

Universities for good mental health

IAU SDG3 Cluster 2024 Networking and Knowledge Sharing

Insight Report



Addressing Mental Health and Well-being in Universities



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Introduction

On May 23, 2023, the WHO announced that the COVID pandemic was no longer considered a health emergency. It has however, together with other confounding crises, left sequelae or surfaced existing challenges that countries are now dealing with, one of them being the increase in mental health issues. Building resilience and learning how to navigate complexity are becoming increasingly important for individuals and communities in this period of great transition. At the same time, individual countries and regions have experience in building resilience and complexity in their specific contexts that others can learn from.

Furthermore, the emergence and acceleration of artificial intelligence and the shift to blended learning and working are having profound effects on university teaching and learning. According to the [World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report \(2023\)](#), more than half of the workforce will need to learn new skills by 2025, as adoption of technology increases. Employers believe that critical thinking and problem-solving skills will top the list. They have also identified new skills, related specifically to self-managing in a changing environment, including active learning, building resilience, stress tolerance, adaptability and flexibility, which can also contribute to good mental health.

Since October 2023, the IAU SDG3 cluster has been exploring how member universities are supporting staff and students to foster good mental health and to equip students with the mindset, knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the current poly-crisis environment. This report summarises learnings from this exploration and examples of good practice.

About the SDG3 Cluster

The [IAU SDG3 cluster on Health and Wellbeing](#), Universities for Good Health, is a network of 7 higher education institutions across 5 continents including [Western Sydney University](#) (Australia), [Makerere University](#) (Uganda), [Universidad de Caldas](#) (Colombia), [Universitas Gadjah Mada](#) (Indonesia), [Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana](#) (Mexico), [University College Dublin](#) (Ireland) and [Universitat Oberta de Catalunya \(UOC\)](#) (Spain). It is spearheaded by the UOC's eHealth Center in Barcelona and is part of the Global Cluster on Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development (HESD) created in 2018 and hosted by the International Association of Universities.

The cluster aims to be a higher education champion, promoting an integrated approach to health, in support of equity and wellbeing worldwide in line with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda. See the [infographic](#) for more information.

Since its launch, it has delivered a series of [webinars](#) related to health and wellbeing:

- [“Higher education under examination: are we ready to train the future healthcare workforce?”](#) (2021) summarised in the “Rethinking healthcare workforce education” paper in [the December 2021 issue of IAU Horizons](#) and in the piece on [“Lessons from the pandemic to educate future healthcare professionals”](#).
- [“Exploring the nexus between health, equity and gender”](#) (2022). See the [infographic](#) summarising the key learnings from the webinar.

In March 2023, the cluster held its first face-to-face workshop entitled *“catalysing collaboration for an integrated approach to health, in support of equity and wellbeing worldwide”* and released a [whitepaper](#) summarising the learnings and other related outputs: see the [video](#), [photo gallery](#), [knowledge capsules and video footage](#).

In that workshop and subsequent meetings, members agreed to focus their efforts on **mental health and building skills for resilience**, which, since the COVID pandemic, had become an increasingly relevant topic for all institutions.

Exploring mental health and building skills for resilience

In October 2023, the SDG3 cluster kicked off its knowledge-sharing series with an online seminar entitled **“The mental health crisis, building resilience in a changing world”**. See the 2023 [webinar recording](#) and [write-up](#). The UOC also published an interview in 2023 where the cluster lead shared some [lessons learned](#) from the past few years of the cluster's work and the cluster's intentions for the future.

In early 2024, the cluster secretariat launched an internal survey and held eight one-on-one calls with member institutions and the IAU to better understand members' engagement with mental health at the institutional, teaching and research levels (see appendix 1 for list of calls held). A group call was subsequently set up to share preliminary findings. A deeper dive on each institution was then developed, based on the initial data and additional website consultations. Two [webinars](#) were also organised on [1 October](#) and [3 October](#) with members to explore the topic. (See the [write-up](#).)

The resulting document provides an overview of how each institution is addressing mental health¹ and wellbeing, based on the data collected. Please note that it is qualitative in nature and that the scope is limited to publicly available data and the resources and knowledge available to each respondent and their consulted colleagues. Its primary aim is to explore how member universities are currently thinking about and addressing mental health in their communities.

