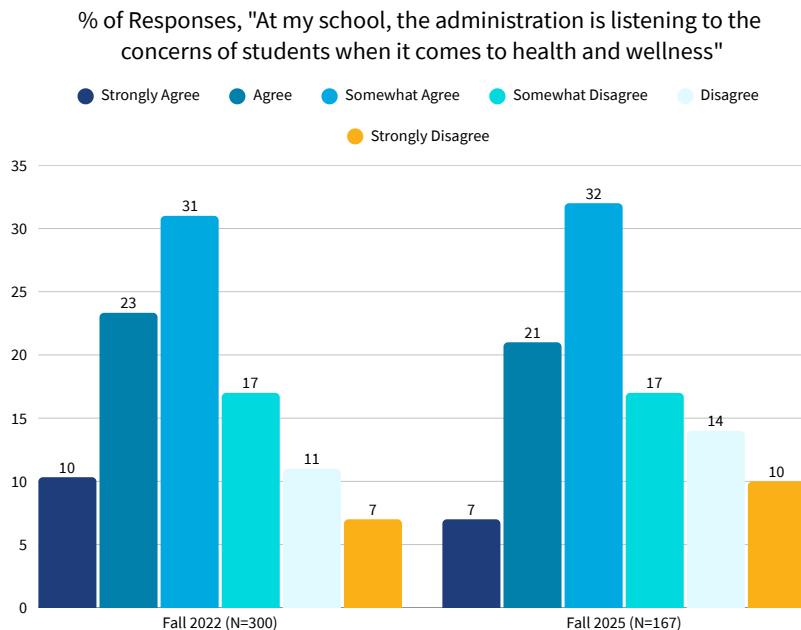
Ultimately, we hope this report highlights the significant achievements of the UNC Chapel Hill JED team, reviews trends in student health and well-being, and provides guidance as UNC Chapel Hill transitions into becoming a JED Campus Alumni.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Engaging in an active and continuous strategic planning process allows schools to evaluate clinical and programming needs and to examine how they deploy both personal and financial resources to address student mental health challenges. Fundamentally, the establishment of a mental health strategic plan indicates to students and other campus community members that mental health and wellness are core values for the school.

► Mental Health as Campuswide Priority

- Throughout the JED Campus program, UNC Chapel Hill consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to institutionalizing student mental health and well-being support as a shared, campus-wide priority. This commitment was demonstrated by maintaining the JED Campus team, featuring the JED Campus partnership and task force on the Heels Care Network [webpage](#), promoting mental health and wellness in [university communications](#), and incorporating this work as a priority within institutional strategic plans.
- In addition to the two HMS administrations included in the JED Campus Program, UNC Chapel Hill utilized additional assessments to gain a deeper understanding of student mental health, wellbeing, and experiences. These include the National College Health Assessment (NCHA), the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU), listening tours facilitated by the Heels Care Network staff, and institutional climate surveys.



Across both (HMS) administrations, the percentage of students who strongly agree or agree that mental health and emotional well-being is a priority at UNC Chapel Hill remained constant at **33%**.

DEVELOP LIFE SKILLS & SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Supporting life skills education is valuable in teaching healthy ways to cope with the stress of college life. Some of the life skills that are important to a student's well-being include managing friends and relationships, problem solving, decision making, identifying and managing emotions, healthy living, and finding life purpose.

Research has shown that loneliness and isolation are significant risk factors for mental health problems and/or suicidal behavior. Therefore, supportive social relationships and feeling connective to campus, family, and friends are protective factors that can help lower risk.



From the eight-item Flourishing scale, **42%** of students screened for positive mental health (flourishing) compared to **36%** at baseline.

▶ Educate Students on Life Skills & Wellness

- UNC Chapel Hill has established a comprehensive approach to student life skill development, which is appreciated. This includes the JED team and a dedicated team overseeing graduate student work in this area.
- Furthermore, campus wellness departments consistently offered educational resources focused on student health and wellness.
- Notable examples include the [Mental Health Seminars](#) and the implementation of the Mental Health “[nudges](#)” students can opt-into on the campus app.

