

# WE'RE LETTING OUR STUDENTS DOWN: HOW DO YOUR PROGRAMS' HABITS STACK UP?

## Education Leadership Conference October 22, 2021



# TASK FORCE HISTORY

October 2017, ACAPT approved formation of Task Force for Student Mental Health to identify best practices for academic programs to support and improve students' health and well-being throughout their academic career and in preparation for clinical practice.

## Task Force Membership

1 PT Program Director

2 Clinical Instructors

1 DCE

1 Student Affairs Director

1 Student

1 PTA Program Director

2 Academic Faculty



# TASK FORCE MEMBERS



Cheryl Resnik, PT, DPT, FNAP, FAPTA  
Task Force Chair  
Academic Faculty  
University of Southern California



Jeannette Anderson, PT, DHS  
PT Program Director  
Mercer University



Heather Beaudoin, PT, DPT  
PT Student Northwestern University  
Northern Michigan Sports Medicine  
Center

# TASK FORCE MEMBERS



Jennifer Bogardus, PT, MPT, PhD  
Director, Clinical Education  
Texas Woman's University



Miriam Gross, PT, DPT, NCS  
Clinical Faculty  
NYU Langone Health-Rusk  
Rehabilitation



Amanda Johnston, PTA, MEd  
PTA Program Director  
San Diego Mesa College

# TASK FORCE MEMBERS



Anne Mejia-Downs PT, MPH, PhD  
Academic Faculty  
College of Saint Mary

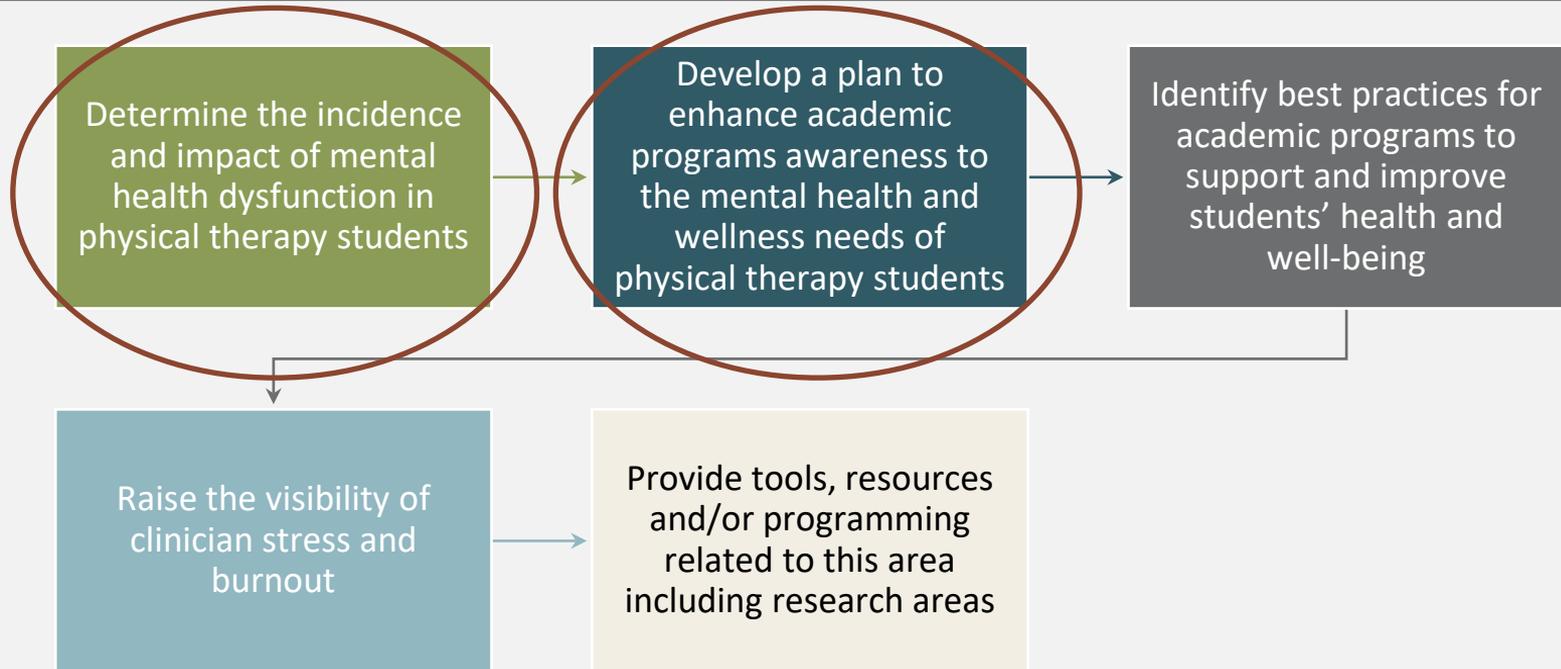


Janet Stevenson  
Student Affairs  
University of Southern California

Jennifer Root, PT, DPT  
Clinical Faculty  
MidMichigan Health  
University of Michigan Health System



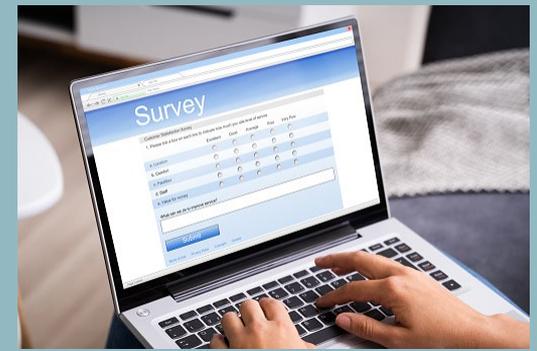
# TASK FORCE CHARGE



# SESSION OBJECTIVES

- > Describe student's perceptions of current programs' strengths and weaknesses related to supporting student mental health and well being.
- > Compare and contrast students' perceptions with those of academic and clinical faculty.
- > Analyze their own programs' habits/culture that supports student well being.
- > Identify action steps to better meet students' wellness needs.