¹ Please note that when discussing mental health, we refer to WHO's definition of mental health, going beyond mental disorders and as "an integral and essential component of health" and "a state of well-being in which an individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."

Key findings

Across the SDG3 cluster, staff and student mental health was an institutional concern and priority. There was a general perception that mental health awareness had increased and come to the forefront, accelerated by the COVID pandemic.

For staff and students:

- Since the COVID pandemic, mental health challenges, such as levels of anxiety and depression have increased, particularly affecting youth, females and students in situations of vulnerability.
- Levels of stress, burnout and the increase of prevalence of non-communicable diseases more generally in staff were also important concerns.
- The shift to blended models of delivery in higher education and continual pressure of quantitative results was affecting the student/professor relationships and dynamics.
- In some universities, the offer of mental health support was still limited and demand was greater than supply. In others, uptake of existing services was hindered by several factors, such as lack of awareness of their existence and barriers to access, such as real or perceived stigmatisation or simply preferring alternative sources of support.
- Services were not necessarily accessed by those that most needed them.
- The excessive focus on the individual rather than the individual in their context meant an over-emphasis on the personal risk factors contributing to mental ill-health.

For the community:

- Access to mental health services was unequal, due to the various divides (for example, digital, urban/rural, level of education, socioeconomic and cultural).

In general, there was a perception that insufficient resources were dedicated to mental health services.

Institutional Support

All institutions had some policies and resulting support systems in place for prevention, detection and signposting, emergency response and, in some cases, guidance and counselling, directed to both staff and students. These were delivered through a combination of in-person, phone and online services.

Examples included:

Prevention

- Employee and staff surveys to identify risks and to prioritise areas of focus.
- General promotion of health and wellbeing through awareness campaigns, guidelines and manuals, activities and short courses aimed at increasing mental health literacy, and promoting health and wellbeing.
- An increased focus on the built environment, such as considering green areas, natural light and accessibility on campus.

Early detection and signposting

- By increasing staff's and, more specifically, academic staff's awareness of and literacy in mental health as first points of contact and increasing awareness.
- Through identification and follow-up with students in situations of risk following risk indicators.
- Through one-on-one communication channels via hotlines and chatbots for staff and students.
- Through employee and student assistance programmes.
- Through third-party annual staff health checks.

Emergency attention and treatment

- Through emergency hotlines.
- Issuing protocols for suicide prevention.
- Counselling through university-run clinics and university hospitals or third parties, both in person and remotely.
- Psychiatry through university health services and hospitals.

The type of support and mechanisms of delivery were context-specific and targeted, considering underlying determinants of health and mental health, and successful university experience. Targeted strategies considered the most appropriate mechanisms to reach and engage targeted student populations given their particular risk profiles. However, members felt that further work could be done in this direction. The types of services provided and mechanisms of delivery varied according to the health ecosystem that the university was operating in.

Members highlighted the importance of taking a holistic, positive, salutogenic and cross-disciplinary approach to addressing student and staff mental health and wellbeing. There was a general sense that mental health is still often viewed primarily through a disease-oriented and excessively individual lens, perhaps contributing to stigmatisation while not taking sufficiently into account the impact of context. A focus on wellbeing, prevention and early detection, with actions focused on building resilience, fostering healthy lifestyles and increasing awareness of the role of physical spaces, was seen as important.

Several people considered it good practice to have an integrated strategy that considered general health and wellbeing, while at the same time having more specific policies and programmes for vulnerable populations most at risk.

Community Support

Community support was delivered mostly through university clinics and hospitals. Additionally, mental health modules were incorporated in larger flagship research, knowledge transfer and dissemination projects.

Teaching

Mental health was considered in the curriculum in several ways:

In modules designed to help current and future health professionals support their patients in their mental health.

- Through formal psychology modules in mental health and health-related degrees (such as social and health sciences, nursing and midwifery, and public health degrees) and in

specialisations in psychiatry, or specialised masters (such as e-health, clinical sexology, neuroscience and neuropsychology).

- In some cases, though not in general, through modules supporting mental health to supplement traditional medical training.
- As part of continuing education.