▶ Promoting Social Connectedness

- We appreciate UNC Chapel Hill's continued effort to offer community forums and spaces for debriefing and processing the various impactful events experienced during the JED Campus program.
- The institution demonstrates a clear commitment to student awareness regarding campus involvement and connection. Various campus offices (such as CAPS, Heels Care, and Student Life) actively share information highlighting the importance of connection and outlining steps for students to get connected, and the JED task force had a subcommittee focused on social connecting and peer mentoring.

 **11%**

17% of students said they strongly agree or agree that they feel isolated from campus life, compared to **28%** at baseline.

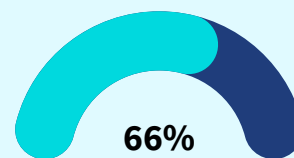
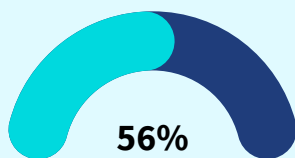
IDENTIFY STUDENTS AT RISK & HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR

It is important to take action to identify students at risk for mental health problems and/or suicidal behavior. Promoting emotional health awareness among those who interact with students the most (residence hall staff, academic advisors, faculty, and even other students) equips them to recognize and refer a student who might be in distress.

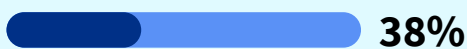
Many students who need help may be reluctant or unsure of how to seek it out. Obstacles to help-seeking include lack of awareness of mental health services, skepticism about the effectiveness of treatment, prejudices associated with mental illness, and uncertainty about costs or coverage. Campuses should engage in strategies designed to increase the likelihood that a student will seek help.

► Strengthen Screening & Training Opportunities

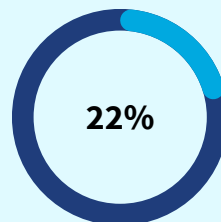
- In addition to screening in Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), there are now additional screening opportunities for students to take on the Heels Care [webpage](#). We believe this is a valuable initiative as it empowers students to self-screen and be matched with appropriate resources.
- UNC Chapel Hill has remained consistent with providing a variety of [mental health training opportunities](#) which are easily accessible via the Heels Care webpage.
- Additionally, the Director of Communications in Student Affairs and faculty worked with members of the task force to strengthen department messaging and awareness of this work.



The percentage of students from 2022 (left) to 2025 (right) who said they strongly agree or agree that they would know where to access mental health resources on campus.



The percentage of students who indicated they would reach out to a professor if their mental health was impacting their academics compared to the baseline of **27%**.



The percentage of students who have participated in a gatekeeper/mental health training compared to **10%** at baseline

PROVIDE MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE

JED asserts that institutions should offer accessible, consistent, and high-quality mental health and substance use services to students. Approaches to care should include adequate staffing levels, staff diversity reflective of the student population, flexibility in treatment approaches, and strong partnerships with off-campus providers. Preserving a student’s mental health is critical in preventing substance misuse, risk for suicide, and strengthening their academic success.

▶ Sustained Services and Awareness of These Services

- CAPS consistently met JED's recommendations for their services. Specifically, they continued to implement embedded positions and strategies to reduce barriers to accessing services, which is noteworthy.
- A key priority among the task force was to strengthen campaigns around substance use, specifically around opioid use. Members of the task force then worked on how to strengthen these efforts across campus. Additionally, a subcommittee of the task force worked to strengthen amnesty and overdose policies.

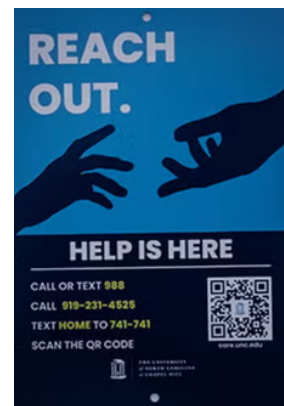
CRISIS MANAGEMENT & MEANS SAFETY

Having clear crisis management policies and protocols in place, including a focus on crisis prevention and effective responses when crises occur, is central to the safety of students and the campus community. Clear and accessible emergency and postvention protocols help guide faculty and staff when a student is struggling and provide readily accessible emergency information, including crisis phone numbers, chat, and text services.