# METHODS – SURVEYS



- > 3 Qualtrics surveys were developed and tested in December 2018
- > IRB approval #HS-19-00169 by USC March 2019
  - Academic faculty and staff – N=461
    - Program director, DCE, faculty, student affairs personnel
  - Clinical faculty – N=242
    - 10 sites identified by DCEs
  - PT and PTA Students – N=1226
    - The Pulse, Student Assembly Director of Communications, Core Ambassadors

# METHODS - Qualitative Analysis

- > Themes were identified (coded) from the responses to open-ended survey questions
- > Three groups of task force member researchers analyzed data:
  - Responses from DPT and PTA faculty
  - Responses from clinical faculty
  - Responses from students
- > The themes that were coded were rechecked with other researchers for agreement





# 8 DIMENSIONS OF HEALTH/WELLNESS

- **Emotional**—Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships, including sexual relationships
- **Environmental**—Accessing pleasant, stimulating, and safe environments that support all aspects of well-being
- **Financial**—Demonstrating competence with money management to meet current and future financial needs
- **Intellectual**—Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills
- **Occupational**—Personal satisfaction and enrichment from one's work
- **Physical**—Recognizing the need for physical activity, adequate and healthy foods, and sleep
- **Social**—Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system
- **Spiritual**—Expanding a sense of purpose and meaning in life

# Quick Recap of Quantitative Data

- > ELC Presentation 2020
- > Student Mental Health: Results from the ACAPT Task Force Study

Please identify how frequently you have encountered the following issues with your students.

- > 1 = Never
- > 2 = Rarely
- > 3 = Occasionally
- > 4 = Frequently

# How prepared do you feel to manage the following student issues?

- > 1 = Not prepared
- > 2 = Somewhat prepared
- > 3 = Very prepared

# Issues Addressed on Survey

- > **Academic performance anxiety**
- > **Anxiety** (generalized, social, panic attack, etc.)
- > **Clinical performance anxiety**
- > Depression
- > Nutrition (eating disorder, food insecurity)
- > Environmental safety (disasters, housing insecurity)
- > **Financial strain**
- > Grief due to loss
- > Perceived social isolation and loneliness
- > Psychotic episode
- > Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- > Relationship issues
- > Sexual abuse, sexual assault (including domestic partner)
- > **Student health issues**
- > Substance abuse
- > Suicide ideation or attempt

# Student Demographic Data

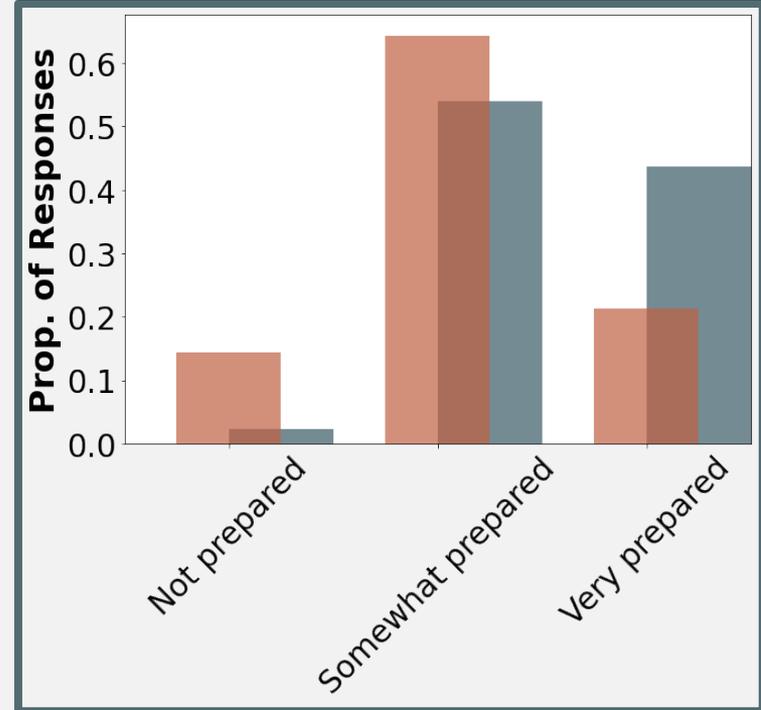
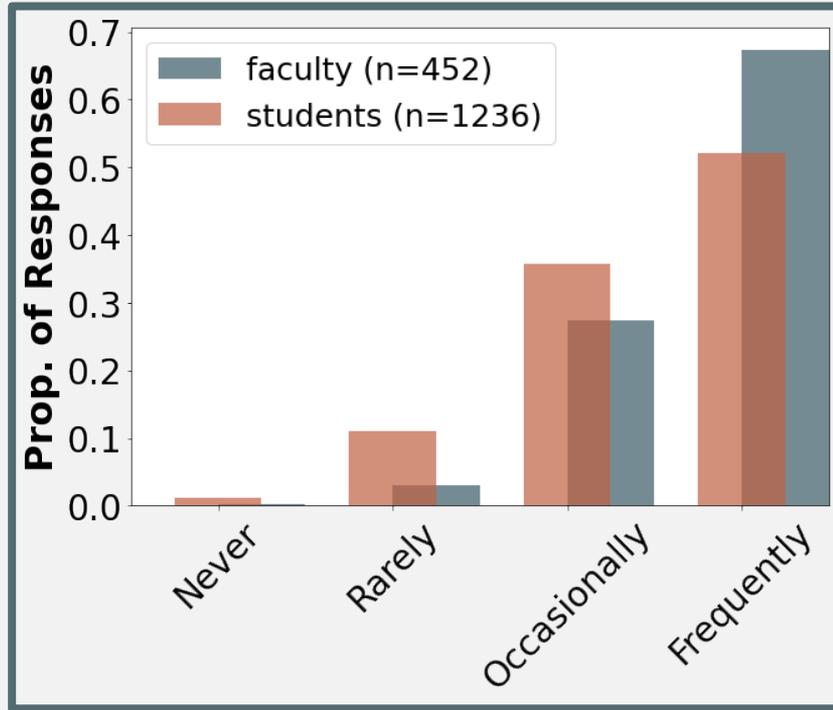


