

# Middlesex Community College

## The Need for Mental and Physical Health Services

(presented by Abigail Tirone)

*Note: Statistics referenced in this testimony are attached with more information.*

There are currently 2,896 students on Middlesex Community College campus, and if one in FOUR college students suffer from some sort of mental illness, then 724 of our students alone are affected. In addition, we have 100+ veterans on campus suffering from PTSD with no easily accessible resources for either demographic.

I cannot express enough how many friends and students I know who have struggled or had to withdraw from classes due to a mental illness whether depression, anxiety, or something more serious. Similarly, how many faculty I spoken with who have described scenarios where they have a student break down in the middle of class, is academically struggling, or just suddenly drops out because of a mental illness. A majority of the reason why is because we, as one of many community colleges, lack the resources to not only aid students, but support faculty. I myself have been diagnosed with both depression and anxiety, and have needed someone to go to when I had several anxiety attacks during school hours last semester. Likewise, when I was pulled off my medication because of a physical ailment for two months and I could not focus enough to complete assignments on time, I needed someone to advocate for me (just like countless others with similar circumstances). Furthermore, we do not have the funds for services at night at all!

According to a study done by NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) for the reasons why students drop out of college, 64% of the students they interviewed dropped out due to mental health reasons and 50% of those because they did not have access to mental health services and supports. Additionally, more than 45% of those who stopped attending because of mental health related reasons.

[http://www2.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Find\\_Support/NAMI\\_on\\_Campus1/collegereport.pdf](http://www2.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Find_Support/NAMI_on_Campus1/collegereport.pdf)

Community colleges have a large variety of services, anywhere from innovative curriculum, developmental education, and programs supporting work-force development. However, another mission of the community college is to support the "wholeness" of individuals. Loads of research suggests that "wellness" contributes to student success. Therefore, budgeting for higher education has to include not only money for the liberal arts and vocational training, but professional support for the mental health needs of our students.

We realize that the solution is not one that will be easily resolved, nor is it a simple process. However, we as students would like to propose an approval for budgeting a temporary solution in order to remedy this situation until a more permanent solution can be attained.

Some avenues community colleges would need budgeted in order to temporarily alleviate the problem would include:

Hosting and promoting...

1. Resources Awareness—brochures, contact information, and booths

2. Quiet spaces for students
3. Monthly Health and Wellness speakers
4. Stress reduction events/activities
  - Two additional NAMI statistics
5. Mental Health Awareness
6. Suicide Awareness and Prevention
7. More mental health trainings for faculty and staff as extremely important
8. Informational and Interactive Health Fairs (for things such as various cancers, disorders and diseases)
9. Orchestrate clinics that would offer health screenings and flu shots

Student success is dependent on educational funding that addresses the "whole" person.

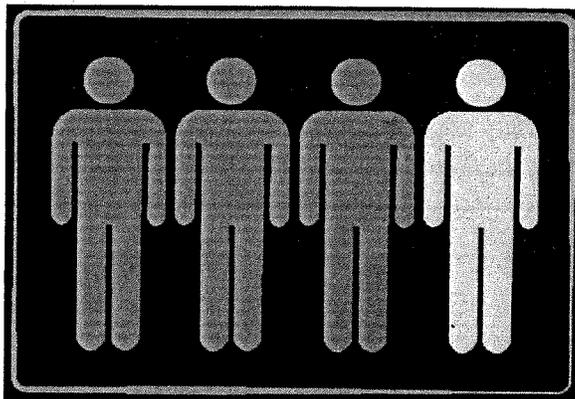
In conclusion, while we can bring further data/information next budget cycle to ensure a more permanent solution for all community colleges, I would encourage you to please consider budgeting for this temporary solution, not only for our students' success, but ultimately, our country's success.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak, and have a good evening.



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## Learn About The Issue



There is much we now know about students and the mental health issues they experience while attending college. Here are some brief facts and stats about college students and mental health. This data undoubtedly makes the case for the importance of addressing the mental health needs of all students on college campuses and why everyone should care about this issue. Check out **NAMI's resources for faculty, staff and students** to begin to address these important issues.

### **Mental health issues are prevalent on college campuses.**

- 75 percent of lifetime cases of mental health conditions begin by age 24.<sup>1</sup>
- One in four young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 have a diagnosable mental illness.<sup>2</sup> More than 25 percent of college students have been diagnosed or treated by a professional for a mental health condition within the past year.<sup>3</sup>
- More than 11 percent of college students have been diagnosed or treated for anxiety in the past year and more than 10 percent reported being diagnosed or treated for depression.<sup>4</sup>
- More than 40 percent of college students have felt more than an average amount of stress within the past 12 months.<sup>5</sup>
- More than 80 percent of college students felt overwhelmed by all they had to do in the past year and 45 percent have felt things were hopeless.<sup>6</sup>
- Almost 73 percent of students living with a mental health condition experienced a mental health crisis on campus.<sup>7</sup> Yet, 34.2 percent reported that their college did not know about their crisis.<sup>8</sup>
- Colleges across the country have reported large increases in enrollment.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, college counseling centers have also observed an increase in the prevalence and severity of mental health issues experienced by students and an increase in the number of students taking psychotropic medications.<sup>10</sup>

**toll-beginning-in-youth.shtml.**

<sup>2</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (n.d.). Mental health: What a difference student awareness makes. Retrieved from

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<sup>3</sup> American College Health Association (2012). American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment II: Reference Group Executive Summary Spring 2012. Retrieved from

**[http://www.acha-ncha.org/docs/ACHA-NCHA-II\\_ReferenceGroup\\_ExecutiveSummary\\_Spring2012.pdf](http://www.acha-ncha.org/docs/ACHA-NCHA-II_ReferenceGroup_ExecutiveSummary_Spring2012.pdf)**.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> National Alliance on Mental Illness (2012). College students speak: Survey report on mental health. Retrieved from **[www.nami.org/collegereport](http://www.nami.org/collegereport)**.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> College Board Advocacy and Policy Center (n.d.). Trends in higher education. Retrieved from

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<sup>10</sup> American College Counseling Association (2010). National Survey of Counseling Directors. Retrieved from **[http://www.collegecounseling.org/pdf/2010\\_survey.pdf](http://www.collegecounseling.org/pdf/2010_survey.pdf)**.

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### Numbers of Americans Affected by Mental Illness

- One in four adults—approximately 61.5 million Americans—experiences mental illness in a given year. One in 17—about 13.6 million—live with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, major depression or bipolar disorder.<sup>1</sup>
- Approximately 20 percent of youth ages 13 to 18 experience severe mental disorders in a given year. For ages 8 to 15, the estimate is 13 percent.<sup>2</sup>
- Approximately 1.1 percent of American adults—about 2.4 million people—live with schizophrenia.<sup>3,4</sup>
- Approximately 2.6 percent of American adults—6.1 million people—live with bipolar disorder.<sup>4,5</sup>
- Approximately 6.7 percent of American adults—about 14.8 million people—live with major depression.<sup>4,6</sup>
- Approximately 18.1 percent of American adults—about 42 million people—live with anxiety disorders, such as panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), generalized anxiety disorder and phobias.<sup>4,7</sup>
- About 9.2 million adults have co-occurring mental health and addiction disorders.<sup>8</sup>
- Approximately 26 percent of homeless adults staying in shelters live with serious mental illness and an estimated 46 percent live with severe mental illness and/or substance use disorders.<sup>9</sup>
- Approximately 20 percent of state prisoners and 21 percent of local jail prisoners have “a recent history” of a mental health condition.<sup>10</sup>
- Seventy percent of youth in juvenile justice systems have at least one mental health condition and at least 20 percent live with a severe mental illness.<sup>11</sup>

### Getting Mental Health Treatment in America

- Approximately 60 percent of adults<sup>12</sup>, and almost one-half

of youth ages 8 to 15 with a mental illness received no mental health services in the previous year.<sup>13</sup>

- African American and Hispanic Americans used mental health services at about one-half the rate of whites in the past year and Asian Americans at about one-third the rate.<sup>14</sup>
- One-half of all chronic mental illness begins by the age of 14; three-quarters by age 24.<sup>15</sup> Despite effective treatment, there are long delays—sometimes decades—between the first appearance of symptoms and when people get help.<sup>16</sup>

### The Impact of Mental Illness in America

- Serious mental illness costs America \$193.2 billion in lost earnings per year.<sup>17</sup>
- Mood disorders such as depression are the third most common cause of hospitalization in the U.S. for both youth and adults ages 18 to 44.<sup>18</sup>
- Individuals living with serious mental illness face an increased risk of having chronic medical conditions.<sup>19</sup> Adults living with serious mental illness die on average 25 years earlier than other Americans, largely due to treatable medical conditions.<sup>20</sup>
- Over 50 percent of students with a mental health condition age 14 and older who are served by special education drop out—the highest dropout rate of any disability group.<sup>21</sup>
- Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the U.S. (more common than homicide) and the third leading cause of death for ages 15 to 24 years.<sup>22</sup> More than 90 percent of those who die by suicide had one or more mental disorders.<sup>23</sup>
- Although military members comprise less than 1 percent of the U.S. population<sup>24</sup>, veterans represent 20 percent of suicides nationally. Each day, about 22 veterans die from suicide.<sup>25</sup>

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