

ACCT  
LEADERSHIP  
CONGRESS

2024

Community Colleges as  
**Catalysts:**  
Cultivating Skills for the Future

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#ACCT2024



# Empowering Student Wellbeing: Waubonsee's Peer Support Program and Innovations in Mental Health Support

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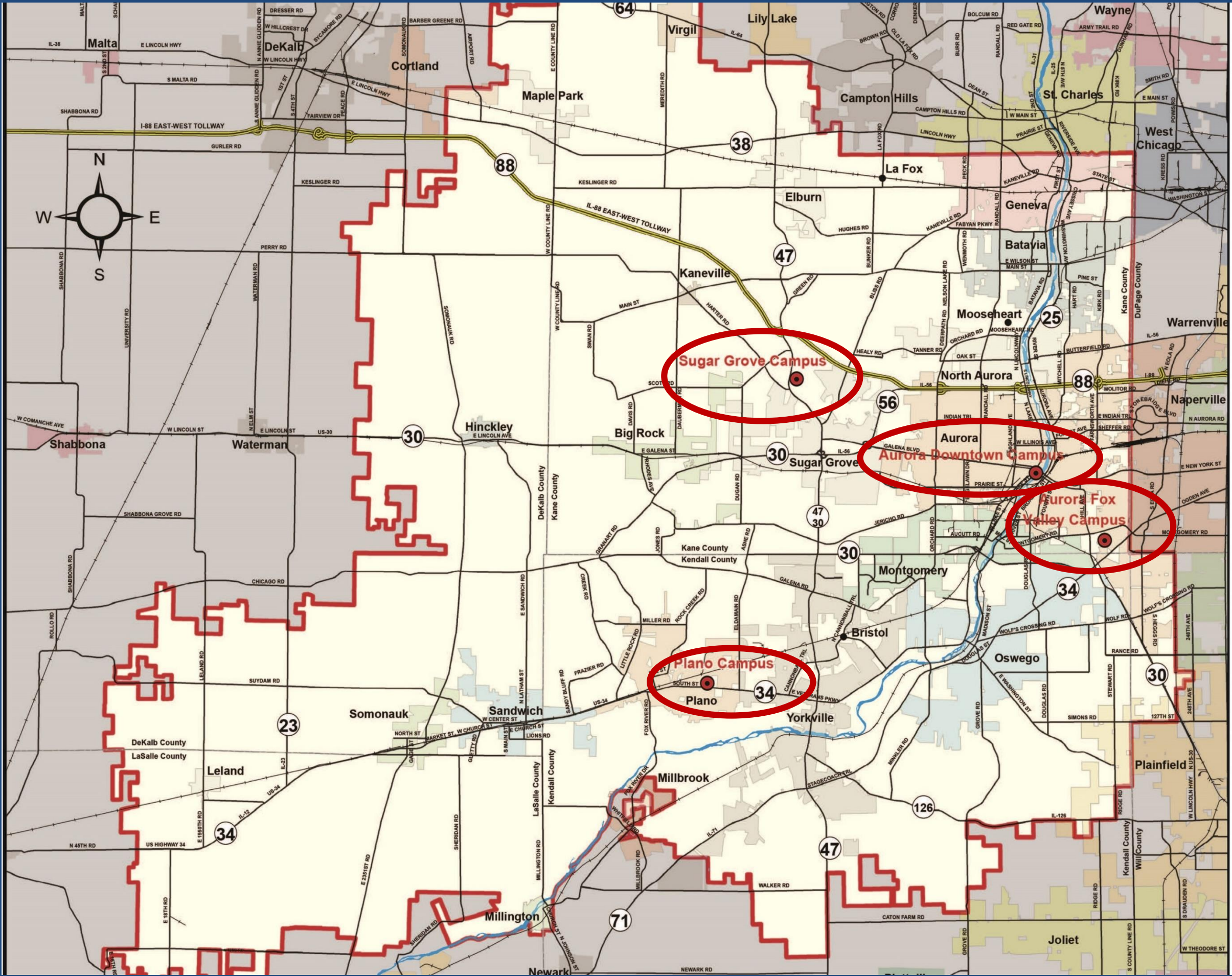
# Agenda

- About Waubonsee Community College
- The Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act
- College Mental Health Data
- WCC Mental Health Initiatives
  - Peer Support Overview
- What We've Learned
- Questions and Discussion