Through the incorporation of “soft skills” in the curriculum to help build positive leadership and resilience.

- In some cases, transdisciplinary soft skills were incorporated across the curriculum.
- Dimensions of ethics and management in complex environments were increasingly coming through, especially through the implementation of Education for Sustainable Development.
- The more intangible “being” skills (such as mindset and presence) were sometimes considered in leadership, and personal and professional development modules and courses.

Through pedagogical approaches meant to support building the skills for positive leadership.

- Incorporating action-based and student-centred learning in the curriculum.
- International exchanges, community-based and community service programmes.

Members acknowledged the importance of further supporting students in their emotional and social development, and of considering mental health in the curriculum. Further work was needed to advocate for and embed soft skills in the curriculum. There was a perception that the less tangible and measurable “being” skills or inner states were considered and taken on board less. Several members emphasised their strong relevance and importance in building resilience in the current context. However, the case for their inclusion and value still needed to be made across stakeholder groups, and in already content-heavy curriculums.

Several members also stressed the importance of offering lifelong learning to health and mental health professionals to adapt to the rapidly changing context and societal needs.

Research

Cross-cutting research interests included:

- ✓ Early detection of anxiety and depression, and other mental health challenges with the support of artificial intelligence and robotics.
- ✓ Prevention and relapse prevention of addictive behaviours and substance abuse.
- ✓ Optimisation of mechanisms of delivery of mental health (online, offline, blended).
- ✓ Focus on demographics in situations of vulnerability and specific life stages (such as childhood and adolescence).
- ✓ Addressing ageing and mental health.

Key learnings from the webinar discussions

Mental health experts from member universities discussed some of the themes mentioned above in more detail in the [webinars](#) organised on [1 October](#) and [3 October](#).

They stressed that mental health awareness has increased since the COVID pandemic; country policies on mental health were being refreshed or developed, and efforts had been made to identify and quantify mental health challenges in the academic community and society more widely.

When considering mental health in the academic community, the experts highlighted the importance of differentiating between students, academic staff and management/administrative staff, while at the same time appreciating their interdependencies. Among students, a distinction also needed to be made between undergraduates, graduates and doctoral students; and with academic staff, between different categories and the degree of stability of contractual agreements.

Strategies, policies and programmes existed to support staff and students, and had been greatly accelerated by the COVID pandemic, with some countries and institutions further along the journey than others. Mental health and wellbeing initiatives in universities were increasingly going beyond psychological services, involving multiple departments. Universities are developing comprehensive prevention models that focus on creating supportive environments by, for example, promoting physical and cultural activities, or economic support for students in need.

Social support networks, participation in extracurricular activities, a sense of autonomy and effective stress management were identified as some of the protective factors for mental wellbeing across all university populations. Good academic performance, belonging to social groups (such as sports, cultural or religious) and having strong social support networks were examples of protective factors for students' mental health.

As an important period of transition for students, members identified a growing need to address the unique stressors faced by specific communities such as LGBTIQ+, first generation or international students, including culture shock and potential isolation.

The speakers also called on universities to consider their own impact in this context and highlighted the influence of academic and financial stress on mental health.

Furthermore, they highlighted the emerging importance of strengthening connection and belonging in hybrid learning environments. Peer support systems, consistent communication, active listening and co-creation with students and staff were all seen as elements of good practice.

The experts encouraged universities to consider how to increase the reach of support, and some highlighted the importance of building awareness in staff and students around mental health first aid, as first points of contact. Some also mentioned the potential of peer support as a way of overcoming stigmas around accessing formal services, and as a way of supporting positive mental health.

Finally, as a historically underfunded area, leadership and advocacy were seen as vital to keep the issue high on government agendas. Measuring the impact of mental health initiatives was also identified as an ongoing challenge for securing continued funding and support.

In the following section, we offer a deeper dive into how each member university is integrating mental health in its institution, research and teaching, drawing on the information shared to date.