- > 1180 DPT students,  
46 PTA students
- > Program completion
  - <50% 467 (38%)
  - >50% 760 (62%)

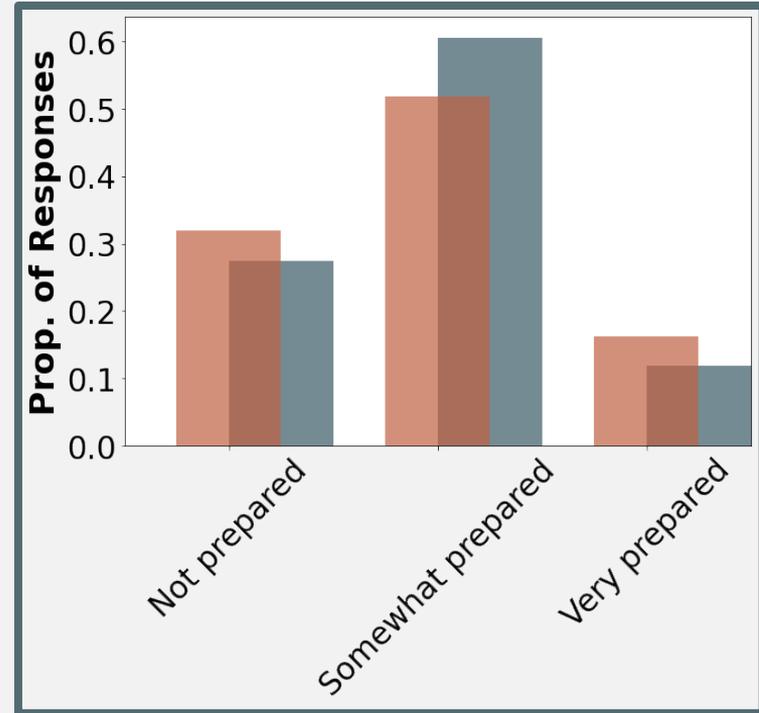
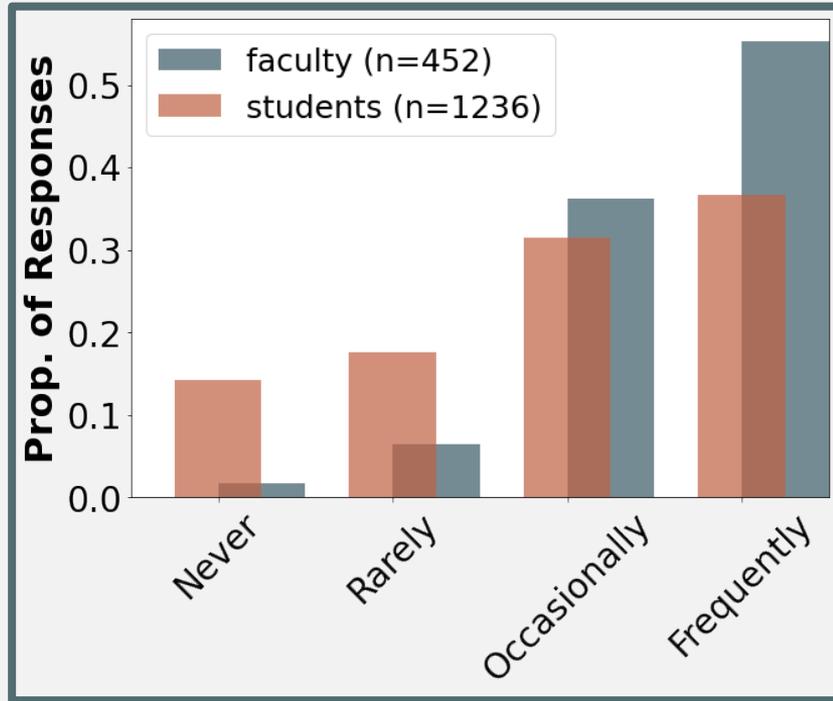
## Age

< 25	878 (72%)
26-30	265 (21.6%)
31-35	61 (5%)
> 36	17 (1.5%)

