



UTAH SYSTEM OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

December 16, 2022

Updated Recommendation for \$2,025,000 Student Mental Health Legislative Budget Priority

Proposed 2023 Legislative Budget Priority: \$2,025,000 to support student mental health

The Commissioner's office proposes that the \$2,025,000 (ongoing) legislative budget priority for student mental health is as follows:

- \$75,000 for SafeUT higher education outreach coordinator (shared position with the Huntsman Mental Health Institute [HMHI])
- \$1,950,000 to provide at least six virtual counseling sessions per year for all non-high school, matriculated students in the USHE system

This recommendation is the result of multiple discussions and feedback from JED Campus leads at the JED Campus convening held in October 2022, USHE counseling center directors, Senior Student Affairs Officers, and Huntsman Mental Health Institute leadership, including SafeUT partners. The Commissioner's office appreciates the engagement and support of each stakeholder group in helping develop this proposal.

Background

Utah college students are experiencing a generational mental health crisis. In spring 2019, [degree-granting USHE institutions administered the American College Health Association–National College Health Assessment survey](#) (ACHA-NCHA). [Over 5,200 USHE students responded to the survey](#), reporting that during the prior 12 months, they experienced the following:

- 63% felt overwhelming anxiety
- 45.6% felt so depressed it was difficult to function
- 42.7% felt overwhelming anger
- 57.8% felt things were hopeless
- 66.1% felt very lonely
- 71.1% felt very sad
- 9.3% intentionally cut, burned, bruised, or otherwise injured themselves
- 14.9% seriously considered suicide
- 1.9% attempted suicide

While this survey has not been repeated systemwide since the new USHE system was merged or since the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health concerns have only grown since 2019.

What has the State of Utah and the Utah Board of Higher Education done for USHE student mental health so far?

2018 – SafeUT mobile app: Utah’s statewide mental health crisis and tip line

In 2018, the [SafeUT mobile app](#) expanded to Utah’s public higher education institutions. SafeUT is a free statewide service that provides real-time crisis intervention to Utah’s students, parents, educators, and educational entities. SafeUT was developed by the legislatively-created SafeUT Commission and allows students in crisis to open a two-way messaging service with licensed clinicians, call a crisis counselor directly, or submit confidential tips to school administrators on bullying, threats, violence, etc. The app is staffed by trained crisis counselors at the Huntsman Mental Health Institute (HMHI) 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Every USHE student has the ability to access SafeUT, though more work needs to be done administratively to the SafeUT app to integrate USHE institutions in a meaningful way.

2020 – The JED Foundation/JED Campus: Developing institution-specific mental health strategic plans with the support of experts

Due to the support of the J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation and the Commissioner’s office, all 16 USHE institutions have partnered with [the JED Foundation](#) by participating in a collective cohort in their [JED Campus](#) program. JED Campus guides institutions through a four-year process of comprehensive systems, program, and policy development, with customized support to build upon existing efforts. A primary outcome of the JED Campus partnership is an institution-specific student mental health strategic plan. In 2020, the eight degree-granting institutions were onboarded with JED Campus, with the eight technical colleges joining the cohort in 2021. All 16 institutions have implemented the Healthy Minds survey, the results of which guided the creation of their institution-specific mental health strategic plan. All USHE institutional mental health strategic plans will be completed by the end of the calendar year.

2022 – Mental Health First Responders (MH1) expansion: Providing after-hours mobile crisis and intervention support to students living on-campus

Piloted at the University of Utah, [MH1](#) provides mobile, after-hours crisis support services from licensed mental health crisis workers, including assessment, stabilization, diversion, interventions/coping skills, and groups/workshops. MH1 is housed at an on-campus residence hall and is open from the hours of 4:00 PM to 2:00 AM. As this model has shown significant promise, the Board of Higher Education prioritized and received a \$1.5 million ongoing legislative appropriation during the 2022 legislative session to further expand the program at the University of Utah, as well as expand the model to two additional institutions. Utah State University and Southern Utah University were chosen as additional pilot locations, and mobile after-hours care modeled after MH1 is being implemented on their campuses in Spring 2023.

2022 – Trula Campus: Evidence-based peer coaching to help students manage stress and increase overall wellness

[Trula Campus](#) is an evidence-based, Utah-based program designed to increase student wellness and foster connection through one-on-one coaching sessions. Peer coaches—trained current college students—assist their peer college students in personal development, goal-setting, confidence building, stress management, self-care, and more, aimed at prevention and overall wellness. Coaching occurs via phone, text, or video at no cost to the student. During the 2022 legislative session, the Board of Higher Education requested and received a \$1.5 million ongoing legislative appropriation to expand access to peer coaches systemwide. The Commissioner’s office partnered with Trula Campus to provide this service, and now Trula Campus is available to all USHE students at no cost to the student.

Commissioner’s Recommendation

This is an information item only; no action is required.