# Waubonsee Community College

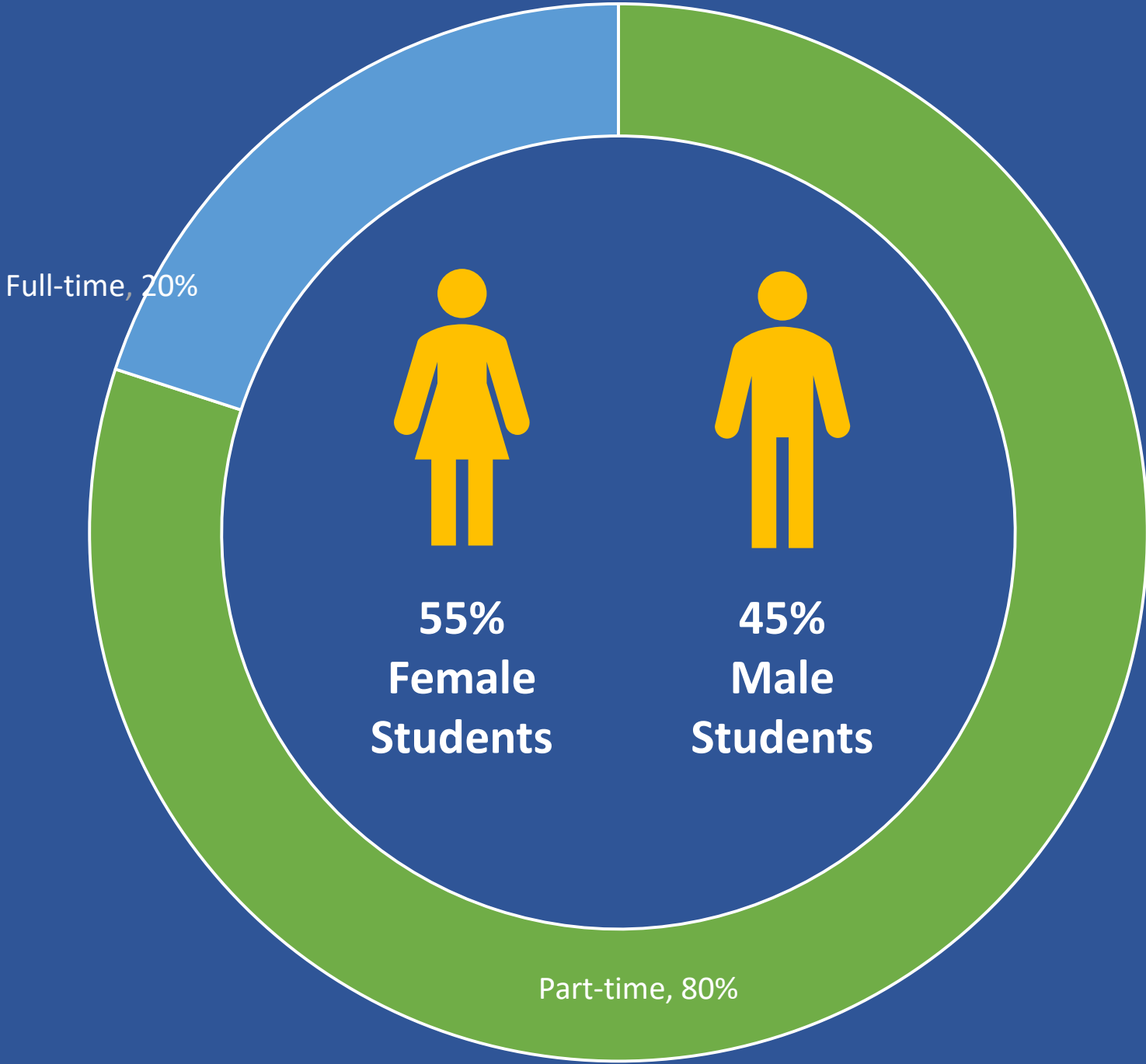




# Enrollment by Program Type

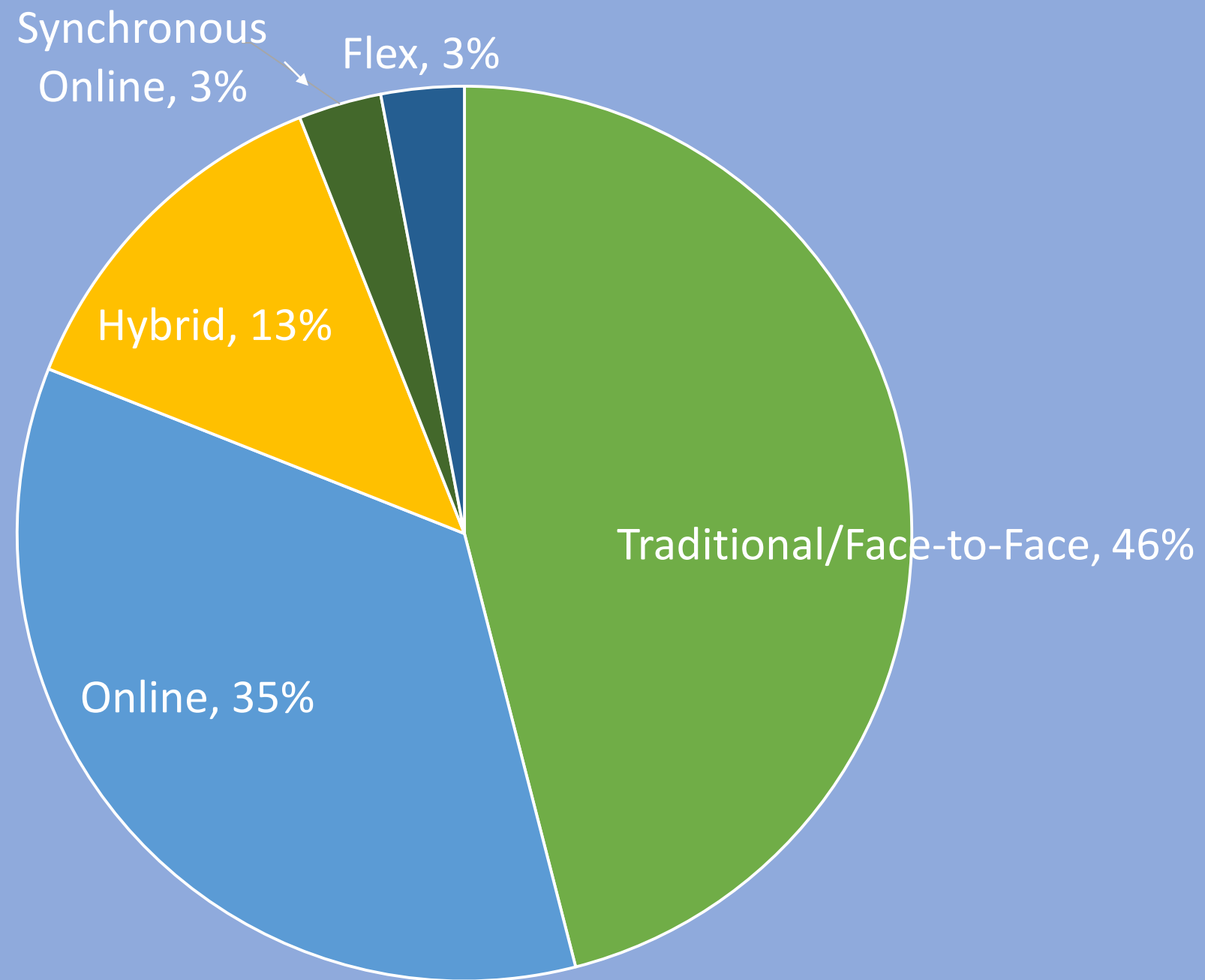


# Enrollment by Status and Gender

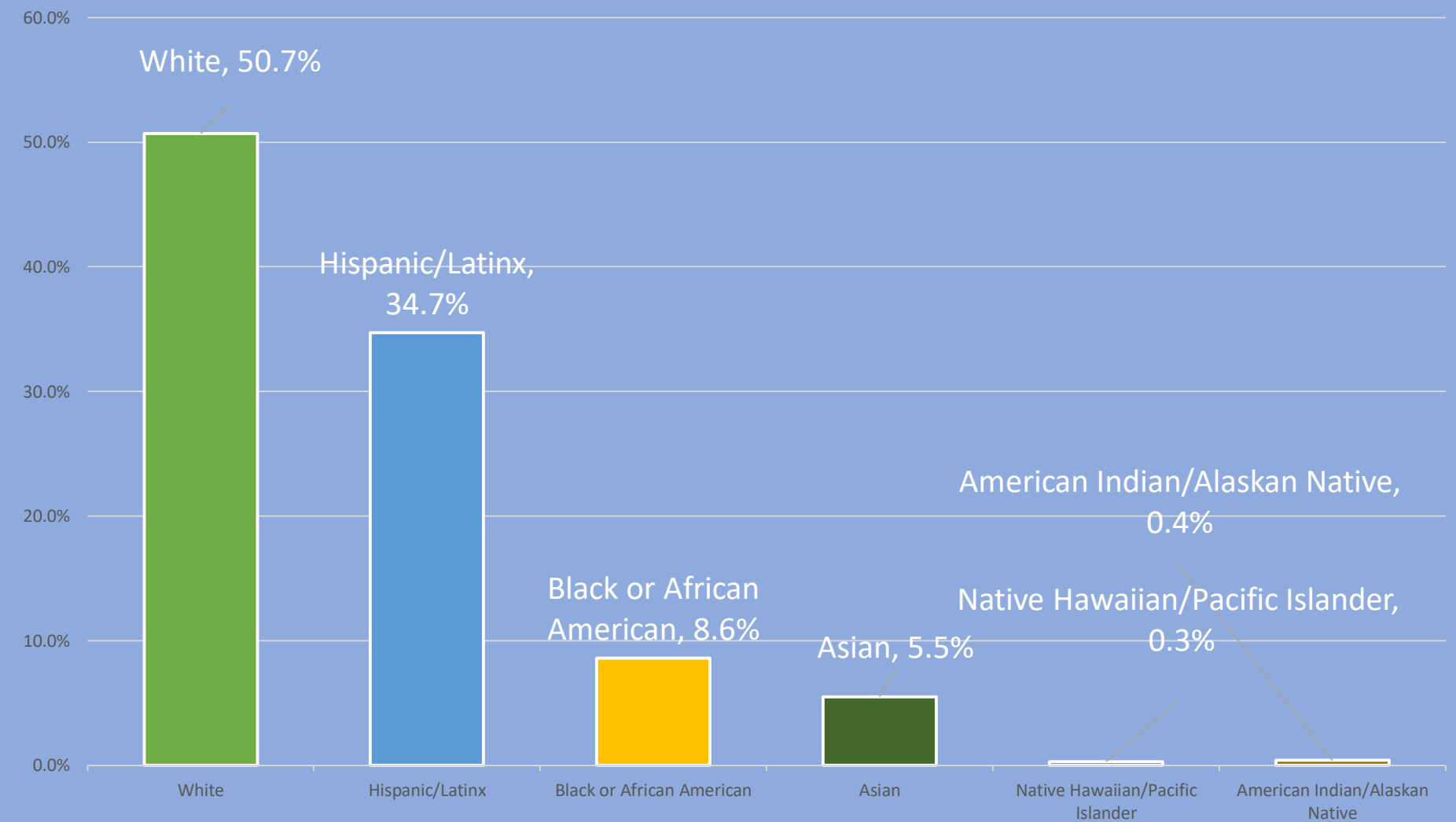




## Enrollment by Course Modality



## Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity





# The Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act

Went into effect 7/1/2020 (Illinois)

(110 ILCS 58/) Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act.

- ◆ Increase mental health awareness efforts on campus and in curriculum.
- ◆ An online mental health screening tool
- ◆ Strategic community partnerships
- ◆ Clinical Ratio Benchmark (1 counselor per 1250 students).
- ◆ Mental Health Peer Support program



# Additional MHEAC Requirements

- Increase access to mental health services on and off campus