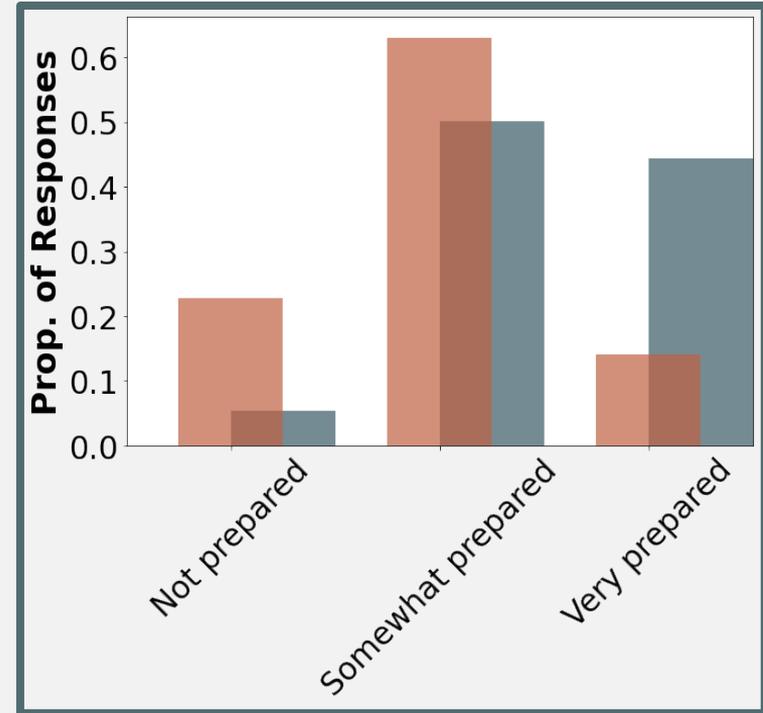
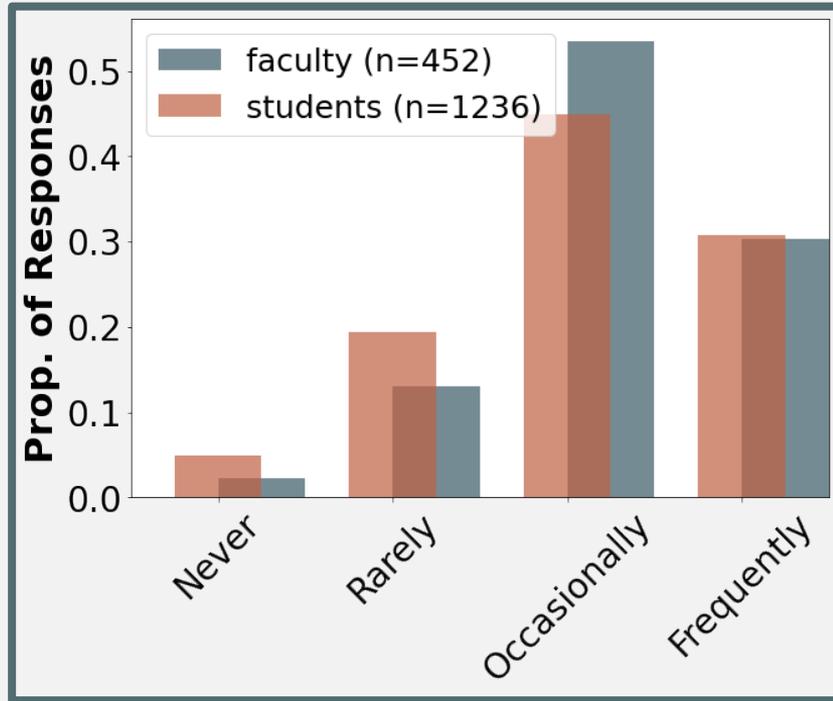
# Academic Performance Anxiety



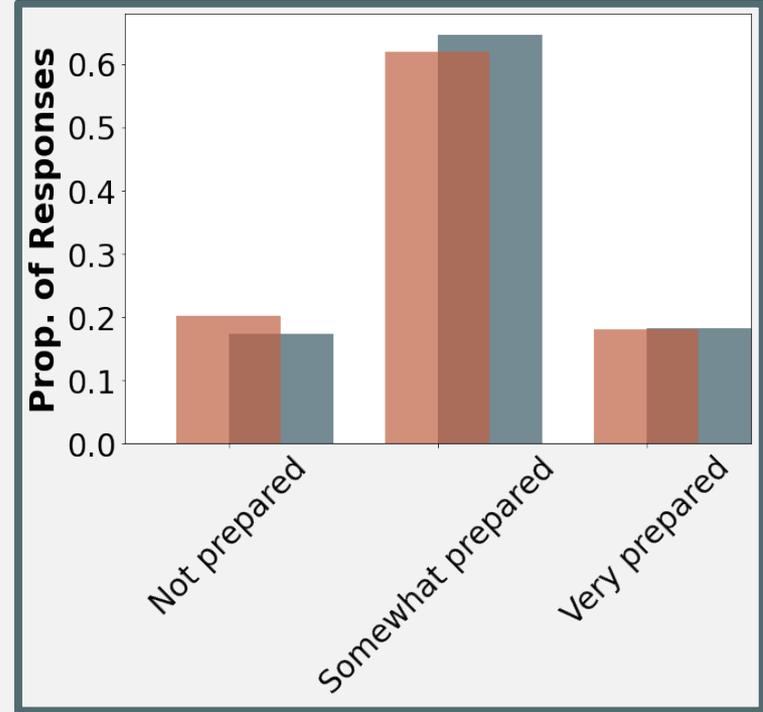
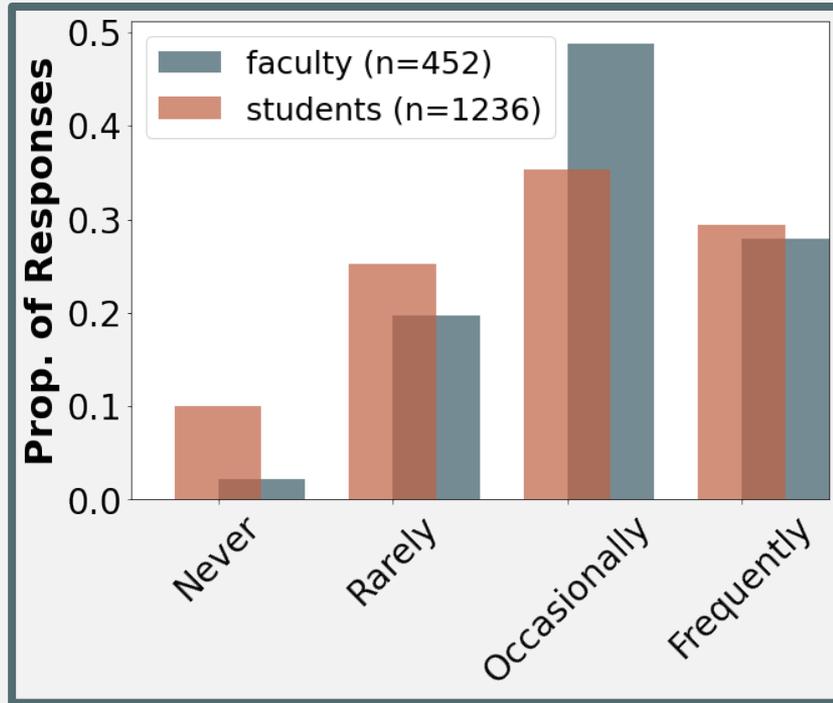
# Financial Strain