Members in the spotlight

Universidad de Caldas, Colombia

Brief context: A history of conflict (armed conflict, sexual abuse, drug use, domestic violence and social inequality) in the country has led to a high rate of post-traumatic disorders, depression and anxiety, further exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. During the pandemic, the uptake of mental health services increased. However, rates of depression, anxiety and drug use also increased. Furthermore, though the country offers universal health coverage for mental and physical health services, there is a considerable rural/urban divide in access to healthcare.

Integration of mental health and resilience in the university

Institutionally, several departments at the University of Caldas work on mental health. The Department of Mental Health and Human Behaviour addresses the mental health of populations in a comprehensive manner, participating through teaching, projection and research projects. Some examples include:

- The “Health Promoting University” project aims to nurture a culture of health and care through innovative strategies promoting self-care to influence the quality of life and the environment of the University of Caldas community, with participation in regional, national and international alliances of Health Promoting Universities.
- The [“Permanece con Calidad”](#) (Remain with Quality) programme aims to encourage student retention, accompanying them through the academic and psychosocial challenges of their university experience which can have an impact on attendance and graduation rates.

The university has set up a University Committee for Health Promotion and an institutional [mental health policy](#) that covers the entire academic community. It also offers counselling programmes for students and institutional psychological emergency care services through a third-party healthcare provider.

Community mental health and resilience

More widely, consulting is provided to government bodies on mental health, and there are research and knowledge transfer projects focusing specifically on populations in situations of vulnerability.

Research and knowledge transfer

Research related to mental health is conducted by the departments of Mental Health and Human Behaviour, and of Public Health. The main research focus areas include prevention of depression and anxiety in young people, addiction relapse prevention, comprehensive intervention in mental pathologies, and artificial intelligence and mental health. For example, the university is conducting innovative research looking at the effectiveness of acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), and mindfulness in mental health. Additionally, the “Virtualmente” project is looking to generate an early detection strategy for anxiety and depression in young people using AI.

The university also has some short courses on mental health. Examples include mental health literacy and mindfulness, mental health in primary health and the ABC for a good life, a virtual course in telepsychology, a virtual course on healthy schools with a mental health and school

coexistence module, and a comprehensive approach to psychoactive drug consumption disorders. Some of these courses form part of larger applied research projects.

Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

Context

The COVID pandemic has been a catalyst for raising awareness, and the development and roll out of increased mental health services in Indonesia, and at Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM).

Integration of mental health in the university

Conscious of its central role as a place of work and study, UGM launched the [“Health Promoting University”](#) cross-faculty initiative with the aim of promoting staff and students’ mental and physical health and wellbeing. A cross-functional governance structure entitled the “Health Promoting Unit” was set up to implement the programme. Eight working groups were created, including one on mental health. Since the pandemic, the initiative has received increased attention.

UGM has developed guidelines, guidebooks and tools to increase awareness and build literacy around mental health and wellbeing, to support staff and students in detecting early signals of challenges, and to signpost effectively. UGM also has a strong in-person students’ counselling unit.

Since the pandemic, UGM has experimented with different communication channels to reach staff, students and the community which has helped increase the penetration of support. Examples include a [YouTube channel](#) and Instagram account with edutainment for health promotion, a chat bot, “Lingtang”, for early detection, and an emergency response approach along the lines of a “mental health first aid kit”.

Research

Research on mental health is mainly conducted by the Departments of Psychiatry, Medical Education and Bioethics and the Centre of Bioethics. UGM researchers have been involved in epidemiological studies to understand the prevalence and distribution of mental health disorders in Indonesia to help policymakers and healthcare providers target their interventions effectively. They have also been involved in research looking at different psychosocial interventions aimed at addressing mental health issues in the Indonesian population. They have contributed to policy research related to mental health, advocating for policies that promote mental health awareness, access to care and destigmatisation of mental illness in Indonesia. Finally, they have implemented community-based mental health programmes in collaboration with other stakeholders, including healthcare providers, community leaders and local communities, and non-governmental organisations. Interesting research is also being conducted looking at the impact of religious studies on resilience.

In Indonesia, [community service](#) is also a mandatory part of the higher education curriculum. Students are sent to live in local rural communities to develop projects combining education, research and community services in support of the SDGs. This provides them with real-life problem-solving experience and communication skills and enables them to work in multidisciplinary teams and acquire essential life skills.

Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain

Context

Mental health in Spain has declined since the COVID pandemic. Rates of depression and anxiety have risen, especially in already vulnerable populations. Spain has seen its youth particularly affected. The education system and universities are joining forces and ramping up their mental health support services. Studies both at the regional level and at the national level have been conducted to better understand the evolution of university student and staff health and wellbeing.

Support for staff and students

A survey assessing psychosocial risks in universities is periodically conducted across Spanish universities. Mental health is considered in the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya's (UOC) Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing policy, and from an occupational risk and prevention perspective (from the Health and Safety unit and the Personnel department, under the direction of the Office of the Vice Rector for Alliances, Community and Culture). Mental health assessments are included in the volunteer employee annual checkup (delivered by a third-party healthcare provider). Institutionally, there are programmes and short courses to support PhD students and staff in managing their mental health. An employee and PhD student assistance programme, the "Servei d'Atenció Psicològica (SAP)", provides psychological support. There is also a "Health and Wellbeing Week", which includes talks and activities promoting health and wellbeing.

Teaching

Different aspects of mental health are included across programmes delivered by the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Economics and Business at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and in postgraduate programmes.

- In health-related disciplines (psychology, psychiatry, digital health, education and social work), the focus is on training future healthcare professionals in the areas relevant to their field. The Master's Degree in E-Health, for example, explores how technology (such as apps and telemedicine) is used to improve mental healthcare and patient outcomes.
- Some aspects of mental health are also considered in management courses (Human Resources, Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability) at both the bachelor's and graduate levels and in leadership and team management modules.
- Soft skills are included either as cross-disciplinary competencies (as part of the "ethical commitment and gender perspective") or the competencies related to ethics and critical thinking in the "use of technology" dimensions, which form part of all management and continuing education syllabuses through the [UOC Skills Lab](#).

Research

Different research groups affiliated to the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, the eHealth Center and the Internet Interdisciplinary Institute (IN3) cover mental health. For example, the eHealth Center's guiding vision is to contribute to a paradigm shift in health (and thereby mental health) through scientific evidence for digital health and community empowerment. Researchers at the Faculty of Health Sciences look at individual factors (healthy ageing, women's health or brain health), lifestyle (food, physical activity or addictions) and the environment (planetary health, epidemiology and public health, digital health or culture and society). The Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences focuses on four main themes: education and IT, psychology, health and quality of life, and social action across specific demographics.

Western Sydney University, Australia

Context

Western Sydney ranks as Australia's third largest economy, led by healthcare, retail and construction, but faces certain social economic challenges. Western Sydney University (WSU) plays a pivotal role in regional development, which reflects the community, with 65% of students being first generation attendees, underscoring their role in advancing social mobility. The [Australia University Accord](#), initiated by the government in 2023, represents a comprehensive review of higher education in Australia, with an increased focus on student wellbeing. Post COVID, WSU has seen issues arising from students and staff financially impacted by inflation, an increased need for services responding to connection and wellbeing coinciding with the return to campus, and a need to support cohorts identified as more likely to be at risk of poor wellbeing outcomes.

Institutional support for staff and students

Institutionally, WSU is guided by an integrated [Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy](#), with 4 key components: Health and Wellbeing Promotion, Prevention (improving mental health literacy and training their community), early intervention (supporting people experiencing mental health concerns) and systemic response (providing organisational responses that support health and wellbeing needs.) The strategy is spearheaded by a Mental Health and Wellbeing Team which is part of the Office of People.

The university provides free disability, counselling and welfare support to students. It also provides information about other government services that are available to access if students are experiencing distress or financial hardship. For staff, it offers an Employee Assistance Program free of charge where they can access professional counselling and support services for themselves and their family. The university also offers some tools to support staff in having conversations about wellbeing, including a staff wellbeing plan.

Institutional support for community mental health and resilience: WSU offers clinical psychology services to the public (both in person and remotely) through a university-run clinic at a reduced cost compared to commercially-run clinics. The geographical community that the clinic serves is one which is under-served by commercial clinics.

