Curriculum + Students = The Only Guaranteed Point of Contact

Dr. Eithne Hunt, Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, UCC
“Academics have a critical role to play in fostering student mental wellbeing. This is because the academic curriculum structures and gives coherence to student life. Increasingly, the curriculum is the one consistent element of the student experience.”
Median Age of Students 2022/2023

Higher Education Authority (2023)
The age of adolescence

Fig. 1: Age of onset of mental disorders.

From: Towards a youth mental health paradigm: a perspective and roadmap
‘Although adolescence is often thought of as a time of turmoil and risk for young people, it is more accurately viewed as a developmental period rich with opportunity for youth to learn and grow’.

[National Academy of Sciences, Engineering & Medicine, 2018]
The adolescent brain

Cognitive, social, emotional and self-regulatory capacities are still developing right through the mid-20s.

"three Rs"
- regulatory system
- relationship system
- reward system

https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-amazing-teen-brain/
Developmental framework for young adult success

Young Adulthood (Post-Secondary, Ages 19-22)
Hierarchy of learner needs

Learning mindsets:
- I belong in this community
- I can change my abilities through effort
- I can succeed
- This work has value and purpose for me
“Our students need to know that resilience is possible and within their developmental - communal reach, and they need to see themselves as resilient.”

Daugherty & Steenbergh (2020, p. 21)
The Inter-Relationship of Mental Health States: Language Matters

- Depression
- Heartbroken, sorrowful, demoralized, grieving, mournful, despairing
- Upset, annoyed, sad, unhappy, disappointed, disgusted, angry, bitter, blue, down, sorry, glum, forlorn, disconsolate, distressed, despondent, dejected, pessimistic
- Pensive, thoughtful

- Mental Disorder/Illness
- Mental Health Problem
- Mental Distress
- No Distress, Problem or Disorder
Depression is not the same as having a bad day.

OCD is not the same as being organized.

ADHD is not the same as being hyperactive.

Anxiety Disorder is not the same as feeling stressed before an exam.

PTSD is not the same thing as feeling upset.

Schizophrenia is not a split personality.

Panic Disorder is not the same thing as being afraid.

Bipolar Disorder is not the same as being moody.

#getliterate
www.teenmentalhealth.org
BRAINPOWER
Harnessing the power and potential of adolescent brain and behaviour for enhanced learning, wellbeing and student success

Your BRAINPOWER
Harnessing the power and potential of brain and behaviour for enhanced learning, wellbeing and student success
Optimal mix of services for mental health

![Pyramid diagram showing different levels of mental health services ranging from self-care to long-stay facilities and specialist services.](Image credit: Patel et al. (2015). Licence: CC BY 3.0 IGO)
Table 1. Adapted WHO model of support for university students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of support</th>
<th>Type of support</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Severity of students’ mental health problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>External specialist support</td>
<td>Specialist mental health services</td>
<td>Severe problems requiring specialist care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University support services</td>
<td>Counselling, Disability services, Computerised therapy</td>
<td>Students with more severe or diagnosable problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Structured university support</td>
<td>Personal tutors, Study and wellbeing skills, Peer support or Buddy system</td>
<td>Students with varying levels of distress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Informal university/personal</td>
<td>Friends, Social support via university societies with some offering talks</td>
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<td>support</td>
<td>on mental health issues, Family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Self-care – or readiness for university</td>
<td>Budgeting and cooking skills, Friendship skills, Coping with academic demands (e.g. time management, essay skills, sleep)</td>
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<td>University support services</td>
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EVERYDAY MATTERS
Healthy Habits for University Life®

Want to learn some science-based habits to enhance your learning and wellbeing?
Sign up for a free, online digital badge available to all UCC students.

- mental wellbeing
- resilience
- growth mindset
- sleep health
- occupational balance
- gratitude
- self-compassion

Everyday Matters has been one of the most interesting and practical lessons I have learned in my university education.

How I wish I had this knowledge before now!

Scan me

UCC
Skills Centre
College of Medicine and Health
# Top 10 skills of 2023

1. Analytical thinking
2. Creative thinking
3. Resilience, flexibility, and agility
4. Motivation and self-awareness
5. Curiosity and lifelong learning
6. Technological literacy
7. Dependability and attention to detail
8. Empathy and active listening
9. Leadership and social influence
10. Quality control

**Type of skill**
- Cognitive skills
- Self-efficacy
- Management skills
- Technology skills
- Working with others

**Source**

**Note**
The skills judged to be of greatest importance to workers at the time of the survey.
“To the extent that these interventions alleviate stress, they might also reduce prevalence of mental disorders, and, by virtue of the strong associations known to exist between mental disorders and academic performance improve the academic performance and subsequent life-long well-being of students.”
Thank You

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