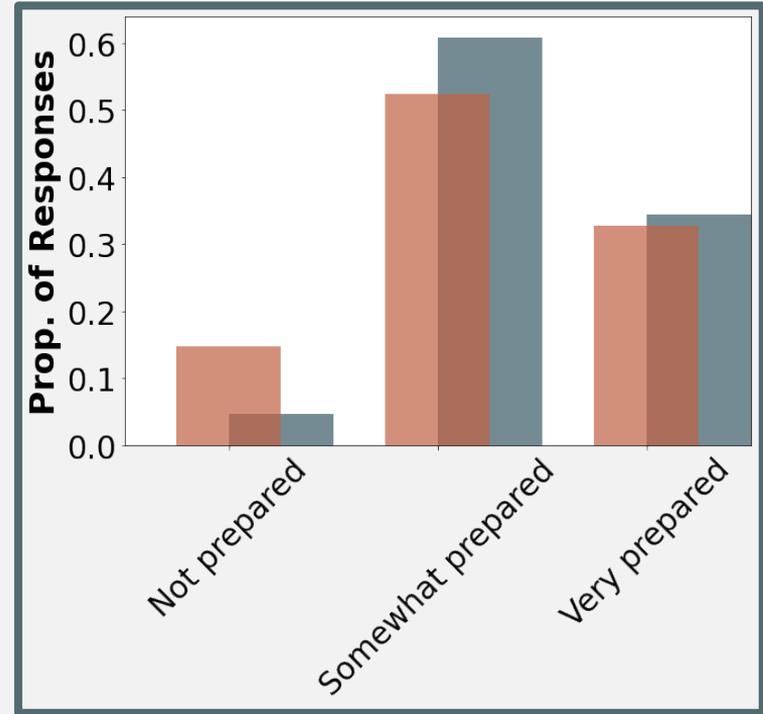
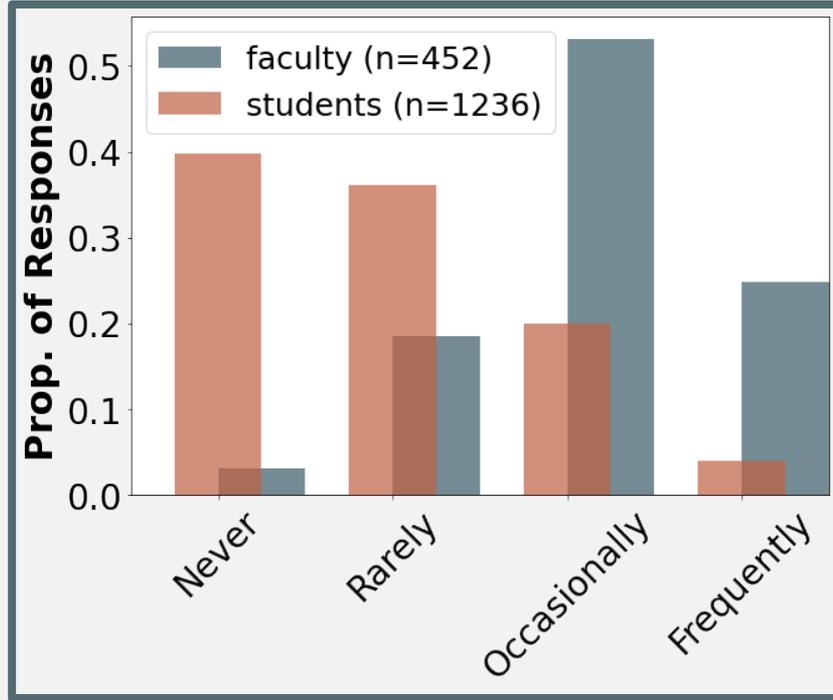
# Clinical Performance Anxiety



# Generalized Anxiety



# Student Health Issues



# Faculty reported “rarely” or “never”

- Needing to address student concerns related to:
  - Environmental Safety (disasters, housing, neighborhood)
  - Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
  - Substance Abuse
  - Sexual Abuse or Assault
  - Suicidal Ideation or Attempt
  - Psychotic Episode