- Improve treatment/improve the capacity to provide mental health treatment
- Illinois will establish a Technical Assistance Center to provide technical assistance and training to reduce administrative barriers
- Create a website or mobile app with information about mental health resources
- Designate an expert panel to advise students, faculty, and staff



# College Student Mental Health Data

ACES - Adverse Childhood Experiences –  
Traumatic events experienced before the age of 18

- **About 64% of U.S. adults reported they had experienced at least one type of ACE before age 18.**
- **Nearly 1 in 6 (17.3%) reported they had experienced four or more types of ACEs according to the CDC.**

**<https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/aces/index.html>**



# 2022-2023 Healthy Minds Study (U of Michigan)

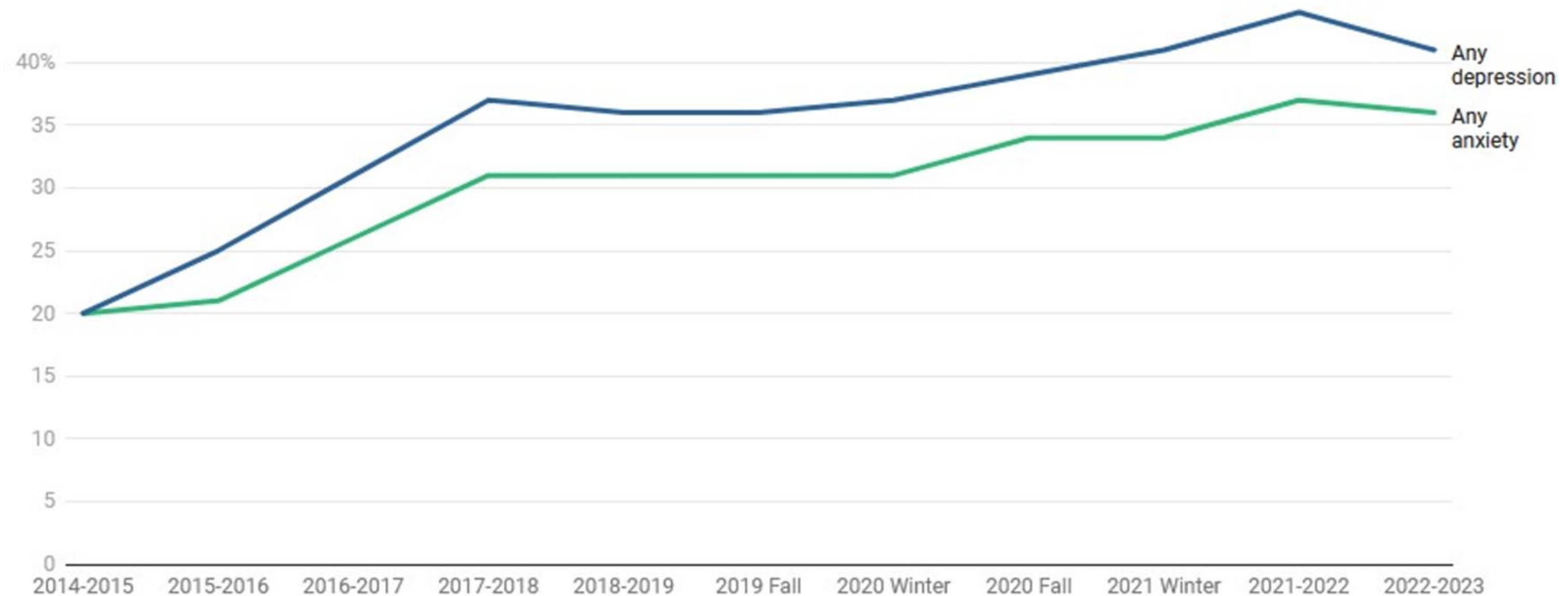
Estimated values of selected measures	Percentage of students	
Major depression (positive PHQ-9 screen)	20%	20%
Depression overall, including major and moderate (positive PHQ-9 screen)	41%	41%
Anxiety disorder (positive GAD-7 screen)	36%	36%
Eating disorder (positive SCOFF screen)	14%	14%
Non-suicidal self-injury (past year)	29%	29%
Suicidal ideation (past year)	14%	14%
Lifetime diagnoses of mental disorders	46%	40%
Psychiatric medication (past year)	29%	29%
Mental health therapy/counseling (past year)	36%	36%
Any mental health therapy/counseling and/or psychiatric medication among students with positive depression or anxiety screens (past year)	59%	59%
Personal stigma: agrees with "I would think less of someone who has received mental health treatment."	6%	6%
Perceived public stigma: agrees with "Most people would think less of someone who has received mental health treatment."	41%	41%



