

Report outlines recommendations to improve student mental health and well-being

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Two years ago, when Johns Hopkins medical student Davis Rogers read reports detailing the prevalence of depression among medical students and residents, he resolved to find a way to help promote mental health among his peers. When he was invited to join the Task Force on Student Mental Health and Well-Being—a cross-divisional group of Hopkins students, faculty, administrators, and staff—he saw it as fulfilling part of a personal mission.

"This concept of [mental health](#) is not exclusive to patients in psychiatry or those who study it—it's an issue that affects everyone, students included," he says.

After hearing concerns from members of the Student Government Association about the prevalence of [mental health issues](#) at Hopkins, JHU President Ronald J. Daniels requested that the [task force](#) be assembled. The group met for the first time in March 2016.

Today, after an extensive universitywide data-gathering effort, the task [force](#) released its [final report detailing recommendations for improving the climate of mental health and well-being across the university](#).

The report, available online, outlines three major recommendations:

- The university should promote a climate of awareness and support for [student](#) mental health, wellness, and stress reduction.
- The university should take the necessary steps to improve student

care at JHU mental health service providers and support greater access to mental health services.

- The university should offer, and in some cases require, training on mental health awareness and resources for faculty, staff, and students.

"Mental health and well-being are essential to learning," says Sunil Kumar, provost of Johns Hopkins University. "In recent years, the university has worked to improve the quality and accessibility of the [mental health resources](#) available to students, and the release of the Mental Health Task Force report provides even greater guidance on the next steps we must take to ensure our students thrive."

The final report was shaped by student feedback gathered in a variety of ways, including listening sessions held across the university, an online survey conducted in September 2016, and feedback solicited in May of last year when the task force issued its draft report.

"The report's recommendations are based on the evidence gathered by the task force, as well as the feedback we received from students from around the university," says Daniele Fallin, chair of the Department of Mental Health at the Bloomberg School of Public Health and co-chair of the task force. "I'm proud of the recommendations we've proposed, and I'm confident they will contribute to a sustained focus on student mental health and well-being that will make Johns Hopkins a healthy place to learn."

While the task force conducted its background data gathering, the university took several steps to promote and improve access to [mental health services](#). The Office of Wellness and Health Promotion, located within University Health Services, was launched in early 2017 as part of an effort to develop wellness programming that supports multiple dimensions of health for students and trainees on the East Baltimore

campus. The university also expanded the operating hours and the breadth of health care provider expertise at the Counseling Center, which serves Krieger, Whiting, and Peabody students.

In response to the report released today, the university will convene workgroups that will include student representatives to develop and implement new programs that promote an environment of wellness and self-care. In addition, there are plans to identify a universitywide leader this year to steward progress and institute new mental health and wellness programming efforts.

Kumar said the university is also exploring opportunities to streamline care and increase access to mental health providers across the university.

"I think it's imperative for students to stand up and speak up about the issues that affect them and their communities," says A.J. Tsang, a junior majoring in public [health](#) studies and French who served on the task force. "I think it was great that the [task](#) force put an emphasis on student input from the very beginning. It's a great model for devising and implementing change on campus."

Added Rogers: "This is about building a healthier student experience and finding ways to create a better atmosphere for students in all ways. I'm grateful to have been involved."

Provided by Johns Hopkins University

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