



## **Congressional Advisory Board**

The Congressional Advisory Board serves as the voice of the University of South Carolina's student body to the federal government. The Congressional Advisory Board researches the most critical issues pertaining to students and addresses South Carolina's Congressional Delegation to find better solutions to academic, financial, and social issues.

The board works to solicit input from institutional constituents such as students, faculty, administrators and staff. The board strives to educate the university community about federal higher education initiatives and investments, enabling students to realize their potential for active involvement in national politics.

As student advocates, we believe we can transform both the state and the University of South Carolina by informing our elected leaders of issues that are relevant to our generation. By doing this, we can enhance their future — benefitting our community and leaving a lasting legacy for future students.

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## Letter from the Director

Dear Senators and Representatives,

I would first like to express my sincerest appreciation on behalf of myself and the Congressional Advisory Board of the University of South Carolina Student Government for taking the time to read this report, considering the issues addressed, and welcoming us to your offices. Connecting the student body with our federal legislative process is a valuable learning experience as we seek to share our unique perspectives as students in hopes of generating dialogue and subsequent change in policies that affect college students nationally.

Addressed herein are the topics of opioid and prescription drug abuse, mental health on college campuses, maintenance of effort (MOE) policies and income-driven repayment (IDR) plans, first generation student advocacy, veteran student advocacy, and public safety on college campuses. Each of these topics uniquely affects college students, and our policy proposals have the capacity to dramatically improve the lives of young people, as well as benefit their future careers and overall well-being. After facilitating dialogue on our campus and in the surrounding community and surveying multiple facets of each, we have compiled a comprehensive legislative proposal representing the greatest concerns we encountered.

For the past six months, our impressive board members have worked diligently and now take great pride in addressing these topics and representing the students at the flagship university of the state of South Carolina. I am proud to present to you the Congressional Advisory Board 2020 Annual Report.

Sincerely,



**Wilfredo H. Anderson**  
Director of the Congressional Advisory Board  
University of South Carolina Student Government

## **Opioid/Prescription Drug Abuse and Mental Health**

### **Impact of the Opioid Crisis and Prescription Drug Abuse on College Campuses**

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders from the American Psychiatric Association (APA) classifies opioid-use disorder as the disruption of typical physiological and behavioral function as a result of opioid consumption over a year-long period.<sup>1</sup> In 2017 alone, roughly 72,000 people died of drug overdoses and approximately  $\frac{2}{3}$  of these deaths were caused by opioids.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, the opioid crisis has permeated into our establishments of higher education. In a multi-institutional study conducted by The Ohio State University, known as the College Prescription Drug Study (CPDS), 19,539 students responded as using non-medical prescription drugs.

The study focused on three major medication groups: opioid pain medications, stimulants, and sedatives. Opioid pain medications – such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine, and fentanyl – target opioid receptors in the human body. Stimulants are a drug class typically used in the treatment of attention deficit conditions such as attention deficit disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in order to improve focus. Commonly dispensed stimulants include Adderall, Ritalin, and Vyvanse. Sedatives are a drug class most commonly used to treat anxiety and seizure disorders. Some common sedative medications are Valium, Xanax, and Ativan. These are three distinct classes of medications, but they all share one

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<sup>1</sup> MacKillop, J., Kenna, G., Leggio, L., & Ray, L. Integrating Psychological and Pharmacological Treatments for Addictive Disorders. (2017) Routledge.

<sup>2</sup> Ahmad FB, Rossen LM, Spencer MR, Warner M, Sutton P. Provisional drug overdose death counts. National Center for Health Statistics. 2018.

common attribute – the majority of all of these medications are controlled substances and can only be obtained via prescription.<sup>3</sup>

The leading reason for the use of pain medications was to “get high” at 43.1% and 22% of respondents using pain medications experienced memory loss as a result of abuse.<sup>4</sup> In addition, 39% of respondents used pain medications and alcohol concomitantly to manage stress. However, the effect of opioids and other pain medications were not the only abused substances studied. The study also focused on the effects of sedatives and stimulants. To “get high” was a leading cause for the use of sedatives and stimulants at 34.4% and 15.0%, respectively. Adverse effects included 37% of sedative abusers experiencing memory loss and 12% of stimulant abusers experiencing some form of emotional problem.<sup>5</sup> The study went on to discuss that 35% of the respondents, approximately 6,838 individuals, reported using some form of illicit drug. The top three illicit drugs reported were marijuana at 93%, cocaine at 38%, and hallucinogens and ecstasy tied for third at 37%.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the CPDS, a study was commissioned from the National College Health Assessment (NCHA) to look into these issues. Per this study, it was found that the University of South Carolina (UofSC) exceeds national averages in prescription medication abuse with opiates, sedatives, and stimulants.<sup>7</sup> The use of stimulants is double the national average and the use of opiates and sedatives is one-third higher than the national average. NCHA also revealed some notable statistics about the use of illicit drug cannabis, commonly known as marijuana, at UofSC.

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<sup>3</sup> Phillips, Erica L. & McDaniel, Anne E. (2018). College Prescription Drug Study Key Findings Report. Center for the Study of Student Life, The Ohio State University: Columbus, Ohio.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> University of South Carolina Student Health Center (2019). Substance Use & Mental Health Trends: Data from Alcohol Edu and the National College Health Assessment. Retrieved from UofSC Student Health Center.

NCHA revealed 20.0% of students reported using cannabis over the past month.<sup>8</sup> The data showed that the use of cannabis had an association with loneliness.<sup>9</sup> Of the participants reporting use of cannabis either daily or weekly, over 50% reported feelings of loneliness.<sup>10</sup> These feelings of loneliness have been correlated with an increase in mental health concerns at UofSC.

Data from NCHA indicates 20.4% of students say depression hinders their academic success with 27.7% saying the same about anxiety and 33% saying the same about stress. Each student could only select one of the aforementioned conditions, thus 88.1% of students in total identify one of three conditions as a hindrance to their academic performance.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, we can see a link between prescription drug abuse, mental health, and academic performance.