# Longitudinal

## Depression and Anxiety

### Rising rates of anxiety and depression among U.S. college students



*For the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years, annual reports were divided into fall and winter reports.*

Chart: Healthy Minds Policy Initiative • Source: [Healthy Minds Network](#) • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

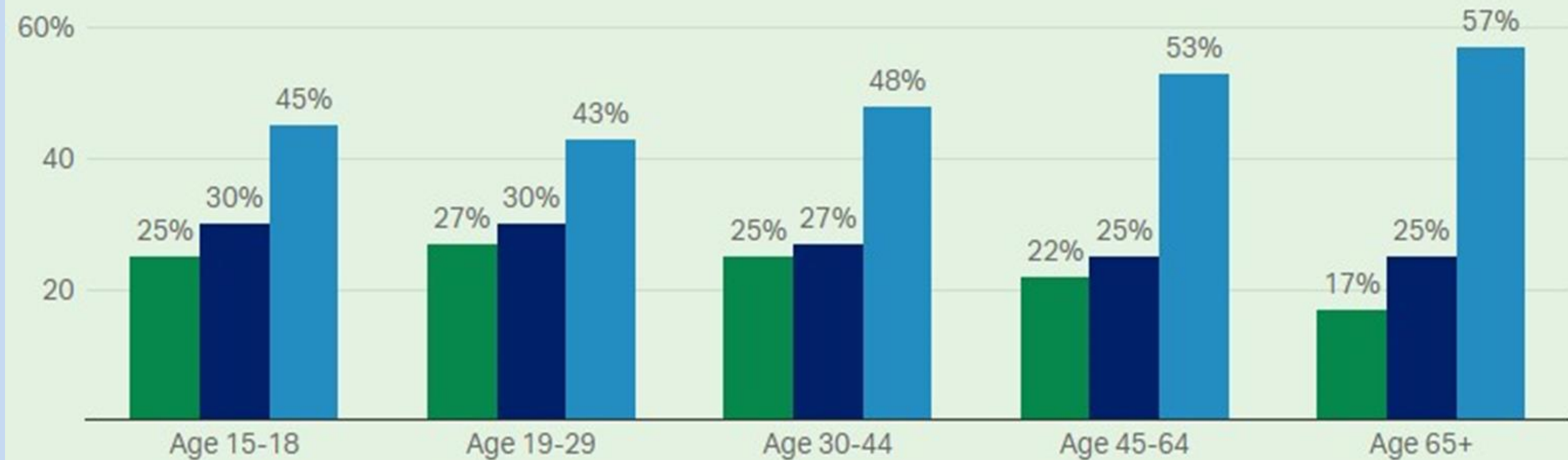


# Loneliness

## 10-Point Gap in Reported Loneliness Among Older vs. Younger Adults

In general, how lonely do you feel?

Very/Fairly lonely A little lonely Not at all lonely



Across 142 countries and territories surveyed

Global percentages are weighted to reflect the global population. Percentages may not sum to 100% as "Don't know" and no response percentages are not shown. Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% ± 1 percentage point.

[Get the data](#) • [Download image](#)

GALLUP

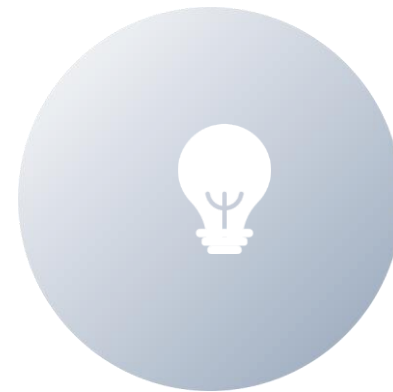


# The Impact of Mental Health Challenges on Retention



## *Quality of Life*

It goes without saying that the quality of life of our students can improve greatly with mental health support on campus.