Research

Mental health related research is mainly carried out by the Schools of Psychology, of Medicine, and of Nursing and Midwifery and its [research institutes](#). Research is being conducted around digital health applications and specific mental health conditions such as addiction, anxiety, bipolar disorder, depression, and focusing on specific target groups such as youth and women in menopause.

Teaching

The university offers self-directed online training for staff in psychological first aid. It has also incorporated soft skills in the curriculum through three distinct areas, education about the SDGs, education that contributes to the SDGs (or a singular SDG) and education for sustainability.

1. **Education about the SDGs** is content-related, allowing students to recognise the SDGs or the ones specifically related to their discipline, their larger global purpose and why it is important to envision a better future for all by 2030.
2. **Education that contributes to the SDGs (or a singular SDG)** are specific programmes and learning activities or degree programmes that allow and equip students to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.
3. **Education for Sustainability** is the pedagogical underpinning that fosters sustainability competencies that need to be included explicitly as part of the curriculum to develop sustainability-literate graduates. It is a process which engages people in decision-making and action-taking for a more socially just, economically sound and ecologically responsible future. Source: https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/driving_sustainability/sustainability_education/curriculum

University College Dublin, Ireland

Context

Ireland's mental health services are primarily provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE), which operates under the framework of the "Vision for Change" policy introduced in 2006. This policy aimed to shift focus from institutional care to community-based services, emphasising holistic and person-centred approaches. In recent years, there have been efforts to reform and improve Ireland's mental health services. The "Sharing the Vision" policy, launched in 2020, builds on the "Vision for Change" and aims to enhance mental health services through a more integrated and person-centred approach.

Institutional support for staff and students

University College Dublin (UCD) offers a [variety of support services](#) to address the mental health and wellbeing of its students and staff. This ranges from [counselling services](#), [student health services](#), online community health support, to support for access and lifelong learning. Student Advisers are also available to students to support them with personal, social, or academic issues, and to sign-post students to appropriate services. The university website also offers a list of [helpful free resources](#). It also provides more general preventive wellbeing services through its student wellbeing hub. For staff, UCD offers both direct and peer support services to employees.

Research

UCD is actively involved in a variety of mental health research projects across several disciplines and departments. For example, UCD conducts research in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, focusing on areas such as ADHD, eating disorders, neuropsychiatry, and the transition between child and adult mental health services. Some other research areas include the uses of digital phenotyping to study the mental health of Irish adults with and without diabetes, psychosocial interventions for Advanced Cancer, mental health and wellbeing within the farming community, challenges and opportunities for Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry services in Ireland and the impact of COVID on mental health services in general hospitals.

Teaching

UCD offers modules, particularly within its psychology and psychotherapy programmes, to equip the future healthcare workforce with skills to look after their patients' mental health. Furthermore, many of UCD's courses, especially those within the Professional Academy, incorporate soft skills development as part of their core curriculum. Examples include:

Professional Academy Diplomas: short, intensive courses taught by industry practitioners that focus on practical applications, designed to upskill professionals in specific areas. They focus on enhancing both hard and soft skills such as communication, leadership and problem-solving.

Career Development Programmes: The UCD Careers Network offers multiple programmes and workshops aimed at building essential soft skills. These include the "Skills for Working Life" programme, which focuses on leadership, commercial awareness, communication and emotional intelligence.

The UCD Advantage Award which encourages students to engage in extracurricular activities that develop soft skills.

Makerere University, Uganda

Context

As in the case of other countries, mental health has received increasing attention in Uganda since the COVID pandemic.

Institutional support

Makerere University Hospital and the Counselling and Guidance Centre provide access to support services, especially counselling. The university offers clinical psychology services to the public through a university-run clinic, the hospital, and the Counselling and Guidance Centre. However, uptake and awareness are still low.

Research

Researchers at Makerere University have conducted studies to understand the mental health burden and provision of services in Uganda, and particularly for those in situations of vulnerability. It has also participated in intervention studies aimed at addressing mental health challenges and reducing stigma around mental health in Uganda. Main research focus areas include alcohol and substance abuse, and child mental health.

Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Mexico

Context

As a country in economic transition, Mexico relies on community, especially family, for support and resilience. The COVID pandemic stimulated the strengthening of local communities faced with a common problem.

