

To the UConn Community:

I write to you today to announce a series of actions the university is taking to evaluate and enhance our support for student mental health and well-being on our campuses. UConn recognizes that many of our students face significant mental health and wellness challenges. We are committed to doing all we can to support you.

Beginning this past fall, UConn Student Health and Wellness partnered with the [JED Foundation](#), a non-profit dedicated to promoting mental health, emotional health and suicide prevention programs among teens and young adults. The specific program aimed at college and university population is called "[JED Campus](#)."

JED Campus and UConn have embarked on a multi-year strategic effort in collaboration with UConn Undergraduate Student Government that will assess mental health and well-being efforts currently underway at UConn with the goal of identifying strengths and areas for growth. This will amplify the existing good work through the Wellness Coalition. I believe this work should be an institutional priority and have formed a task force to prioritize this issue at UConn. The President's Task Force on Student Mental Health and Well-being will be charged with reviewing our current efforts, understanding areas of diminished capacity, and identifying priorities for best practice and expansion of care for our students. I expect to name the members of this task force in the coming days.

Beginning on Feb. 17, UConn will administer an in-depth assessment of our students' attitudes, behaviors and awareness of mental health issues, known as the "Healthy Minds Study." The study will be administered to a random sample of 12,000 UConn students. The findings from the study will enable UConn and the Jed Foundation to create a strategic plan that will be implemented over the next three years. As a Jed Campus, UConn will agree to adopt a public health approach to promoting emotional well-being, preventing suicide, and understanding the impact of substance use on student health and well-being. The demand for mental health services has risen dramatically among the college-aged population nationwide in recent years, with students overall use of services increasing from 19% in 2007 to 34% in 2017. (Lipson, Lattie, and Eisenberg, 2018).

We have seen a similar increase in demand for mental health services at UConn. In response, we have hired six additional full-time clinical positions and launched a case management model for each of the regional campuses.

Different students present different needs based on their individual circumstances and history. Each requires an approach that is best suited for them, whether it is individual sessions, group therapy, case management, psychiatric care, or emergency assessment. But it is important to note that the student mental health crisis is not a challenge that colleges and universities can simply hire our way out of. Equally important is the culture we must create around mental health and well-being on our campuses. This applies to our employees as well. We must all learn how to demonstrate care and effectively respond to student well-being needs.

As Huskies, our care and compassion for one another is universal and essential to our identity. I thank all of you for the ongoing support you show for our community, and I believe our collaboration with the Jed Foundation and this task force will greatly help us to advance this vital work.

Sincerely,

Tom

**Thomas Katsouleas**

President

University of Connecticut