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Mental Health Declines: KU Resources

Students today are under great pressure due to the demands of college and the need to graduate. These pressures cause a decrease in mental health which can be linked to depression. A study of 373 colleges nationwide revealed that more than 60% of college students had mental health issues during the school year 2020-2021. ([Lipson, S. K., et al., Journal of Affective Disorders, Vol. 306, 2022](#)). The mental health of college students across the US has declined steadily from 2013 to 2021. According to a new study led by [Dr. Sarah Lipson at Boston University](#) during that time period, depression symptoms increased by 135 percent, and anxiety symptoms increased by 110 percent. Despite not developing a formal disorder, many still struggle. Navigating the stress of college transition is challenging. A mental health crisis can be caused by an overwhelming workload, a new environment, or other stressors such as graduation pressures. Several kinds of approaches are necessary to address this issue, as it is at an all-time high. I investigated this problem as well as the KU resources available.

In order to uncover the common themes students think could be improved and the ways in which they are faring, I researched KU's mental health approach and interviewed a number of students. My research on mental health resources at KU revealed that KU offers Caps counseling and psychological services. A student's emotional and psychological development is the mission of Counseling and Psychological Services, which serves to enhance performance in the university environment. Additionally, CAPS contributes to the professional development of

graduate students in mental health and counseling professions by evaluating students' academic progress and improving student and faculty performance. The objectives of this service are to help students improve decision-making, identify and utilize resources, and succeed academically, socially, and personally. [Visit the website](#) to book appointments, access the caps portal, get 24/7 support, watch presentations, and submit outreach requests.

Among the fifteen students interviewed, only five had heard of this service. The majority of interviewees mentioned a desire to learn more about resources and considered KU to have failed to adequately inform them about all available resources. Since entering college, most students reported experiencing challenges with stress management. One student I interviewed, Rachel Currie expressed, “I can't believe I was unaware of CAP, and it's a shame as there seems to be a whole range of great resources I would have liked to have known about my freshman year.”. It was a common theme that even though some classes added resources to their syllabus, this was not enough to encourage students to use them.

After combining all of the responses, students suggested KU market its counseling and advising services during classroom announcements, offer a messaging system for students to ask questions, and work to destigmatize asking for help in order to maximize the impact of the resources. Students suggested that mental health could improve if teachers supported students' mental health and promoted resources properly. Interviewee Alex Dinyer stated, “If students are struggling, using teaching assistants to recommend resources could be beneficial because they are students themselves and can relate to and help those who find it difficult to take action.”. The implementation of these ideas in KU's curriculum could help better utilize resources and inform students on how to receive assistance.

Hence, mental health among students today is rapidly declining. Due to this rapid decline, campus changes are urgently needed. My research and interviews with students revealed that students are unaware of how to get help and what's available. The University of Kansas offers a wide range of resources but needs to improve its intervention efforts to reach more students. Faculty and teachers should utilize their training and knowledge about these resources in order to assist students. During the introduction to a course, every teacher should describe how you can get help if you are struggling. Later, these resources can be reinforced during high-stress periods, such as finals. Furthermore, teaching assistants should receive the same mental health training as professors, as they are more accessible to students when they need help. Education and involvement can bring about change.

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