## *Cognitive & Non-cognitive Factors*

Mental health issues impact just about every cognitive and non-cognitive factor that we use to measure retention and completion.



## *Negative Correlation Between MH Conditions and Attainment*

According to Community College Research Center (CCRC) survey of 277 CC students. First-time, low-income learners who enrolled full-time in the fall of 2022 looking to earn an associate degree.

# WCC Mental Health Initiatives

## Identify Mental Health Needs

- Student Surveys
- Anonymous Online Mental Health Screening Tool



## Community Partnerships

- 24/7 Waubonsee Talk Line  
Drop-in Community Resource  
Partnership



- IRIS –Integrated Referral and Intake System  
Kane Co Health Department

## Awareness Efforts

- Mental Health First Aid, USA training offered to all faculty, staff, and student employees.
- MH Awareness through curriculum - synchronous and asynchronous efforts.
- MH workshops and messaging around high stress times.

## Peer Support

- Peer-to-Peer Support  
The Waubonsee Peer Support Program  
(bilingual)





# MHEAC Implementation Timeline

MHEAC  
July, 2020



June 2022

First Cohort of  
Peer Support Leaders  
Hired - March, 2023

Peer Support  
Full Launch  
August, 2023

Mental Health First Aid, USA certification training offered to all faculty and staff since 2020

Waubonsee  
24/7 Talk  
Line (2014)

Peer Support  
Development Began  
May, 2022

AID Resource  
Partnership  
November, 2022

Peer Support Program  
Soft-launch  
May, 2023

Second Cohort of  
Peer Support Leaders  
Hired - August 2024



# The Waubonsee Peer Support Program

Our mission with the Waubonsee Peer Support Program is to build a community that champions mental health awareness and equips students with essential tools for success. Our Peer Support Leaders are trained in various mental health support techniques, peer mentorships skills, and possess extensive knowledge of campus & community resources. This enables them to assist students with everything from setting academic goals to navigating emotional challenges.

By fostering peer connections, we strive to enhance daily well-being and create a space where students feel safe, valued, and understood on campus.



# Meet the **Waubonsee** Peer Support Leaders



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[Música]

# Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.

- Helen Keller



# Best Practices in Peer Support

## **Recovery Based Peer Support Certifications:**

- Certified Recovery Support Specialist (CRSS) – Ill Dept of Human Services
- Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS) – National Alliance on Mental Illness
- Too extensive and time intensive for a CC Setting

## **Higher Education Peer Mentorship Certifications plus Mental Health Support Certifications were a better fit:**

- International Peer Educator Certification – College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA)
- Certified Peer Educator - NASPA
- Mental Health First Aid, USA Certification

# Launch Checklist

Reviewed and consulted extensively on the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act.

Each community college is unique – no template was readily available

Created a program that fit WCC.

Engaged leadership, the counseling team, and students. Reviewed available data on student needs.

Waubonsee is an HSI – We wanted this program to be bilingual!

So thankful that WCC leadership and the Board of Trustees supported the idea from “Hello.”

Secured the funding and launched...

That easy (wink, wink:)



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# *Timeline and Training Curriculum*

- Soft launched at the end of Spring 2023 (May 2023)
- Fully launched at the beginning of Fall 2023
- 4 Peer Support Leaders
- Paid student employment positions – 10 hours per week each
- *Eduology Peer Mentor Certification - or - NASPA Peer Educator Certification*
- *Be There Certification/Mental Health First Aid Certification*
- *Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Gatekeeper Certification*

# Other Important Trainings

- Boundaries and Ethics in Peer Mental Health Support
- Confidentiality in Peer Support and FERPA
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
- Emergency/Crisis Procedure & Mandatory Reporting
- Campus Resources & Community Resources
- Ongoing training and support by the Waubonsee Counseling Team
- Canvas training includes utilization of the Recovery Model
- Most importantly – there is always a Waubonsee Counselor available when Peer Support Leaders are meeting with a student. *6 Faculty Counselors & 3 Part-time Counselors.*



# Implementation Across Modalities



## *In Person*

Wellness Workshops, Classroom Presentations with Skills training, Tabling Events, Partnerships with Student Life and student clubs. 1:1 drop-in or scheduled peer support appointments.



## *Synchronous*

Hybrid Wellness Workshops, Zoom Classroom Presentations, 1:1 virtual or phone appointments for peer support or counseling, Waubonsee Talk-line(24/7)



## *Asynchronous*

Peer Support Canvas Course (English/Spanish) with mental health information wellness skills, gratitude board, campus/community resources, Mindwise Online Screening, downloadable Canvas modules covering important mental health topics.