Some of these prescription drugs may appear to help a student for a short period of time, but long-term use can be detrimental. For example, history of stimulant use such as amphetamines, the drug class most commonly used to treat attention deficit disorders, has been linked to the development of Parkinson's Disease by some researchers<sup>12</sup>. Long-term use of stimulants like amphetamines can also produce amphetamine psychosis. Amphetamine psychosis can manifest itself as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or paranoia<sup>13</sup>. These conditions can lead to strenuous medication regimens with a multitude of wide-ranging side effects and difficulties adapting to everyday life including potential increases in suicidal thoughts and tendencies. In addition, long-

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> University of South Carolina Student Health Center (2019). Substance Use & Mental Health Trends: Data from Alcohol Edu and the National College Health Assessment. Retrieved from UofSC Student Health Center.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Christine, C. W., Garwood, E. R., Schrock, L. E., Austin, D. E., & McCulloch, C. E. (2010). Parkinsonism in patients with a history of amphetamine exposure. *Movement disorders : official journal of the Movement Disorder Society*, 25(2), 228–231. doi:10.1002/mds.22915.

<sup>13</sup> Berman, S. M., Kuczenski, R., McCracken, J. T., & London, E. D. (2009). Potential adverse effects of amphetamine treatment on brain and behavior: a review. *Molecular psychiatry*, 14(2), 123–142. doi:10.1038/mp.2008.90.

term use of antidepressants can also lead to the following side effects: weight gain (65%), not feeling like themselves (54%), reduced positive feelings (46%), feeling as if they're addicted (43%), caring less about other people (36%), and feeling suicidal (36%). Out of those experiencing side effects after prolonged use, 74% mentioned they also experienced symptoms of withdrawal.<sup>14</sup> Some antidepressants worsen blood sugar control in people with diabetes, which may worsen the severity of their disease and raise blood sugar levels.<sup>15</sup>

The opioid epidemic is a growing problem in South Carolina. According to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, 5 million pain killer prescriptions are filled every year in South Carolina which is more than one per resident of the state. For those prescribed opioids in South Carolina, one in four is struggling with addiction. The rate of addiction can be linked to how easily dependence to opioids can develop. Dependency on an opioid can develop in just three days because of its ability to change the brain's chemistry. This dependency occurs because as more opioids are taken, an individual gradually becomes less responsive to the effects of opioids. In order to compensate for this gradual decline in response, the body requires more opioids to achieve a response. In turn, this creates a cycle of increasing dependence which becomes harder to break due to the physiological dependence that has been achieved. In 2017, there were 1,103 drug overdose deaths in total, 863 involved prescription drugs and 816 of the deaths involved opioids.<sup>16</sup> Not only is the opioid crisis a threat to the citizens of South Carolina, but to students at the University of South Carolina as well. Richland County, where the University of South Carolina resides, has the fifth highest number of opioid overdose deaths of the 51 counties

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<sup>14</sup> Cartwright C, Gibson K, Read J, Cowan O, Dehar T. Long-term antidepressant use: patient perspectives of benefits and adverse effects. Patient preferences and adherence. 2016 Jul 28;10:1401-7. doi: 10.2147/PPA.S110632.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> South Carolina Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (SCDAODAS) (2018). Opioid Data. Retrieved from <http://justplankillers.com/data/>.

in South Carolina. College-aged students are at an increased risk of opioid addiction.<sup>17</sup> Since 2014, opioid overdose deaths for those age 18-24 and 25-34 years old have doubled.<sup>18</sup> These two age ranges represent the vast majority of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. In order to establish ways to protect these age groups, we suggest the following pieces of legislation to help reduce the negative repercussions of the substances discussed above.

We urge the members of the House of Representatives to support H.R. 1614 - The John S. McCain Opioid Addiction Prevention Act. H.R. 1614 was introduced by Congressman John Katko and currently sits with the House's Energy and Commerce Committee.<sup>19</sup> The bill has five co-sponsors and bipartisan support, and consists of three major topics. First, it establishes a new registration requirement for practitioners who are licensed to prescribe controlled substances such as opioids, antipsychotics, and antidepressants. The importance of this is derived from the establishment of another measure to document the prescribing and dispensing of controlled substances. An addition like this may improve records of how many controlled substances are being prescribed. The second topic addresses a limit on the supply of opioids prescribed for the initial treatment of acute pain.<sup>20</sup> Acute pain is associated with a singular, identifiable event and typically resolves in days to weeks. Thus, only short courses of pain medications are typically required. Due to these shorter courses of pain medications, the likelihood of addiction, dependence, and tolerance would be reduced. The third topic establishes that an opioid approved for the treatment of addiction is not subject to the limit for acute pain. For example, Methadone (Dolophine) is a pain medication that is used in the treatment of opioid addiction. However,

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Katko, & John. (2019, April 12). H.R.1614 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): John S. McCain Opioid Addiction Prevention Act. Retrieved from [https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/1614?q={\"search\":\[\"H.R.+1614\"\]}&s=1&r=1](https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/1614?q={\).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.



Methadone comes in multiple doses and can be tapered down easily over a period of time. Thus, multiple prescriptions may be needed, but this can culminate in an individual becoming free of addiction. It is our recommendation that the members of the U.S. House of Representatives vote in favor of H.R. 1614, the John S. McCain Opioid Addiction Prevention Act.

For members of the U.S. Senate, we recommend supporting S.1044 - Fentanyl Sanctions Act. This bill currently resides with the Senate's Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs. The bill is sponsored by Senator Chuck Schumer and is co-sponsored by Senators Brown, Capito, Cornyn, Cotton, Feinstein, Markey, Menendez, Peters, Rubio, Shaheen, and Toomey.<sup>21</sup> This bill focuses on four primary objectives. The first objective is for the president to impose sanctions on foreign individuals and entities identified as opioid traffickers. The sanctions include receiving loans, foreign exchange transactions, property transactions, and certain investments that fall under U.S. jurisdiction.<sup>22</sup> This is of the highest importance because it tightens restrictions on highly addictive substances entering the U.S.

One of the federal government's primary roles is to protect the health and safety of its citizens and these illicit opioids are a direct and growing threat to the health of this country's citizens. The second objective is for the president to provide a report to Congress about the implementation of these sanctions and cooperate with Mexico and China to combat illicit opioid trafficking.<sup>23</sup> The illicit supply of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids can be sourced to Mexico and China. In order to combat illicit opioid trafficking from other nations, negotiations must take place to work in conjunction with these foreign nations, from which the illicit opioids originate.

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<sup>21</sup> Schumer, C. E. (2019, June 4). S.1044 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Fentanyl Sanctions Act. Retrieved from [https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1044?q={\"search\":\[\"S.+1044\"\]}&s=2&r=1](https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1044?q={\).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Pardo, Bryce, Illicit Supply of Fentanyl and Other Synthetic Opioids: Transitioning Markets and Evolving Challenges. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT515.html>.

The third objective is to create the Commission on Synthetic Opioid Trafficking.<sup>24</sup> The purpose of this commission would be to develop a strategy to combat the flow of synthetic opioids into the U.S. According to the CDC, synthetic opioids were responsible for more than 28,000 deaths in 2017.<sup>25</sup> More deaths are attributed to synthetic opioids than brain cancer, antibiotic-resistant bacterial infections, and firearms. This commission will also report on the deficiencies of other countries' regulations of pharmaceutical and chemical production. By highlighting the inadequacies of foreign countries, the commission will be better equipped to handle the influxes of synthetic medications coming into the US. The benefit of this will be the ability of the US to identify needs through self-identifying lapses in the nation's system. Finally, the fourth objective of the bill is for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence to establish a program to assist law enforcement efforts and sanctions against illicit opioid traffickers should this piece of legislation become law. This is crucial to the success of other aspects of this bill because it assigns the oversight of this project to a specific governmental agency. It is our opinion that it deserves your full support.

Prescription medication abuse and the opioid crisis pose serious threats to the health of college students. The problems caused by misuse of controlled substance leads to future health problems which increase health expenditures, risk of potential hospitalizations, and decreased quality of life. We urge you to support measures to help control the spread of the opioid epidemic and the abuse of other prescription medications. We ask you to support H.R. 1614 and S.1044 which both address the opioid crisis. One of our federal government's central tenants is to protect

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<sup>24</sup> Pardo, Bryce, *Illicit Supply of Fentanyl and Other Synthetic Opioids: Transitioning Markets and Evolving Challenges*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT515.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Ahmad FB, Rossen LM, Spencer MR, Warner M, Sutton P. Provisional drug overdose death counts. National Center for Health Statistics. 2018.

and preserve the health and safety of our citizens. By supporting the recommended pieces of legislation in this report, you will be able to help protect and preserve the health and safety of college aged students and combat the growing epidemic that is the opioid crisis and prescription drug abuse.

### **Recommendations:**

- *Support measures to help control the spread of the opioid epidemic and other prescription medications. Specifically, we ask you to:*
- *Support H.R.1614 - John S. McCain Opioid Addiction Prevention Act. This bill establishes a new registration requirement for practitioners who are licensed to prescribe controlled substances in schedule II, III, or IV.*
- *Support S.1044 - Fentanyl Sanctions Act. This bill establishes programs to address illicit opioid trafficking and imposes sanctions on foreign individuals and entities involved in such activities.*

### **Mental Health**

Mental health deficiency can take multiple forms ranging from moderate to severe - from things like anxiety over an upcoming event to thoughts of self-harm - and affected areas include our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. In other words, it is how we think, feel, and act that dictates how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood, and college students find themselves in the middle of that scale. Changing schedules, identity discovery,

extracurricular, social, and academic responsibilities are all developmentally normative dimensions of college students, but each has potential mental health implications.

Facing a variety of possible outcomes that will determinedly affect their life's course, many college students may experience the persistence, exacerbation, or first onset of mental health problems while possibly receiving no or inadequate treatment. According to new research published by the American Psychological Association, about 35% of students struggled with a mental illness.<sup>26</sup> This mass survey was composed of data collected across eight total countries from around 14,000 students, solidifying the fact that mental health is truly a global issue.<sup>27</sup> The head of this project, Columbia University psychology professor Randy Auerbach, expressed his concern that while timely and effective treatment is important, the number of students in need of treatment for these disorders far exceeds the resources of most counseling centers.<sup>28</sup>

College counseling centers are the first line of response for students in need of support, but these centers are consistently under a great deal of pressure. A majority of university students seek help during peak times as the stress of midterm exams and papers start to take effect. This can be described as a bottle-neck phenomenon for which mental centers are ill-equipped to cope and must utilize waitlists as counseling sessions can be backed up for weeks. In dealing with mental illness, it is crucial to meet the needs of a patient in a timely manner. A Pulse Point survey conducted by the American Council on Education in April of 2019 collected responses from over 400 university presidents regarding the mental health and well-being of their

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<sup>26</sup> "The Road to Resilience". American Psychological Association, 2020. Web.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Auerbach, Randy P., et al. "*WHO World Mental Health Surveys International College Student Project: Prevalence and Distribution of Mental Disorders*", Journal of Abnormal Psychology. American Psychological Association, 2018.

students.<sup>29</sup> When asked what additional resources would be of value, over a quarter of university presidents said professional development and training for themselves, board members, and faculty on symptom recognition and identification. Another quarter of university presidents suggested developmental tools or assessments to help students build their skills in self-care and coping with stressful conditions.<sup>30</sup>

The American Psychological Association uses the term ‘resilience’ to describe this process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, or significant sources of stress.<sup>31</sup> Commonly considered to be a character trait, resilience involves behaviors, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and improved upon. Resilience is not simply the ability to “sweep things under the rug”, or to maintain a stoic disposition. Instead it is the understanding of one’s interactions with hardship and the evaluation of their respective responses. No two people react the same to stressors because no two people have the same thought processes; what works for one may not for another. It is this variation that leads to shortcomings in treatment as there can be no catch-all when providing care, and it is also a reason why students seek one-on-one counseling. If it is possible to get at the root of the problem – managing the causations of anxieties, depression, etc. – before their symptoms take effect, then half of the problem is already eradicated.

