

Name: Amanda Blue, Outreach Manager, College of Health Sciences

Title of Project: Mental Health First Aid

These trainings incorporated two the recommended approaches identified by the University Forum:

“Increasing opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue and/or learning among students, and between faculty, staff and students.”

“Projects that encourage campus-wide discussions and participation through online webinars and/or workshops.”

Amount Awarded: \$2500

Select the key priority areas of the Forum for which the proposal intended to address:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff (AFSCME) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PT Employees |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> People with Disabilities | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Students - Phila |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> People of Color/Non White | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Veterans |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Women | <input type="checkbox"/> Intern'l Students |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LGBTQA | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Trad Student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Assault Policies and Procedures | |

Because Mental Health First Aid is a program designed for laypeople to gain mental health literacy and skills to assist another individual who may be struggling, all populations benefit; particularly those that tend to be at higher risk for mental health issues.

Brief description and goals and outcomes of your project:

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training has provided the campus community with a learning forum that includes open and respectful communication and education regarding mental health. Goals include reduction of stigma through education, and an increase in participant’s awareness of signs and symptoms that an individual may be struggling, and a five-step procedure designed to assist. Through prior research conducted as an applied learning project for my MPH, it was determined that referrals to the counseling center increased by over 130% after training residence hall staff to recognize these signs and symptoms. Although referrals by others are not tracked in the same manner, and are therefore more difficult to quantify, the value of this program has been clearly demonstrated.

Over the 2018-2019 academic year, I was able to coordinate a total of 14 MHFA trainings and certify 275 participants as “Mental Health First Aiders,” a three-year certification granted by the National Council for Behavioral Health. At \$18 per manual, the \$2500 grant award accounted for the purchase of 138 MHFA manuals to provide to participants, the remainder were purchased through the College of Health Sciences.

Description of procedures, steps, timeline:

Procedurally, training schedules are coordinated for each semester on the basis of both trainer availability and space on campus. Once each of those factors has been determined, an email is circulated across campus to all faculty, staff and students with a link to register; this occurred in September 2018. Within a 48-hour period, each of the available classes were full and a waiting list was started. This is the process that has occurred each semester since Spring 2017. The participants attend the class, become certified, and their names and email addresses, are entered into the national “First Aider” database maintained by the National Council in Washington, D.C. The evaluations provided by the National Council are also entered at that time.

Analysis of the success of the project and results achieved:

The Mental Health First Aid project continues to be of benefit to the WCU campus. Since its initiation in 2016, over 1100 members of our campus, a majority of which are students, have been trained. Of the 14 trainings completed in AY 2018-19, I co-facilitated 10, along with 7 other instructors. Metrics for results cannot be accurately determined, as referrals are not tracked on, or off, our campus outside of the residence life staff. Therefore, the only data to provide is that which is reported through the evaluations of the participants. A sampling of evaluation data is included below, along with a few reflections provided by students:

The course evaluation includes a Likert Scale range: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Uncertain, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree. Below are **Overall Course** and **Knowledge/Confidence** average scores for the WCU program, all ranging from 4.5 – 4.8.

Overall Course Average Scores

- 4.8 Course goals were clearly communicated.
- 4.8 Course goals & objectives were achieved.
- 4.8 Course content was practical and easy to understand
- 4.6 There was adequate opportunity to practice the skills learned.

Knowledge/Confidence Average Scores

- 4.8 Recognize the signs that someone may be dealing with a mental health problem or crisis.
- 4.6 Reach out to someone who may be dealing with a mental health problem or crisis.
- 4.5 Ask a person whether s/he is considering killing her/himself.
- 4.8 Actively and compassionately listen to someone in distress.
- 4.7 Offer a distressed person basic "first aid" level information and reassurance about mental health problems.
- 4.7 Assist a person who may be dealing with a mental health problem or crisis to seek professional help.
- 4.7 Assist a person who may be dealing with a mental health problem or crisis to connect with community, peer, and personal supports.
- 4.8 Be aware of my own views and feelings about mental health problems and disorders.
- 4.8 Recognize and correct misconceptions about mental health and mental illness as I encounter them.

Student Reflections

"I think it was extremely valuable and honestly wish that it could be required for all students, faculty and staff at WCU."

"Should be mandatory."

"Excellent. Need more of these. There are so many misconceptions and prejudices."