(110 ILCS 58/35)

## Sec. 35. Peer support.

(a) Because peer support programs may be beneficial in improving the emotional well-being of the student population, each public college or university must develop and implement a peer support program utilizing student peers to support individuals living with mental health conditions on campus. Peer support programs may be housed within resident assistant programs, counseling centers, or wellness centers on campus.

(b) Peer support programs must utilize best practices for peer support, including, but not limited to: (i) utilizing the tenets of the recovery model for mental health, (ii) adequate planning and preparation, including standardizing guidance and practices, identifying needs of the target population, and aligning program goals to meet those needs, (iii) clearly articulating policies, especially around role boundaries and confidentiality, (iv) systematic screening with defined selection criteria for peer supporters, such as communication skills, leadership ability, character, previous experience or training, and ability to serve as a positive role model, (v) identifying benefits from peer status, such as experiential learning, social support, leadership, and improved self-confidence, (vi) continuing education for peer supporters to support each other and improve peer support skills, and (vii) flexibility in availability by offering services through drop-in immediate support and the ability to book appointments.

(Source: P.A. 101-251, eff. 7-1-20.)

(2) Peer support programs under Section 35 must be monitored for effectiveness and quality by the public college or university. Monitoring measures shall include, but are not limited to: (i) improved symptomatology, (ii) if needed, connection to additional services, (iii) student satisfaction, (iv) wait time for drop-in appointments, (v) wait time for scheduled appointments, and (vi) satisfaction with the training curriculum for peer supporters.

# Peer Support Section of MHEAC



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# Who Wins With Waubonsee Peer Support



## The students who use the service

Reduces barriers to mental health support, especially with underrepresented groups. Can open doors to higher levels of support if needed.



## The Peer Support Leaders

Certifications, on-going training, and work experience in MH that usually does not occur until much later. A mutually supportive and wellness focused team environment.



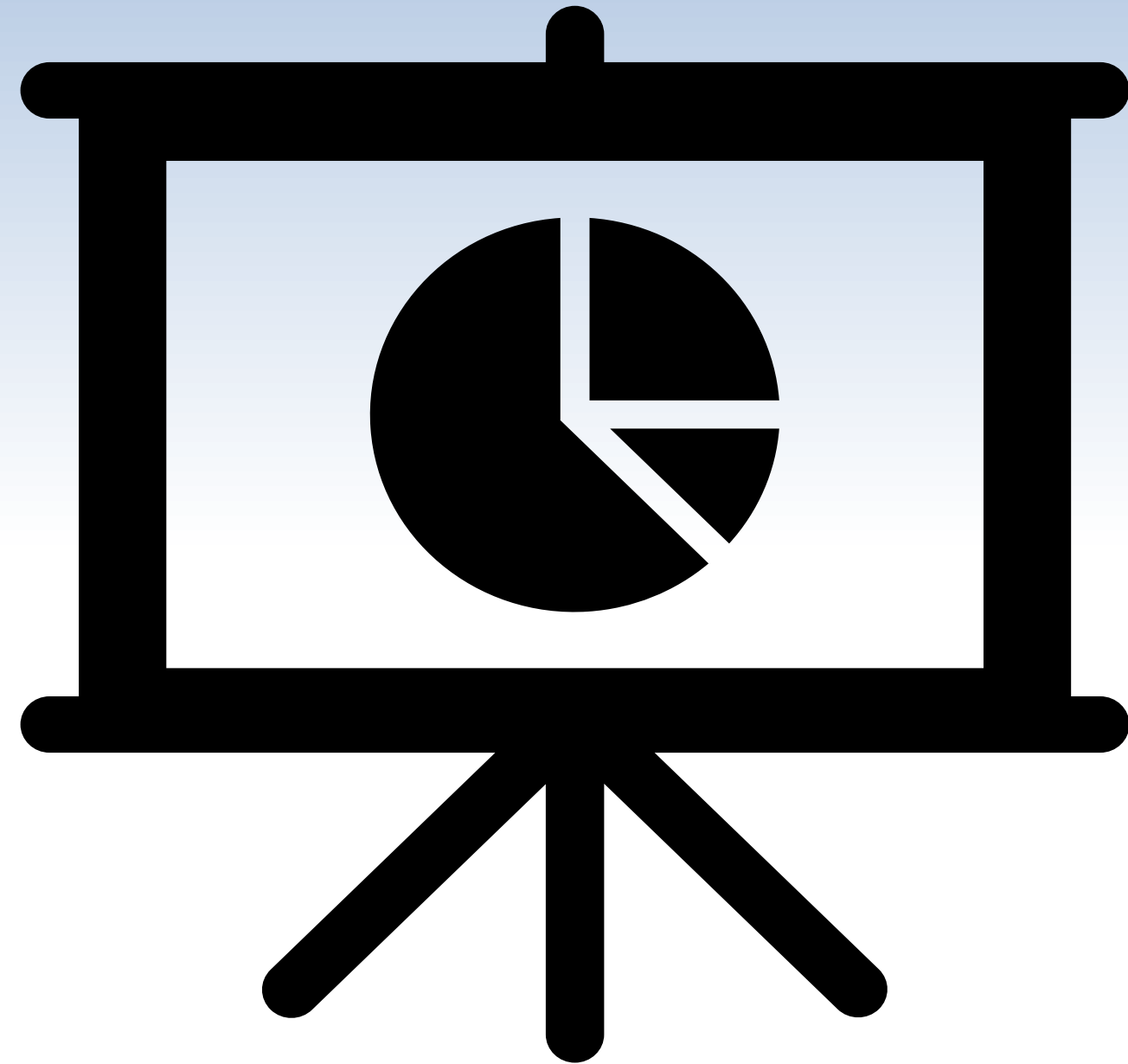
## The faculty, staff, campus atmosphere

