



Georgetown  
University

## The Presidents' Convening on College Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

### **March 20, 2023: Dinner and Presentation**

US Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy, MD, MBA  
Georgetown President John J. DeGioia

### **March 21, 2023: Convening Program**

Three-part facilitated discussion following expert presentations  
Lunch presentation highlights a new survey of recent graduates on mental health and transition into the workforce

#### **I. Broadening Higher Education's Value Proposition to Include Student Wellbeing**

The rising rates of mental distress being reported by college students has made this the top priority of college presidents.

- Given what we know about the onset of mental health issues during the college years, and what the data show about how the college experience influences our lifelong wellbeing, can we infuse student wellbeing into pedagogy?
- What long-held beliefs and policies need to be reconsidered? And how do we move mental health from an ancillary function to a primary goal of higher education?

Two examples precede the discussion:

#### 1. The Bennington College Mental Health and Wellness Model

Bennington College is well known for its faculty-supported, self-directed curriculum which now includes a major mental health and wellbeing component. The Bennington College Mental Health and Wellness Model, a fully integrated, multi-service, community approach to mental health and wellness, began in the fall semester of 2022. The student wellness plan, like the Bennington Academic Plan, is designed to encourage students to take responsibility for their own

growth and development. Working one-on-one with a professional counseling staff member, students will assess their own wellness needs (both as individuals and as a community member); set goals; identify the available services and resources; and monitor their progress in achieving their wellness and mental health goals over time.

Speakers:

*Laura Walker, MBA  
President, Bennington College*

*Michael Cohen, PhD  
Director of Student Counseling, Disability Services Coordinator, and Thesis Advisor, Glasgow Caledonian New York College (GCNYC)  
President, Michael Cohen Group, LLC (MCG)*

2. The Engelhard Project for Connecting Life and Learning, Georgetown University

The Engelhard Project represents an innovative approach to integrating student wellbeing issues into academic contexts. It builds on the principles of the whole person education by supporting faculty and campus resource professionals as partners in incorporating health and wellbeing issues into the classroom. This curricular approach enhances academic learning, encourages students to reflect on their attitudes and behaviors, and fosters faculty, staff, and student connections both in and out of the classroom that support students' engagement in their learning.

Speakers:

*Joselyn Schultz Lewis, MA  
Senior Associate Director for Inclusive Teaching and Learning Initiatives,  
Georgetown University's Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship (CNDLS)*

*Jennifer Woolard, PhD  
Professor and Chair, Psychology Department, Georgetown University*

Session I. Discussion Facilitator:

*Paula A. Johnson, MD, MPH  
President, Wellesley College*

## **II. Behavioral Health, Engagement, and Retention:**

National dialogues around retention in higher education and student mental health have been largely separate, siloed conversations. Given that the same students who have, on average, lower rates of college persistence and retention also have, on average, higher levels of unmet mental health needs – namely students of color and first generation, low-income students (Lipson et al., 2018) – there is an urgent need to bring together these two dialogues.

- Given the value of higher education degrees to overall success and equity, how can we bring mental health into focus as part of our retention and completion strategies?
- What policies need to be examined to retain and re-engage vulnerable students?
- Can community colleges and four-year schools unite around this issue?
- What are the barriers to doing so?

National leaders will provide examples and lead the discussion.

### Speakers:

*Russell Lowery-Hart, PhD  
President, Amarillo College*

*Sarah Ketchen Lipson, PhD, EdM  
Assistant Professor, Department of Health Law Policy and Management, Boston  
University School of Public Health  
Co-Principal Investigator, Healthy Minds Study*

### Session II. Discussion Facilitator:

*Pam Eddinger, PhD  
President, Bunker Hill Community College*

**Lunch Presentation:** New survey findings on the experiences and expectations of recent graduates/young employees on mental health in college and the workplace: The Mary Christie Institute, the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), and the Healthy Minds Network.

Speakers:

*Corey Thomas, MBA  
Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, Rapid7*

*Gloria Larson, JD  
Chairwoman, Mary Christie Institute  
President Emeritus, Bentley University*

### **III. Reframing the Campus Mental Health Crisis**

Much is reported about the campus mental health crisis but the narrative itself is largely reactive, focused on demand for limited resources, dissatisfied students, and counseling staff at risk of burnout.

- Can we examine the service delivery challenge from a different lens by engaging students in their wellbeing, setting realistic expectations for families, and expanding the definition of what constitutes wellbeing for today's students?
- Can we move the narrative from what can't be done with limited capacity to what can be accomplished with innovation and campus-wide partnerships?

Speakers:

*Eric Wood, PhD, LPC  
Director of Counseling and Mental Health, Texas Christian University*

*Sylvia Burwell  
President, American University*

Session III. Discussion Facilitator:

*Elizabeth H. Bradley, MBA, PhD  
President, Vassar College*