While there is debate regarding the origins of resilience deficiency – fear of failure, inability to cope with various stressors, feeling defeated due to setbacks – there is consensus that this lack of adaptability has created a more distressed population of students entering higher

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<sup>29</sup> Chessman, Hollie, and Taylor, Morgan. “*College Students Mental Health and Well-being: A Survey of Presidents*”. American Council on Education, HigherEducationToday. Web. 12 August 2019.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> “*The Road to Resilience*”. American Psychological Association. 2020. Web.

education institutions than in previous generations. Students come to college and are faced with a multitude of new experiences and many need assistance in their transition into adulthood and self-sufficiency. The approaches higher education institutions have used to respond effectively to this growth in demand for mental health services include increasing the size of the counseling staff or the number of available programs. The biggest issue that arises out of these options is finding the capital to fund them. This is the challenge faced by university health centers, as a president from the ACE survey wrote, “We can’t just solve this by hiring more counselors.”<sup>32</sup> There have been many successful efforts by well-known colleges, like Princeton University, Stanford University, and Tulane University, who have incorporated creative and effective resilience-building programs that can be emulated in other locations if provided the proper funding and information. Examples of their initiatives include Princeton’s TigerWell program, which promotes student and staff engagement with and access to mental health support outside of traditional care settings by emphasizing communication, collaborative projects, and social connectedness. Stanford’s Resilience Project also motivates students through personal storytelling, events, and academic skills coaching to remind students that setbacks are a normal part of rigorous education; previous examples include their “I Screwed Up” campaign and a “Failure 101” workshop.

At the federal level, lawmakers may not see mental health to be of top priority when considering all other issues that require a piece of an already tenuous budget. However, universities and their respective stakeholders mainly structure their finances based on what is necessary to maintain or increase retention and completion rates of students. It would, therefore, seem logical that more attention be paid to services upon which students can rely to aid their path

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<sup>32</sup> Chessman, Hollie, and Taylor, Morgan. “*College Students Mental Health and Well-being: A Survey of Presidents*”. American Council on Education, HigherEducationToday. Web. 12 August 2019.

to graduation. Responding to the lack in both legislative and collegiate expense allocation, Professor Auerbach of the APA study stated that students are a key population for determining the economic success of a country, so colleges must take greater urgency in addressing this issue.<sup>33</sup> In other words, it is imperative that we pursue solutions that ensure the quality of our students' minds.

The Higher Education Act of 1965 was a significant piece of legislation enacted to provide support for continuing education programs, scholarship funds, and teaching resources. Signed into law under President Johnson's Great Society domestic agenda, it has been a successful measure taken in higher education administration policy when considering the financial needs of students. A bill proposed on September 12, 2019 looks to add to this list of needs by including a new section initiative entitled, "Enhancing Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Through Campus Planning Act." This addition aims to promote comprehensive mental health and suicide prevention plans on campuses in coordination with the Secretary of Health and Human Services.<sup>34</sup> In alignment with pre-existing State efforts to address these issues at higher education institutions, the bill calls for reports to be conducted both one year post-enactment and three years post-enactment. While it is a step in the right direction, as federal offices should take part in creating efficient policies regarding mental health budgeting, this bill is strikingly vague. Its description merely states that the secretary "shall make efforts to encourage," a generality which promises no definitive action nor offers a clear plan for action. Most recently referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor, this bill must undergo

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<sup>33</sup> Auerbach, Randy P., et al. "WHO World Mental Health Surveys International College Student Project: Prevalence and Distribution of Mental Disorders", Journal of Abnormal Psychology. American Psychological Association, 2018.

<sup>34</sup> "Enhancing Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Through Campus Planning Act", H.R.4327. 12 September 2019.

further examination and modification to ensure that it includes an appropriate method of action before being passed to the next reviewing board.

The “Higher Education Mental Health Act of 2019” was an earlier proposal made on June 25, and it would authorize the Secretary of Education to establish an advisory commission to serve students with mental health challenges in institutions of higher education.<sup>35</sup> This bill provides a detailed description of its purpose and outlines the necessary personnel and duties of the suggested committee, including a report conducted no later than 18 months after the date of enactment. This multifaceted study would examine major obstacles facing students with mental health challenges as well as services available to them and their effectiveness. A well thought out proposal, this act would provide states and higher education institutions with accurate information about mental health concerns amongst their student populations and provide definite recommendations on measures that could be taken to improve the treatment options.

In an article published by the New York Times in July 2019, Jennifer Rothman, senior manager for youth and young adult initiatives for the National Alliance on Mental Illness, advocated for federal mental health education to be made available to students, school staff, and family members.<sup>36</sup> Rothman stated that the lack of such education hinders the ability to recognize and understand the warning signs of mental health issues. Otherwise, adults may think that young adults are overreacting, or that their complaining is simply a phase. What Rothman is referencing is the stigma that has long been associated with mental health distress which, through multiple studies, show it is incredibly commonplace. Although mental health distress is proven to be common, it is often considered taboo or weird to talk about because it implies that not

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<sup>35</sup> “Higher Education Mental Health Act of 2019”, H.R.3489. 25 June 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Taylor, Derrick Bryson. “Need a Mental Health Day? Some States Give Students the Option”, The New York Times, 24 July 2019. Web.



everything is working as it should be. Perfection, be it professional, academic, or social, is an ideal that is not humanly possible to attain, yet its increased emphasis has enveloped recent generational standards. People are uncomfortable sharing insecurities because they are signs of divergence from this ideal, and it is this hesitation to show vulnerability or the slightest bit of failure that creates divides. The affected person's gradual removal from events, both academic and social, has great potential to limit their ability to be productive in society.

As this apprehension increases, the student's work and relationships suffer as it becomes more difficult to sleep, study, and be social. According to the 2018 National College Health Assessment, 63% of American undergrads felt overwhelming anxiety within the past year, but only 23% said they sought treatment.<sup>37</sup> These statistics highlight the increasing urgency and need for mental health legislation. The assessment also speaks to the presence of stigma surrounding mental deficiency as a significantly smaller percentage of students felt comfortable enough to ask for help. The most disturbing realization that arises from this fact is that the insufficient and underprepared university counseling centers already struggle to keep up with those willing to come forward about their problems. Therefore, it would seem logical to assume that the decrease in stigma could lead to more students turning to campus resources, thereby rendering them useless as they are overrun.

Contrarily, a decrease in stigmatized responses to mental health deficiencies could result in a smaller dependency on emergency or institutionalized treatment. Students would not need to rely so heavily on professional help as a means of alleviating their concerns and problems if they felt comfortable sharing such things with their peers or professors. We are products of our environment, so therefore we are intrinsic to it. When one does not feel as though this connection

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<sup>37</sup> "National College Health Assessment: Fall 2018 Reference Group Executive Summary". American College Health Association, 2018. Web.

is present, their sense of belonging and purpose is diminished. As this anxiety increases, the student's work and relationships suffer as it becomes more difficult to sleep, study, and be social; there may be no physical wound, but what they feel is real and it is important that students do not think they have to carry it alone.

Education of mental health deficiency and recognition of associated symptoms has become a growing necessity in recent years, but it is an issue which has not been afforded much attention. Campus resources are not only underfunded, but underprepared to assist the number of students who suddenly flood centers due to their capability to independently cope with new stressors encountered at college. This inability is often the gateway to more deep-seated psychiatric issues. Many higher education institutions have developed programs which have proven instrumental in improving student resiliency, but the application of these requires further study to prompt others to follow suit. The "Higher Education Mental Health Act of 2019" proposes such investigation, seeking to provide definitive solutions and improve awareness of mental health effects on student life. When those affected try to unburden themselves, it can often be met with criticism or taken as a complaint. "Calm down," "get over it," and "you're fine," are phrases we hear every day, and their repetition reinforces the idea that the student is not behaving correctly when they feel as though they cannot keep up. The brain is a bodily organ just like one's heart, stomach, or lungs. When one of these is not functioning properly, there is clear instruction or methodology to improve the condition. The brain is the most complex organ in our bodies, the one that probably needs the most help in recovering from disruptive factors, but it is not being adequately provided for.

## **Recommendation**

- *Support Support H.R. 3489 - to authorize the Secretary of Education to establish an Advisory Commission on Supporting Students with Mental Health Disabilities in Institutions of Higher Education.*

## **Diversity and Inclusion**

### **Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Policies and Income-Driven Repayment (IDRs) Plans**

College affordability has become a rising issue for incoming and current college students in the United States. Tuition costs at American colleges and universities increase at a constant rate, making it tougher for students to independently pay off their fees. The problem is not legislative inaction by the U.S., but rather the lack of effectiveness previous legislative actions have had on improving college affordability and accessibility. The possible solution to this problem lies in refining current policies geared toward improving college affordability. Retooling and emphasizing the importance of the Maintenance of Effort and Income-Driven Repayment policies can help relieve pressure on federal and state governments to generate more money for financial aid efforts in other areas of infrastructure.

The topic of college affordability is not foreign to federal government deliberations as the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee has had several sessions regarding college affordability. Donald E. Heller reported to the committee that, "...tuition prices in both public and private institutions have grown more than three times faster than inflation, or more

importantly, more than three times faster than the median family income in the Nation.”<sup>38</sup> In a prepared statement, Steven Leath emphasized the need for accessible higher education stating that our status as a world power relies greatly on having a “...heavily educated workforce and citizenry.”<sup>39</sup> Being able to sustain a highly educated workforce and citizenry means that legislators at the federal level need to adapt current policies to make them more useful – namely the policies of Maintenance of Effort and Income-Driven Repayment.

Maintenance of Effort as defined by F. King Alexander are provisions that “...stipulate that the federal government will offer states a financial incentive in exchange for their ‘maintenance’ of a prescribed level of ‘effort.’”<sup>40</sup> The benefits for maintenance of effort (MOE) provisions, according to F. King Alexander include the following:

...enable the federal government to pursue on a sustained basis national educational attainment and workforce priorities that it in part funds; leverage federal resources to incentivize states to maintain their funding responsibilities for public higher education; an help mitigate rising tuition prices by encouraging states to invest adequately in their public higher education systems; provide a more predictable funding framework for state colleges and universities, thus, diminishing the fluctuation in state funding for higher education that has long been associated with the ebb and flow of economic cycles; respect state and

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<sup>38</sup> Making College Affordability a Priority: Promising Practices and Strategies: Hearing of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, United States Senate, One Hundred Twelfth Congress, Second Session . (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.cbhear/fdsysaque0001&i=11>.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Alexander, F., Harnisch, T., Hurley, D., & Moran, R. (2010). Maintenance of Effort: An Evolving Federal-State Policy Approach to Ensuring College Affordability. *Journal of Education Finance*, 36(1), 76-87. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40704406>.

institutional sovereignty by providing financial incentives, but not legal mandates or tuition control.<sup>41</sup>

In simpler terms, the idea behind Maintenance of Effort is that the federal government is incentivizing state governments to meet a minimal level of financial support for college students in their respective states. While MOE is not used to monitor or reduce tuition prices at private and public institutions, it can be used to help college students repay student loans.

Congressional Bill H.R. 4638 was recently introduced to the House of Representatives with the intent of giving "...middle-class families access to the maximum Federal Pell Grant, to increase college transparency, and state maintenance of efforts."<sup>42</sup> In this bill, the responsibilities of the state and the public university/college are thoroughly outlined. The states are responsible for maintaining "expenditures and state financial aid for institutions of higher education in the state...at an amount that is equal to or more than the average amount of state expenditures."<sup>43</sup> The bill requests that colleges and universities "...put a prominent link on the homepage of the institution's primary website that goes directly to a report of a standard set of key performance indicators..."<sup>44</sup> In a broader sense college affordability has also been discussed by the 116th Congress, as H.R. 4747, known as the Making College More Affordable Act, was introduced as well with the intention of carrying "out an income-contingent repayment program for Federal Interest Free Education Loans for Undergraduate students..."<sup>45</sup> This program is extensively laid

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Carbajal, and Salud O. "Text - H.R.4638 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Degrees Not Debt Act of 2019." *Congress.gov*, 11 Oct. 2019, [https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/4638/text?q={\"search\":\[\"maintenance+of+effort\"\]}&r=1&s=1.](https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/4638/text?q={\)

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Cicilline, & N., D. (2019, October 18). Text - H.R.4747 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Making College More Affordable Act. Retrieved from [https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/4747/text?q={\"search\":\[\"H.R.+4747\"\]}&r=1&s=3.](https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/4747/text?q={\)

out in the text of the bill as the terms, conditions, and benefits of the program. However, the following changes were added to this program laid out in the H.R. 4747 bill:

(i) a Federal Interest Free Education Loan shall have an applicable rate of interest of 3.76 percent for the term of the loan;(ii) the aggregate maximum amount of Federal Interest Free Education Loan that may be awarded to a borrower shall be \$90,000, for not more than a 4-year academic period;(iii) interest on a Federal Interest Free Education Loan shall only accrue during periods when a borrower is not earning taxable income due to professional negligence, professional incompetence, or malicious action on the part of the borrower;(iv) a borrower may consolidate any loan under section 428B, or a Federal Direct PLUS Loan, that is made, insured, or guaranteed on behalf of such borrower with the Federal Interest Free Education Loan of such borrower;(v) a Federal Interest Free Education Loan may only be repaid under the income-contingent repayment plan under subsection (r); and(vi) the secretary may determine other terms and conditions, and benefits to borrowers of Federal Interest Free Education Loan.<sup>46</sup>