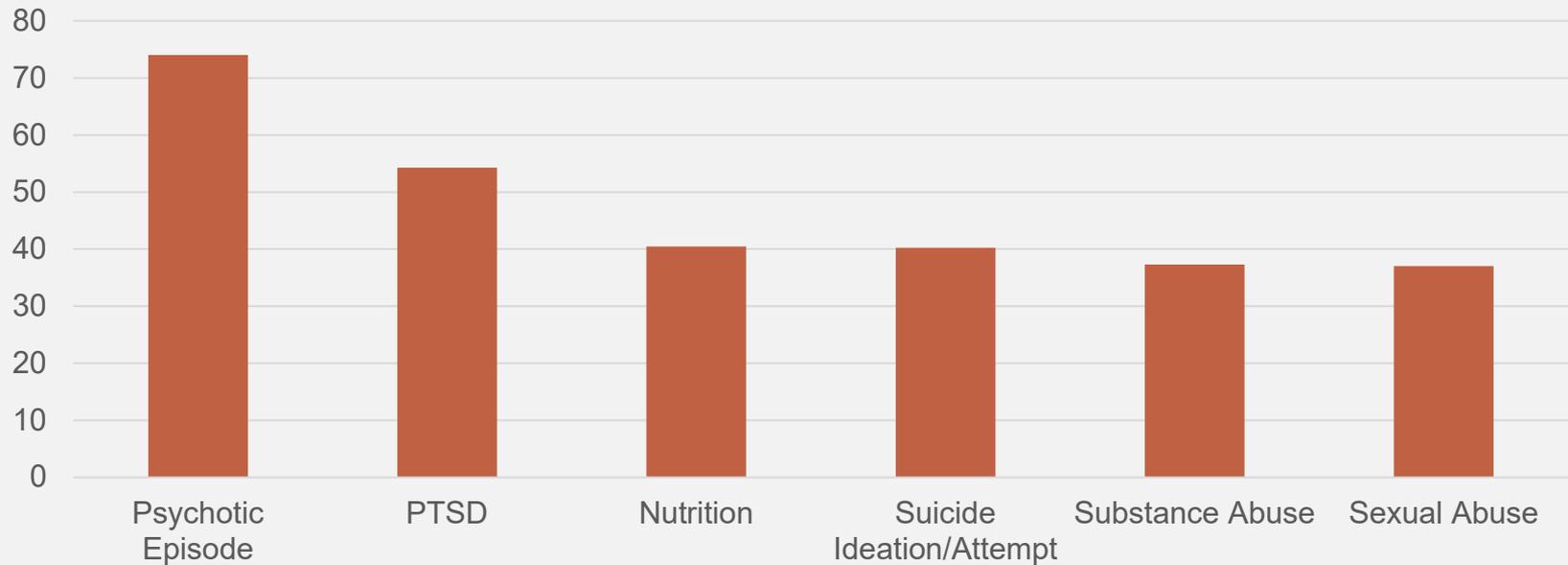
- Consistent with student reports

# Students reported “rarely” or “never”

- Experiencing concerns related to:
  - Depression
  - Grief due to Loss
  - Nutrition
  - Social Isolation
  - Student Health Issues
  - Relationship Issues

# Faculty Perception of Being “Not Prepared” to Address These Issues

Percentage Not Prepared



# Student Qualitative Data

Compare/Contrast  
to Faculty Data





# Student Question

- > “What do you feel are your program and/or academic institution's *strengths in supporting students' wellness needs?*”

# Themes: Student Perceived Strengths

- > University Resources
  - Counseling**
- > Program Attributes/Culture
- > Faculty and Staff Attributes
- > Student Attributes



# Student Perceived Strength - University Resources



- > *“They have good resources that are available at the institution”*
- > *“our institution strives to be very inclusive; the administration puts on health/wellness events; has many resources for students”*
- > *“Providing services that help students manage stress”*
- > *“quality health center”*



# Student Perceived Strength - Counseling

- > *“Availability of counseling services”*
- > *“Free access to mental health counseling is FANTASTIC”*
- > *“Student counseling center with free group meetings”*
- > *“There are counselors available to students for 10 free sessions per year”*

# Student Perceived Strength - Program Attributes/Culture



- > *“providing information about available services for mental health during orientation and in all course syllabi”*
- > *“A strong sense of community in the program from staff and students”*
- > *“Small class size”*
- > *“They have an open door policy and encourage us getting to know profs “*



# Student Perceived Strength – Faculty and Staff Attributes



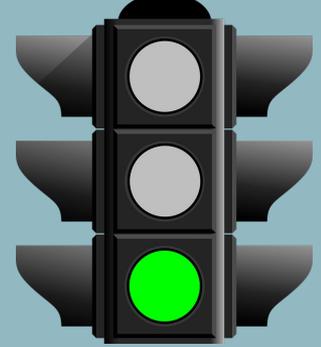
- > *“Each faculty member is very open about being a person to lean on during struggles. When there are personal issues, they are immediately available.”*
- > *“Professors providing office hours outside of class to discuss academic performance or personal life issues.”*
- > *“Faculty individually take responsibility to check up on students who seem to be struggling in these different domains.”*
- > *“Empathic professors”*



# Student Perceived Strength - Student Attributes

- > *“Supportive cohort of students”*
- > *“Peer mentoring”*
- > *“officers within the program that promote social events, service events, meetings, etc.”*
- > *“student advisor and class presidents and having a second year buddy for first years and third year buddy for second years”*

# Where Faculty and Students Agree: Faculty-Reported Strengths

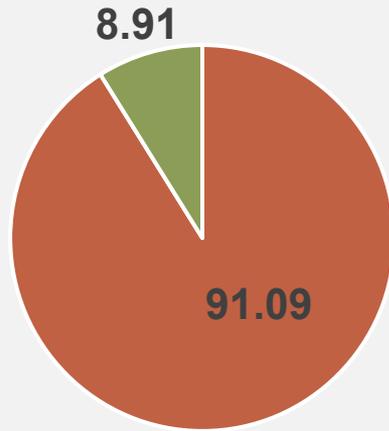


- > **University Resources:** *“Campus resources are available at any time of day”; “...part of the mission and culture of our institution.”*
- > **Counseling:** *“Inpatient and outpatient mental health services on site” ; “assist them in getting to the [counseling] center as needed”*
- > **Program Attributes/Culture:** *“We all have the same goal, we want the student to succeed...”; “Strong relationships between faculty and students”*
- > **Faculty & Staff Attributes:** *“Open door policy, proactive identifying...student issues...”; “Approaching the subject when noticing something is wrong vs waiting for the student to seek help”*



Does your institution have a department/office for counseling and psychological services available for students?

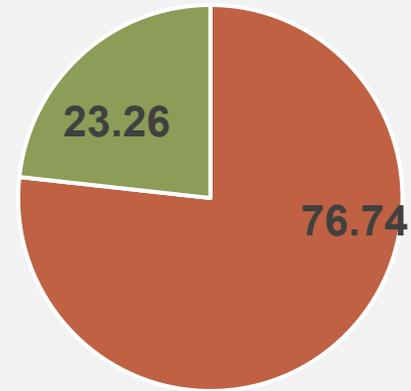
### Percentage



■ Yes  
■ No

Does your program have a protocol or intervention in place in the case of a student's mental health crisis?