Institutional support

During the COVID pandemic, the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (UAM) reinforced a mental health telephone line, chats, short courses and training to support first response services, such as mental health first aid. It also launched an extensive survey to assess the mental health burden in the university community, distinguishing between academic staff, administrative workers and students. UAM is now working towards developing an integrative approach towards mental health for its university community.

Research

UAM is currently developing several research projects related to wellbeing and mental health with an interdisciplinary and integrative approach, particularly on its Iztapalapa, Lerma and Xochimilco campuses.

Conclusions and emerging themes

Mental health challenges have increased and become more visible since the COVID pandemic. Awareness of these challenges has greatly increased. Efforts have been made to identify and quantify challenges and define needs. Country and university strategies, policies and programmes on mental health and wellbeing have been or are being developed. Initiatives are increasingly involving multiple departments, going beyond psychological services, promoting positive and healthy environments, and including nutrition, sports, arts and culture. Leadership is now needed to continue to build the momentum and to secure the resources for these plans to be fully implemented.

Some clear areas for further work and collaboration emerged, including building awareness around and embedding soft skills in the curriculum for resilience, looking beyond the individual when thinking about mental health and better understanding the role of community support, and, finally, catering to communities that could have a higher risk of vulnerability and specific needs. These orientations will help shape the IAU SDG3 cluster's work moving forward.

Appendix 1

Sources

- 2023 co-created whitepaper (for specific case studies)
- Preliminary calls for 2023 webinar and 2023 webinar outputs
- 2024 survey and calls with members
- Website review (selected) for institutional deep dives
- 1 October and 3 October webinars

Calls held	
Initial brainstorming calls	
Imma Alberch, Marta Aymerich, Marc Graells, Liv Raphael, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain	13/03/2024
Liv Raphael, Marc Graells, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain, and Isabel Toman, IAU	17/03/2024
Claudia Patricia Jaramillo Angel and Consuelo Vélez Álvarez, Universidad de Caldas, Colombia	19/03/2024
Gabrielle Weidemann, Western Sydney University, Australia	20/03/2024
Carlos Contreras, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Mexico	20/03/2024
Nadia D'Alton, University College Dublin, Ireland	21/03/2024
Titi Savitri Prihatiningsih, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia	21/03/2024
Rawlance Ndejjo, Makerere University, Uganda	27/03/2024
Carme Carrion, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain	02/04/2024

Additional key informants

Fatwa Dewi, Dean, School of Public Health, Universitas Gadjah Mada

Diana Setiyawati, Director at Centre for Public Mental Health, Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Gadjah Mada

Tanya Perich, Professor and Psychologist, Western Sydney University

Carlos Contreras, Professor, Researcher and Social Psychologist, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana

Rhoda Wanyenze, Professor and Dean of the School of Public Health, Makerere University

Webinar Speakers

1 October session at 5:00 p.m. (CEST), in English.

- Opening statements: Pam Fredman, Board Member and former President of the IAU
- Steve Lee, Mental Health and Wellbeing Team Manager at Western Sydney University
- Ellen Brackenreg, Executive Director of Equity, Diversity, Safety, and Wellbeing at Western Sydney University.
- Galuh Suryandari, PhD candidate in Medical Education at Universitas Gadjah Mada
- Joy Louise Gumikiriza-Onoria, Lecturer, Clinical Psychologist, and PhD fellow at the College of Health Sciences, Makerere University,
- Closing statements: Marta Aymerich, Director of the eHealth Center, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
- Moderation: Liv Raphael, IAU SDG3 Cluster Lead, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

3 October session at 5:00 p.m. (CEST), in Spanish.

- Opening statements: Isabel Toman, Global SDG Cluster Lead at the IAU
- Speakers: Alba Pérez González, Lecturer in the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, and Researcher at the University of Barcelona; Gustavo Pacheco López, Vice President for Outreach and Internationalisation at Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, and Oscar Mauricio Castaño Ramírez, Psychiatrist at the Department of Mental Health and Human Behaviour, Universidad de Caldas.
- Closing statements: Manel Jiménez Morales, Vice Rector for Alliances, Community and Culture, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
- Moderation: Marta Aymerich, Director of the eHealth Center, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya