President's Advisory Committee on Mental Health and Well-Being
Future Priorities Brainstorming Summaries
1/10/2025

Group 1: Mental Health Skills Training for Students

1. **Develop Core Mental Health Skills Programs:**
   - Focus on resiliency-building techniques like "Quit Taking It Personally" (QTIP), confidence-building, persistence, and emotional regulation.
   - Include mindfulness practices to enhance focus, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence.
   - Offer training in stress management (nutrition, sleep, etc.) and navigating the impact of social media.

2. **Expand Campus Mental Health Training Initiatives:**
   - Integrate Healthy Minds Innovations (HMI) and similar frameworks into required courses.
   - Explore the inclusion of peer-led programs (e.g., suicide prevention and ambassador roles).

3. **Incentivize Faculty and Staff Engagement:**
   - Develop resources for promoting simple mental health strategies, such as practicing gratitude at the end of classes or modifying deadlines to reduce student stress.

4. **Engage Students Through Innovative Approaches:**
   - Use creative engagement methods like trivia punch cards, coffee cards, or events that promote social connection and device-free participation.

5. **Pilot a System-Wide First-Year Seminar:**
   - Make mental health and well-being training a required component for first-year students across campuses.

6. **Enhance Resource Mapping:**
   - Build partnerships with existing mental health resources (e.g., Pruitt Center for Mindfulness & Well-being, Healthy Minds Innovations) and secure sustainable funding for proactive initiatives.

7. **Prioritize Staff Training:**
   - Train faculty and staff in micro-interventions and study tips to foster a supportive academic environment.

Group 2: Mental Health and Diverse Student Populations

1. **Expand Access to Culturally Competent Services:**
   - Support financial and professional resources to attract, hire, and retain diverse counselors in addition to training existing providers in cultural competency and implicit bias—to promote equal access to mental health support for all students.
   - Address gaps through targeted initiatives like translation services, culturally relevant programming, and peer-led support groups for groups that show higher levels of mental health need according to systemwide and campus surveys.

2. **Build System-Wide Collaboration:**
   - Share resources and best practices across campuses, particularly in support of marginalized groups, on a consistent basis.
   - Explore centralized training opportunities for staff and faculty.

3. **Enhance Outreach and Communication:**
   - Promote mental health resources through use of student governance, campus focus groups, and tailored awareness campaigns.

4. **Engage Students in Shaping Initiatives:**
   - Conduct regular needs assessments of students and particularly with those departments, organizations and groups across campus dedicated to mental health awareness and wellbeing support.
   - Establish centralized peer-led mental health support, which may look like providing paid roles like peer mentors to increase engagement and ownership.

5. **Measure Initiative Effectiveness:**
   - Use data-driven approaches, including campus climate surveys, retention statistics, and mental health service utilization metrics. Include this Universities of Wisconsin level data as addendum to other relevant annual reports/documents (UW Counseling Impact Assessment Project (UWCIAP), Senior Student Affairs Officer (SSAO) documents)

6. **Increase Faculty and Staff Preparedness:**
   - Introduce Universities of Wisconsin-wide messaging and communication channel in support of wellness and a healthy campus climate: could include mental health awareness days, resiliency training, and mental health first aid workshops.

Group 3: Basic Needs and Mental Health

1. **Strengthen Emergency Grant Programs:**
    *   Expand eligibility criteria for emergency grants and build a centralized policy for administration.

2. **Address Housing and Food Insecurity:**
    *   Scale initiatives like campus food pantries, PHLASH Meals, and flash-frozen meal programs system-wide.
    *   Provide more accessible and sustainable housing options, including safe housing for students fleeing domestic violence.

3. **Enhance Basic Needs Awareness and Integration:**
    *   Incorporate discussions on basic needs into orientation, advising, and campus events.
    *   Train faculty, staff, and housing teams to identify and address unmet basic needs by recognizing the various ways individuals can experience basic needs insecurity.

4. **Foster Innovative Partnerships:**
    *   Partner with local and national organizations (e.g., food banks, healthcare providers) to provide wraparound services. Engage alumni and local businesses in fundraising initiatives for basic needs support.

5. **Invest in Financial Wellness and Education:**
    *   Offer financial literacy workshops and promote cost-effective solutions like open-source textbooks and scholarships.

6. **Improve Data Collection and Resource Mapping:**
    *   Explore data from already completed assessments (e.g., NCHA) that include information about basic needs.
    *   Conduct regular assessments to identify gaps in basic needs and mental health services.
    *   Share findings system-wide to inform policy and funding decisions.

7. **Advocate for State-Level Support:**
    *   Request funding for initiatives like tuition-free programs and grants for emergency support.
    *   Collaborate with state departments to provide benefits training for staff and students.

8. **Develop and Share Best Practices:**
    *   Create a toolkit of best practices for addressing student basic needs and mental health challenges, including cost-reduction strategies for course materials.