### Percentage



■ Yes  
■ No

# Student Question

- > “In what area(s) in supporting students’ wellness needs do you feel your program and/or academic institution *needs to improve?*”



# Themes: Student Perceived Needed Improvements

- > Institutional Weaknesses
- > Program Attributes/Culture
- > Faculty & Staff Characteristics
- > Financial Information/Assistance





# Student Perceived Needed Improvements - Institutional Weaknesses

- > Lack of access to care – not equal in remote campuses, inflexible hours of operation, unavailable during remote clinicals, long waitlist
- > Financial support needed – literacy, wellness, assistance
- > Stressful curriculum – unsupportive of student wellness, heavy course load, demanding exam schedule, conflicts with stated values re: mental health
- > Faculty – lack of recognition of students in distress, lack of compassion

# Student Perceived Needed Improvements - Program Attributes/Culture



- > *“There is a lot of talk about how the program is built around the idea of everyone being a "family", but sometimes I still feel left out.”*
- > *“Scheduling. The program is challenging, but is often scheduled in a way that adds potentially unnecessary stress to those in it.”*
- > *“Putting so much pressure and fear of failure on students”*
- > *“Excess stress is caused by the program and there is limited time for students to consider their own wellness.”*



# Student Perceived Needed Improvements – Faculty & Staff Characteristics

- > *“Their class design and way they treat students creates an environment of depression and other mental health issues.”*
- > *“Accessibility, openness, reliability”*
- > *“I feel like they only talk to us about school and expect school to be our number one (and only) priority. It’s not.”*
- > *“Professor education on helping students with emotional distress”*

# Student Perceived Needed Improvement - Financial Information/Assistance



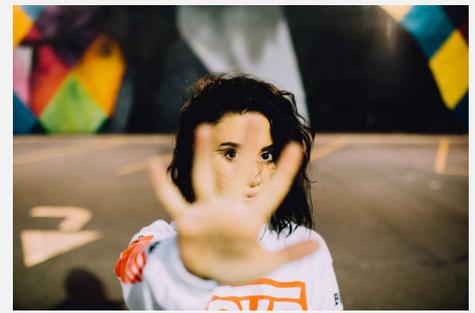
- > *“Stop glossing over the issue of our terrible debt to income ratio.”*
- > *“Students are made to feel guilty for trying to have jobs and financially support themselves outside the program”*
- > Biggest spark of mental troubles for me is financial cost of DPT education vs ROI
- > “nutritional assistance because we can't afford the healthy food sometimes”

# Where Faculty and Students Agree: Faculty-Reported Areas on Needed Improvement



- > **Institutional Weaknesses:** *“Current educational and assessment practices create high-stakes testing that only amplifies stress and anxiety”*
- > **Counseling:** *“resistance to resources that could help with their overall wellness”*
- > **Program Attributes/Culture:** *“There is little to no time in our curriculum for students to take a break to recover from a negative event.”*
- > **Faculty & Staff Attributes:** *“I do not feel I have the training to help students with their mental health...”*
- > **Financial Information/Assistance:** *“Financial/housing insecurity are tough to address”*

# Clinical Faculty Theme – Not My Concern, It's Yours



Institution: Primary responsibility for wellness should rest with university

- > *“I believe that the responsibilities you have outlined are between the student and their institution; not the site where they are interning.”*

Student: Differences in generations and today's student

- > *“It's hard for me to get past the way I was raised (“suck it up buttercup”) and realize kids these days are much more fragile and sensitive.”*

# What Next?

- > Students: We hear you!
- > Let's ACT!



# Analyze Your Program's Habits/Culture to Support Student Wellbeing





# 8 DIMENSIONS OF HEALTH/WELLNESS

- Emotional—Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships, including sexual relationships
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- Social—Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system
- Spiritual—Expanding a sense of purpose and meaning in life

## Analyze Your Program's Habits/Culture to Support Student Wellbeing

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Resources Actual or Potential</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>
<i>Emotional</i>				
<i>Environmental</i>				
<i>Financial</i>				
<i>Intellectual</i>				
<i>Occupational</i>				
<i>Physical</i>				
<i>Social</i>				
<i>Spiritual</i>				



# Wake Forest University - Thrive



Thrive is a campus-wide initiative – owned by every member of the Wake Forest University community. The Office of Wellbeing leads the campus in making wellbeing a part of every experience in the lives of our students, faculty, and staff.

<https://thrive.wfu.edu/>

# On-Campus Resources



## Emotional Wellbeing

### University Counseling Center

- [Body AWAKE](#) body-acceptance program
- Book a counseling appointment 336-758-5237

### Office of the Chaplain

- [Koru mindfulness courses](#)
- [Drop-in meditations](#)

### LGBTQ+ Center

- [Identity Spaces: T-Time, QTPOC Connections, Lavender Menace](#)
- ### Office of Wellbeing
- [ResilientWake](#)

## Environmental Wellbeing

### Campus Recreation

- [Outdoor pursuits trips](#)

### Office of Sustainability

- [Volunteer for the Office of Sustainability](#)

### Community volunteering

- [Volunteer at Campus Garden](#)



ACAPT

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Task Force to Enhance Academic Programs Aw

## Student Financial Health



### FINANCIAL RESOURCES

- ▶ [CARE Team Case Management](#)
- ▶ [Financial Aid](#)
- ▶ [Human Resources](#)
- ▶ [Student Financial Resources](#)

### RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

- ▶ Material
- ▶ Medical
- ▶ Loans
- ▶ Scholarship & Stipends
- ▶ Urgent Need
- ▶ Test Prep & Fee Reduction
- ▶ Local Resources (non-WFU affiliated)

# Identify your institution's, program's, and faculty strengths



- > Counseling Center availability and responsiveness
- > Orientation (academic/clinical) addresses issues of wellness
- > Consistent faculty availability and messaging for support
- > Individual comfort with discussing emotional wellbeing

# Identify your institution's, program's, and faculty areas for improvement

- > Counseling Center hours are limited
- > Test dates in program not discussed so they occur too close together
- > Feeling of incompetence of faculty to address mental health issues
- > Time to focus on whole student



# Identify potential institutional, programmatic, and faculty resources

- > Student Affairs Department
- > Psychology Department
- > Faculty member with counseling background
- > Dedicated advisement time to check in on mental health





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- Social—Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system
- Spiritual—Expanding a sense of purpose and meaning in life