Along with Maintenance of Effort policies, Income Driven Repayment Plans in the past have been great tools to ease the burden for college students struggling with tuition costs. The basis behind these plans is listed out by John R. Brooks in his article, *The Case For More Debt: Expanding College Affordability By Expanding Income-Driven Repayment:*

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

Borrowers will pay no more than a fixed percentage of discretionary income as monthly loan service payments, and if any debt is still outstanding after a certain number of years, the full balance is forgiven.<sup>47</sup>

Brooks also mentions that while there is general agreement on both sides of the aisle that this is a good idea, there are still problems. The biggest problem according to Brooks is that “monthly payment as a percentage of income, and ultimate forgiveness after the full repayment, apply only to money borrowed from the federal government.”<sup>48</sup> This can result in students drawing money from family savings to working extra hours concurrently with school to pay off tuition.

Legislation pertaining to reworking how Income-Driven Repayments should be used has been recently introduced to Congress. H.R. 3833, also known as the Streamlining Income-driven, Manageable Payments on Loans for Education Act, was presented in July 2019 as a means of recertifying income for Income-Driven Repayment Plans, and for other purposes.<sup>49</sup> Another bill that was recently introduced was H.R. 3102. This bill, also known as the Helping Individuals Get a Higher Education while Reducing Education Debt Act, will amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 by improving how student loans are distributed and forgiven. It has specific provisions for Income-Driven Repayment, including amending rules for refinanced loans from the federal government.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Brooks, John R. “The Case for More Debt: Expanding College Affordability by Expanding Income-Driven Repayment.” *Utah Law Review*, vol. 2018, no. 4, July 2018, pp. 847–865. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=130855080&site=ehost-live.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Bonamici, & Suzanne. (2019, July 18). Text - H.R.3833 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Streamlining Income-driven, Manageable Payments on Loans for Education Act. Retrieved from [https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/3833/text?q={\"search\":\[\"income+driven+repayment\"\]}&r=1&s=2](https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/3833/text?q={\).

<sup>50</sup> DeFazio, & A., P. (2019, June 28). Text - H.R.3102 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Helping Individuals Get a Higher Education while Reducing Education Debt Act. Retrieved from [https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/3102/text?q={\"search\":\[\"income+driven+repayment\"\]}&r=2&s=4#toc-HAED3999AC7274CEABB884E3EFADABAFE](https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/3102/text?q={\).

The commitment seen from the United States Congress and its Congressional Committees to making higher education more affordable for all Americans can be seen through the legislation that has been introduced in the past year. However, the commitment will only be truly realized if these pieces of legislation can make it through the House of Representatives and the U.S Senate. Maintenance of Effort and Income Driven Repayment policies need restructuring due to rising tuition prices making it increasingly difficult for college students to easily pay for their higher education. Restructuring these policies to fit the needs of college students in 2020 and beyond will help students pay for their higher education and make college more affordable, instead of making them depend on student loans that take years to pay off once graduating from college.

### **Recommendations**

- *Support H.R.4747 - Making College More Affordable Act, introduced to Congress with the intention of carrying “out an income-contingent repayment program for Federal Interest Free Education Loans for Undergraduate students...”*.
- *Support H.R.3833 - Streamlining Income-driven, Manageable Payments on Loans for Education Act, presented to the House of Representatives in July 2019 as a means of recertifying of income for Income-Driven Repayment plans, and for other purposes.*

### **First Generation Student Advocacy**

Since the enactment of the Higher Education Act of 1965, TRIO programs have been the backbone of federal support for marginalized students.<sup>51</sup> The Higher Education Act of 1965 was

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<sup>51</sup> TRIO Home Page. (2019, October 10). Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html>.



put in place to provide financial assistance for students seeking post-secondary education. The legislation created a solid base for financial aid as well as a National Teachers Corps. TRIO's student support services is the collegiate arm of the services that that are offered to help supplement marginalized communities. At the University of South Carolina, our version of Student Support Services is our Opportunity Scholars Program which serves low-income first-generation college students who are South Carolina residents.<sup>52</sup> The program offers many resources including tuition assistance for those taking three or more Opportunity Scholars Program classes, specialized academic and career advising, smaller class sizes, and several scholarships specific for first-generation students.

Going hand-in-hand with the Opportunity Scholars Program is the Gamecock Guarantee Program, an innovative financial aid program to assist first generation students at the University of South Carolina.<sup>53</sup> The Gamecock Guarantee Program, the grant provides students with a minimum of \$4,500 every year, pledging to cover tuition and fees at the least in addition to any other financial aid the student may receive. This model is also meant to reduce the amount of loans a student will take out, therefore reducing debt. Together, these two programs are trailblazers in the world of first-generation advocacy. With the financial and academic components both taken care of, students are able to be limitless in their pursuit of a post-secondary education. This year marks Gamecock Guarantee's tenth anniversary with a 71% graduation rate.

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<sup>52</sup> Opportunity Scholars Program. (n.d.). Retrieved from [https://www.sc.edu/about/offices\\_and\\_divisions/trio\\_programs/programs\\_for\\_college\\_students/opportunity\\_scholars\\_program/index.php](https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/trio_programs/programs_for_college_students/opportunity_scholars_program/index.php).

<sup>53</sup> Gamecock Guarantee. (n.d.). Retrieved from [https://www.sc.edu/about/offices\\_and\\_divisions/financial\\_aid/grants/gamecock\\_guarantee/index.php](https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/financial_aid/grants/gamecock_guarantee/index.php).

Due to the advancement of our institution in first generation advocacy, the University of South Carolina has been designated a First Forward institution by NASPA's Center for First-Generation Success in its inaugural cohort.<sup>54</sup> This designation is the first of its kind for higher education institutions and has been bestowed on a few dozen colleges and universities.<sup>55</sup>

Programs like Gamecock Guarantee are revolutionary, but they are not commonplace across higher education even though more and more first-generation students are seeking post-secondary education. The Opportunity Scholars Program, although it is a federal TRIO Student Support Services Program, is not what other SSS programs look like at every institution. If one was to look at the statistics, the UofSC model has been proven to be successful and impactful. The resources themselves are not extraordinary, they just require a deep understanding of the diverse and complex needs of first-generation students.