Group 4: Faculty/Staff Mental Health and Skills for Helping Students

1. **Current Challenges for Faculty/Staff Mental Health**
   - **Perceived Overload**: Supporting student mental health feels like an "extra task" rather than an integrated part of faculty/staff roles.
   - **Lack of Structural Support**: Mid and upper management often pay lip service to mental health but fail to implement actionable policies or support structures.
   - **Cultural Barriers**: Higher education culture valorizes overwork, fostering burnout, and making self-care feel shameful or unachievable.
   - **Inequitable Burden**: Women and faculty/staff of color are often disproportionately expected to serve as mental health support for students.
   - **Barriers to Well-being**: Structural issues like inadequate healthy food options or lack of time and resources for self-care.
   - **Unclear Policies and Communication**: Faculty and staff are often unaware of where to go, what resources exist, and how to support students effectively.
   - **Increased Demands**: Growing student mental health needs add to faculty/staff stress without commensurate training or resources.

2. **Strategies for Early Identification and Intervention for Burnout**
   - **Trauma-informed Leadership**: Mandate training in trauma-informed supervision for managers to enhance staff well-being.
   - **Healthy Work Environments**: Implement policies to improve work-life balance, such as meeting-free schedules or email restrictions outside work hours.
   - **Regular Check-ins**: Build check-ins into HR and managerial processes to proactively identify and address burnout.
   - **Modeling Healthy Practices**: Encourage leadership to model the use of PTO for mental health and normalize discussions about workload prioritization.
   - **Streamlined Feedback Loops**: Survey faculty/staff regularly to gather data on mental health and ensure feedback informs future policy and practice.

3. **Supporting Faculty/Staff During Stressful Periods**
   - **Stress Maps**: Audit and identify high-stress periods by department to provide targeted support.
   - **Wellness Initiatives**: Offer mini-destress events (e.g., yoga, mindfulness walks) and plan deadlines around known high-stress times.
   - **Streamlined Processes**: Simplify and centralize systems like grade submission and student complaint management for efficiency during peak times.
   - **Clear Rewards**: Explicitly recognize mental health support efforts in performance reviews and tenure processes.

4. **Mental Health Training and Skill Development Needs**
   - **Proactive Strategies**: Training on setting up emotionally supportive classrooms and managing challenging conversations.
   - **Role Clarity**: Clarify the boundaries of faculty/staff roles in student mental health to reduce fear of liability.
   - **Quick-reference Tools**: Provide flowcharts and toolkits for handling crises and non-crises efficiently.
   - **Tailored Training**: Offer levels of training based on faculty/staff experience and responsibilities, with micro-lessons and hybrid options.

5. **Gaps in Current Training Programs**
   - **Participation Issues**: High workloads prevent faculty/staff from attending or implementing training effectively.
   - **Sustainability**: One-time training is insufficient—create a pathway with consistent reinforcement and evaluation.
   - **Audience-specific Content**: Tailor training by role (e.g., teaching faculty vs. advisors) and include asynchronous resources for flexibility.

Group 5: Student-Led Efforts to Support Mental Health and Well-being

1. **Effective Student-Led Initiatives**
   - **Existing Programs**: Green Bandana Project, Hidden Opponent (athletics), and Little Heart Project (suicide prevention).
   - **Expansion Needs**: Secure funding for successful initiatives like Mantra and develop a system for scaling across campuses.

2. **Resources and Training for Student Leaders**
   - **Key Skills**: Mindfulness, motivational interviewing, suicide awareness, emotional intelligence, and de-escalation techniques.
   - **Peer Support Training**: Programs like JED training and NASPA peer support can help develop effective peer leaders.
   - **Accessible Formats**: Provide resources in multiple languages and formats, including asynchronous tools to accommodate diverse schedules.

3. **Partnerships with University Administration**
   - **Integration with Academics**: Offer academic credit or internships for peer educators and integrate their work with academic departments.
   - **Highlighting Contributions**: Use social media and other platforms to showcase student-led efforts and encourage participation.
   - **Advisor Support**: Provide specific training for faculty/staff advisors of student organizations.

4. **Tailoring Initiatives for Diverse Populations**
   - **Cultural Relevance**: Ensure initiatives are inclusive and representative of all student demographics, including LGBTQ+, first-generation, and graduate students.
   - **Holistic Approaches**: Incorporate culturally resonant methods like food, music, and sports to reduce barriers to participation.
   - **Flexible Accessibility**: Design programs to meet students where they are, including offering events and services outside traditional hours.

5. **Ensuring Access to Peer Support**
   - **Embedded Peer Coaches**: Place trained peer wellness coaches in residence halls, academic colleges, and other accessible locations.
   - **Evidence-based Practices**: Use data to refine peer coaching programs and ensure effectiveness.
   - **Financial Accessibility**: Reduce costs associated with well-being services to eliminate barriers for low-income students.

6. **Cultivating an Open Mental Health Culture**
   - **Approachable Events**: Host "fusion" events that blend mental health discussions with other engaging topics.
   - **Peer-led Dialogues**: Create safe spaces for students to share experiences and support one another.
   - **Awareness Campaigns**: Build a system-wide strategic communication campaign to normalize mental health discussions.

7. **Actionable Recommendations for Systemwide Implementation**
   - **Audits and Inventories**: Conduct regular audits of student organizations and training programs to identify gaps and opportunities.
   - **Funding and Resources**: Ensure continued funding for successful initiatives and share an inventory of available programs across the Universities of Wisconsin.
   - **Collaboration**: Embed trained student leaders throughout each campus to foster integration between academic affairs and student affairs