# Action Steps - Previous Suggestions

- > Identify what mental health resources are already available – make them widely known
- > Set up regular meetings with advisors/mentors (once per semester)
- > Create response algorithms/protocols for mental health crises
- > Compile information on mental health resources for clinical sites
- > Advocate for expanding access to online counseling/ support programs – especially for students at distant clinical sites
- > Provide “Financial Literacy Training”

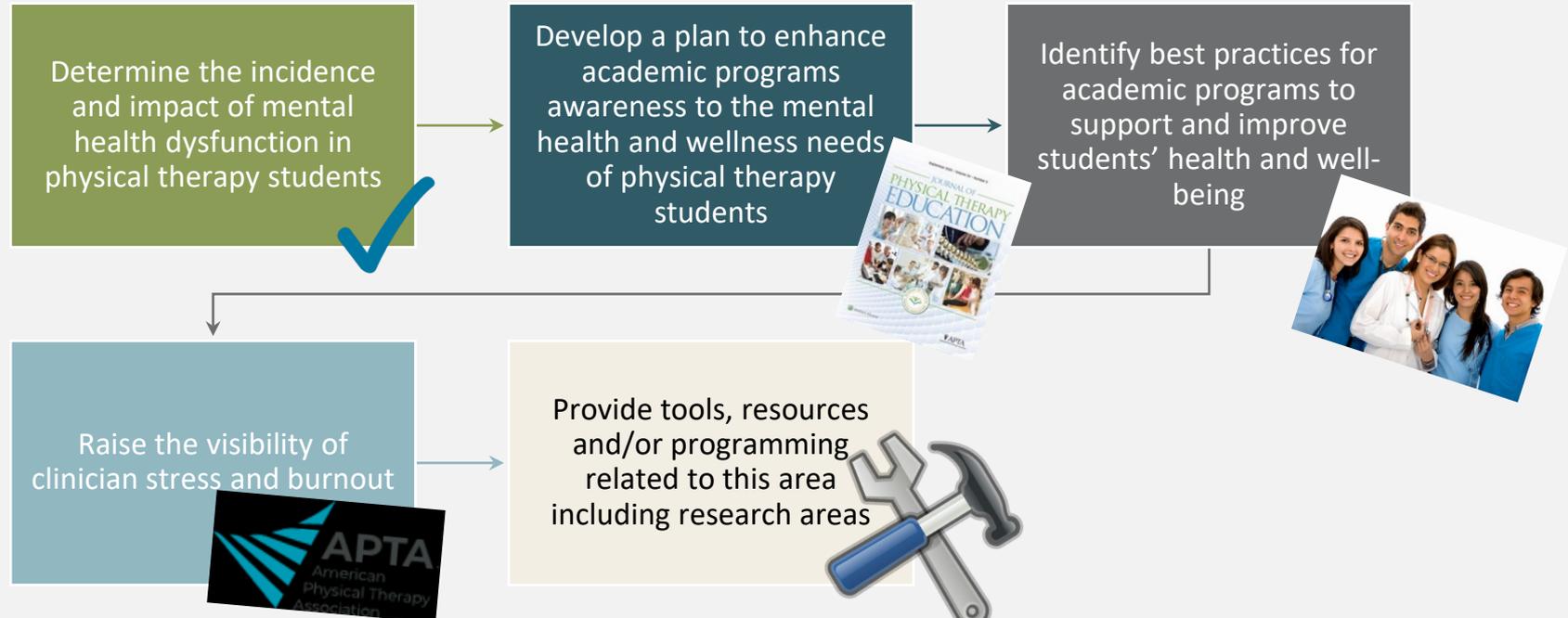
# Action Steps - Institutional Resources

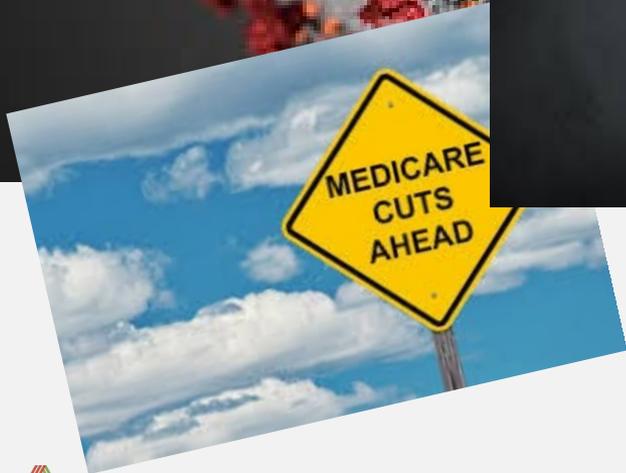
- > Contact Dean of Student Affairs for assistance
- > Contact Chair of Psychology Department
- > Request faculty member with counseling background to discuss how they address mental health in advisement
- > Indicate to advisees that this will be a topic of discussion each semester

# Action Steps - Access to Counseling Services

- > **Access to Counseling**  
If your program is on a satellite campus, do students have equal access to the services as on the main campus?
- > **Counseling Center**  
Are appointments available during lunch, after 5pm, or when students aren't in class?
- > **Messaging About Counseling**  
Do students receive reminders about counseling throughout the subsequent semesters (i.e. *each* semester)?
- > **Culture of Seeking Help**  
Do students avoid getting counseling because of the stigma attached to requesting help?

# Where Do YOU Go From Here?





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Task Force to Enhance Academic Programs Awareness to the Mental Health and Wellness Needs of Students and Future Clinicians

# National Student Survey

- Student survey will be redistributed by ACAPT
- Each Program Chair will have a unique link for their institution
- Program Chairs will be provided with anonymized results
- Look for the notice from ACAPT on November 1, 2021
- Please encourage your students to participate

# Thank you!

- > Please send questions for the Task Force addressed to Cheryl Resnik: [resnik@pt.usc.edu](mailto:resnik@pt.usc.edu)
- > (photos by Unsplash.com-The internet's source of [freely-usable images](#))