Classroom presentations on mental health and wellness topics. Drop-in location to refer students. Canvas Modules to include mental health in curriculum, tabling events.



## The workforce and mental health system

In most areas there is a shortage of mental health professionals. This is a early training opportunity and pathway to the helping professions.



# The Data



# Data - MHEAC Initiatives



## *Identify Needs*

- Mindwise Online Screenings: 236 (since FA 23)
- 571 personal Counseling Appointments (FA23/SP24)



## *Community Connections*

- IRIS Referral System - 4 days, 19 hours  
Average response time
  - Averaging 6 referrals per month



## *Awareness Efforts*

Counseling Faculty Awareness Efforts Include:

- Trauma Informed Educator Workshop: Faculty Development Days, Academic Support Retreat, Valley Education for Employment System Conference (VALEES)
- Latinx Empowerment Group
- Classroom Presentations & Workshops – 20+ Events
- 1:900 Counselor to Student Ratio

*And Peer Support...*

## Canvas Course

- Created by the Peer Support Leaders
- English and Spanish
- Mental Health information
- Wellness Skills
- Campus and Community Referrals
- Gratitude Board
- Asynchronous
- 365+ enrolled

## Presence on Campus

2023-2024 Academic year

- 27 Classroom presentations – over 600 unduplicated students
- 5 Wellness Workshops (60 mins) – ranging from 13 - 66 students per workshop
- 18 Tabling Events – Engagement Fair, Pridapalooza, LatinX Heritage Month, and more

## One-to-One Support

2023-2024 Academic Year

- Outreach to 94 Academic Caution Students who requested MH Information.
- Drop-in Availability at 2 Campuses – 16 hours per week. A variety of times for flexibility
- 34 different students met 1:1 with Peer Support Leaders (scheduled and drop-in). Some met multiple times



# Mental Health Initiatives - Cost

**\$**  
**MINDWISE**  
**\$1500**  
per year

**\$**  
**AID Drop-in**  
**\$6000 +/-**  
per year

**\$**  
**Waubonsee  
Talk Line**  
**\$4000** per year

**\$**  
**IRIS**  
Free

**\$**  
**Mental Health First Aid, USA**  
**\$2000 to become  
an Instructor**  
**\$23.95 per participant  
for certification**

# The Waubonsee Peer Support Program - Cost



## 4 Peer Support Leaders

- 10 hours per week, \$15.50 per hour for 32 weeks = \$19, 840.
- We add Summer as an option which could be another \$6200 if all 4 PSL's work the Summer.

- **2 Peer Support Leaders (2023-2024)** qualified for Federal Work-study (though work-study eligibility was not required.)
- Add \$600 (total for all 4 PSL's) for outside certifications.

## Total Cost for Peer Support 2023-2024

**\$26, 640**

MHEAC Appropriation

FY 2024 - \$58,000

FY 2025 - \$50,000 base plus option to request more

**Note:** Some shifting of my role (4-6 hours of release time weekly), administrative oversight by the Counseling and Student Support Manager is required as well.



# The Learning Curve – Lessons on MHEAC

## **Peer Support Lessons**

- No exact template for Peer Support Programming in a Community College setting.
- Hiring/Training Gaps between Peer Support Leader teams.
- Carving out enough time for the Peer Support oversight – 4-6 hours per week once trained, 6-10 during training periods.
- Let the Peer Support Leaders lead the program!

## **Mental Health Early Action on Campus Lessons:**

- Hard funding rather than waiting on the Mental Health Early Action appropriations.
- If you build it they will come – lots of Counseling referrals.  
Lot's of personal counseling drop-in students as well.

# Summary

- Waubonsee has prioritized the Faculty Counselor Model and mental health support on campus for decades.
- Mental Health Early Action on Campus formalized the requirements for mental health support when it went into effect in July 2020.
- We had a great foundation to build on our Mental Health and Wellness efforts.
- The backing and support from the Waubonsee Board of Trustees and the Executive Leadership has been vital.
- Mental Health Early Action is a law, but prioritizing and fully funding these types of programs through the college takes a strong commitment.

# Thank you!



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# Questions/Discussion

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