Restricting or limited access to potential means of self-harm is one of the most effective ways to prevent suicide. Research has shown that if the means to self-harm are limited, individuals will not substitute for a different plan. When common means to suicide are limited in an environment, it’s been shown that the overall suicide rate declines.

▶ Promote Means Safety

- The JED task force successfully implemented hope signage across campus. This initiative is a notable achievement, effectively providing crisis interventions and promoting positive mental health messages. We appreciate the implementation of this initiative, as research supports the effectiveness of hope signage and means safety measures.



RECOMMENDATIONS

01

Sustain Campus-Wide Responsibility

We strongly recommend that UNC Chapel Hill leadership formalize a campus-wide task force, similar to the JED task force, to advise the impressive student mental health and wellbeing research and initiatives already underway. A sustained task force of this nature has proven effective at other institutions for improving communication and reducing duplication of effort.

Furthermore, we suggest regularly providing the campus community with updates on coordinated mental health and wellbeing efforts. Since the existing JED webpage appears to be a helpful resource, consider creating a single, comprehensive webpage to house all related initiatives and information.

02

Provide Opportunities for Students to Provide Input

We highly recommend that UNC Chapel Hill prioritizes establishing channels for student input on this process, similar to the listening tours conducted by members of the JED task force. Institutions often use methods such as town halls focused on wellbeing or online feedback forms. UNC Chapel Hill should consider the most effective and useful approach for their community.

We recommend that UNC-Chapel Hill consider establishing mechanisms to gather feedback on requested life skills programming and delivery methods. This will ensure that these efforts consistently meet the evolving needs of the student population. Practices such as integrating life skills-related questions into institutional climate surveys or organizing dedicated focus groups are effective ways to gather this specific feedback.

RECOMMENDATIONS

03

Sustain a Data-Informed Approach

While acknowledging the challenges posed by UNC Chapel Hill's size, we emphasize that efforts related to student mental health and well-being be data-informed and measured campus-wide.

The University may consider establishing a data committee or advisory group to give recommendations around conducting a data audit of existing information about mental health and wellbeing across campus, which could inform future initiatives.

Additionally, this group could collaborate with Student Success, Institutional Research and Assessment, and other campus partners about whether standardizing data measurement and assessment for related campus programming would assist in supporting this data-informed approach.

04

Ensure Policies Remain Consistent with Best Practices

As policies related to student mental health, substance use, and wellbeing continue to be updated and refined, we recommend continuing to work as an institution to align these policies with JED's recommendations.

GRATITUDE

The Jed Foundation would like to express gratitude to the JED Campus team for serving as dedicated, thoughtful partners in the work of promoting student mental health and emotional wellbeing on UNC Chapel Hill campus. Special thanks to the following individuals, who served in leadership roles throughout the JED Campus process:

- **Amy Johnson**, Vice-Chancellor of Student Affairs and Task Force Co-Chair
- **Samantha Meltzer-Brody**, Psychiatry Chair and Task Force Co-Chair
- **Sara Stahlman**, Special Projects and Communication Manager for Health and Well-being and Task Force Project Lead

JED Task Force Members:

- Aaron Bachenheimer, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Engagement
- Avery Cook, Director of Counseling and Psychological Services
- Chloe Russell, Associate Dean and Director of Academic Advising Program
- Dean Blackburn, Director of Student Wellness
- Derek Kemp, Associate Vice-Chancellor for Campus Safety and Risk Management
- Desirée Rieckenberg, Dean of Students
- Ed Fisher, Professor of Health Behavior and Director of Peers for Progress
- Elizabeth Poindexter, Executive Director of Communication for Student Affairs
- Jackie Copeland, Associate Provost and Director of Student Scholarships and Aid
- Kala Bullett, Senior Director for Residential Education with Carolina Housing
- Kara Simmons, Associate University Counsel
- Leah Cox, Vice Provost
- Steve Knotek, Associate Professor and Program Coordinator of School Psychology in the School of Education
- Simon Bloor, Director of Accessibility Resources and Service



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