The truth is that in today's global society, simply having a bachelor's degree is no longer enough. Today's students get a competitive edge from the things they do outside of the classroom, typically in the form of studying abroad, internships, fellowships, and co-ops. For the most prestigious of these opportunities, there is a need for housing, transportation, and compensation that most first-generation college students cannot afford to participate in if resources aren't provided. As it relates to studying abroad, currently the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship exists to provide financial assistance through the U.S. Department of State. The Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship was founded under the International Academic Opportunity Act of 2000 and is a grant for Pell Grant eligible students to study or intern abroad for any length between two weeks to a year. The scholarship serves to assist historically

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<sup>54</sup> Ten Steps to Building a #FirstgenForward Campus. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://firstgen.naspa.org/blog/ten-steps-to-building-a-firstgenforward-campus>.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

underrepresented communities to engage in global learning and receive a more well-rounded collegiate experience.<sup>56</sup> U.S intelligence agencies such as the National Security Agency, Central Intelligence Agency, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation offer rigorous and compensated internship and co-op programs to give students real experience in government intelligence before they even graduate.

Programs like these level the playing field so that all students can participate and thrive despite their backgrounds and/or socioeconomic status. Much like the Opportunity Scholars Program, when you remove barriers to entry for underrepresented students, they not only perform adequately, they tend to exceed expectations. Masters, doctoral, and professional degrees are not ideal for every student, so experiential learning is the best way to increase every student's educational value at the bachelor's level. For first-generation college students and other historically marginalized communities, there is clearly a framework readily available to make pathways for experiential learning accessible across the board. The challenge is to now create a basic standard that can be implemented across the nation, across disciplines, and across socio-economic barriers to entry.

Currently on the House floor are three bills that could create major headway into supporting first-generation college students. The first is S.1888, the Go to High School, Go to College Act of 2019 that calls for an amendment to the Higher Education Act of 1965.<sup>57</sup> If passed, the bill would allow current high school students to receive Pell Grants as a way to encourage them to participate in dual enrollment or other college-equivalent coursework. S.1888

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<sup>56</sup> Gilman. (2019, November 26). Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program - Study Abroad with a Gilman Scholarship. Retrieved from [https://www.gilmanscholarship.org/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI24zHw4GL5gIVBI6fCh1fNwH7EAAAYASAAEgLI1w\\_D\\_BwE](https://www.gilmanscholarship.org/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI24zHw4GL5gIVBI6fCh1fNwH7EAAAYASAAEgLI1w_D_BwE).

<sup>57</sup> Portman, Rob. (2019, June 18). S.1888 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Go to High School, Go to College Act of 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1888>.

was introduced to the United States Senate on June 18, 2019 and was created with support from both sides of the aisle. The bill is co-sponsored by Republican Senator Rob Portman [OH] and Democratic Senator Mark Warner [VA]. The legislation has been read twice and is currently with the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. The bill also requires students to be assisted and educated on how to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

This provision will not only help them obtain funds in high school, but it will also prepare first-generation students for post-secondary education. Alleviating the financial burden to take college courses in high school will encourage more first-generation students to seek post-secondary education. Students that enter colleges and universities with credits already completed are more likely to succeed when they get to college and they are more likely to graduate on time and, in many cases, graduate early. More specific wording from the legislation states that it intends to

“provide an assurance that such institution will provide all students enrolled in dual or concurrent enrollment programs and early college high school programs, alongside students receiving College in High School Federal Pell Grants under this subsection, necessary support services to such eligible students, such as academic tutoring, high school to college transition support, guidance counseling, or other comparable services designed to increase student participation for and success in postsecondary education.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Portman, Rob. (2019, June 18). S.1888 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Go to High School, Go to College Act of 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1888>.

The second is H.R.4343, the FACT Act of 2019.<sup>59</sup> The proposed bill will require colleges and universities to be transparent about financial aid practices and offers for current and prospective students. There is also a requirement that this information be readily available with consumer-friendly language that is easy to understand, as well as consumer testing to see if students qualify for financial aid offers available for certain affinity groups such as first-generation college students. H.R.4343 was brought before the United States House of Representatives on September 17, 2019 and has received bipartisan support. H.R.4343 is co-sponsored by Democratic Representatives Lori Trahan [D-MA-3], David Trone [D-MD-6], Bennie Thompson [D-MS-2], Ed Case [D-HI-1], Debbie Dingell [D-MI-12], & Cynthia Axne [D-IA-3] as well as Republican Representatives Lloyd Smucker [R-PA-11] and Brian Fitzpatrick [R-PA-1]. The bill has been referred to the House of Representatives' Education and Labor Committee.

First-generation and low-income students are often unsure of the differences between grants, loans and other types of aid. Education about public and private loans, interest rates, and defaulting is very basic, often leaving students and families ignorant about the debt they are getting into to pay for college. H.R.4343 creates a more equitable collegiate environment through financial aid transparency and education and requires that schools “specify the simple, plain-language, and consumer-friendly information to be included in each such offer with respect to the financial aid being offered to a student, which shall include...an explanation of differences among each such type of financial aid, including clear explanations that grants and scholarships do not have to be repaid, loans...must be repaid with interest; and...payments under federal

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<sup>59</sup> Trahan, Lori. (2019, September 17). H.R.4343 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): FACT Act of 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/4343>.

work-study programs under part C are contingent on finding qualified employment and are typically disbursed incrementally in paychecks.”<sup>60</sup>

Third, H.R.2006 & S.943, the College Equity Act of 2019 brought before the House and Senate, puts equity audits in place to survey how policies and procedures impact different identities. In the House, H.R.2006 was introduced on April 4, 2019 by Rep. Donna Shalala [D-FL-27] with seventeen co-sponsors and is under review by the House Education and Labor Committee.<sup>61</sup> In the Senate, S.943 was introduced in the Senate on March 28, 2019 by Senator Brian Schatz [D-HI] with six co-sponsors and has been read on two occasions and sitting in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.<sup>62</sup> Grants are provided to fund these audits, and grants are also made available to address inequities for marginalized communities as it relates to recruiting students, admitting students, and supporting enrolled students. Some of the specifics regarding grant funds state that “an institution of higher education that receives a planning grant under this section to conduct an equity audit shall undertake a thorough internal review of the institution's policies, practices, and resources to identify areas that might produce gaps in outcomes by gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, income, criminal justice background, military service history, or for first-generation students, students with disabilities, student parents, and transfer students.”

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<sup>60</sup> Trahan, Lori. (2019, September 17). H.R.4343 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): FACT Act of 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/4343>.

<sup>61</sup> Shalala, Donna (2019, April 1). H.R.2006 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): College Equity Act of 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2006>.

<sup>62</sup> Schatz, B. (2019, March 28). S.943 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): College Equity Act of 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/943>.

The bill addresses not only access, but also success and opportunity, a space where advances in experiential learning resources could definitely be implemented and improved to better serve all students of all backgrounds.

These bills would go a long way toward truly making college more affordable and equitable for all students, particularly first-generations students. As the United States of America falls further behind in education, it is important to empower students with different perspectives that are eager to learn, despite a lack of resources.

Much like the establishment of the GI Bill in 1944 or the creation of TRIO back in 1968, the Go To School, Go To College Act of 2019, the FACT Act of 2019, and the College Equity Act of 2019 has the potential to serve as the widespread education reform that is needed in 2020. Serving first-generation college students and other underserved populations is not only about tuition and housing expenses. The success of first-gen students depends on making a well-rounded effort to provide both preliminary and concurrent resources.

### **Recommendations**

- *Support H.R.3268 - Go to High School, Go to College Act of 2019 to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to allow the Secretary of Education to create a pilot program to award College in High School Pell Grants. The program will support enrollment in, and completion of, postsecondary courses offered through a dual or concurrent enrollment program or an early college high school.*
- *Support H.R.4343 - FACT Act of 2019 to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to direct the Secretary of Education to publish requirements for financial aid offers to be provided by institutions of higher education to enrolled and prospective students, and for other purposes.*

- *Support H.R.2006 - College Equity Act of 2019, to require the Department of Education (ED) to establish grant programs for reviewing and addressing inequities in student recruitment, admissions, and support at institutions of higher education (IHEs)*

## **Veteran Student Advocacy**

Higher education is growing not only in demand nationally, but in cost as well. Two thirds of all jobs require some form of higher education or specialized training, while costs of public 4-year schools have more than doubled.<sup>63</sup> It has been longstanding tradition in the United States to care for veterans and military members to the best of the country's ability, and since the introduction of the first G.I. Bill, the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, those benefits in the realm of higher education have been crucial to the success of veterans in their post service lives. Those rights have seen expansion over the years to ensure that members of the military are able to maintain their options in an ever-changing world.<sup>64</sup> However, there still exist issues faced by veterans and military members in trying to attain easy and successful access to higher education that would certainly benefit from a change to the current status quo.

The issue of how to use one's G.I. Bill and the benefits that come with it has been a growing concern of many members in the military. Many eligible members are facing the decision of whether to save the benefits for themselves, or to pass the benefits on to either a spouse or child.<sup>65</sup> This often comes at the sacrifice of one's own education, not to mention the stipulations in currently transferring benefits to a family member. There are many hurdles to jump while looking

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<sup>63</sup> College Affordability and Completion: Ensuring a Pathway to Opportunity. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.ed.gov/college>.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Altman, G. (2019, September 17). Why fewer people are using the GI Bill. Retrieved from <https://www.militarytimes.com/education-transition/2019/09/16/why-fewer-people-are-using-the-gi-bill/>.



to transfer G.I. Bill benefits onto children or spouse. According to new rules on transferring benefits effective January 2020, military members must have served at least six years and agree to serve four more, as well as not having completed a 16<sup>th</sup> year of service yet. The confusion is exacerbated by the lack of resources available for many members of the military, who find they must do this work on their own. It is also a hard decision for military and veteran members to decide whether they would be better off with a college degree or if they should sacrifice their own to better combat growing college tuition rates that their children may one day face without G.I. Bill benefits.<sup>66</sup>

This same issue of a lack of understanding is demonstrated by the number of military members still signing up for the Montgomery G.I. Bill, or Chapter 30 under Title 38, an outdated version that is not as worthwhile as the Post 9/11 version. In 2017 over 110,000 new members joined the Montgomery Bill and are paying for it, even though 97% end up using the Post 9/11 version and simply losing the money paid into the version (Hefling). The presence of the Montgomery Bill should warrant the attention of those at the federal level, and while the Trump administration has proposed some changes, this is now being tackled by the G.I. Planning Act. This piece of legislation will provide new military members the time to learn more about the benefits available to them and make a choice that best fits their goals for the future. The bipartisan bill has passed in the House of Representatives and is now co-sponsored by Senator Jacky Rosen (D-NV) and Senator John Barrasso (R-WY). Pushing this legislation through the Senate as fast as possible would help many active members of the military and save a great deal of money for many new recruits to the military, with little understanding of the system currently in place.

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<sup>66</sup> Guina, R. (2019, July 12). GI Bill Transfer Rules - Transfer GI Bill to Family Members. Retrieved from <https://themilitarywallet.com/gi-bill-transfer-rules/>.

To assist veterans and military students of higher education, the Veteran and Military Center of Excellences has been created.<sup>67</sup> These veteran excellence centers act as educational and support hubs which are built around universities as an on-campus outreach program for veterans and military members who are working on attaining a higher education degree.<sup>68</sup> While there is a program like this set up through the United States Department of Education, it is severely underfunded, and has not seen any grants gifted since 2015. This program, if given proper funding, could match other institutions that some larger universities provide for military personnel, such as the Pat Tillman Veterans Center which supports over 8,000 veterans and military members at Arizona State University (Gonzalez). A similar building also exists at Syracuse University, the Institute for Veterans and Military Families, and they are currently constructing the National Veterans Resource Center, the first of its kind. These are state of the art programs that are unmatched in their field and draw in one of the most successful groups of students to the area, while also helping the local economy.<sup>69</sup> The benefits provided to the military personnel is equally as helpful, with instructional services for students, assistance given in finding financial aid, housing support, and large-scale coordination. One such center, with the appropriate funding in South Carolina, would be beyond valuable. The state is home to eight different military installations, from all branches, and Fort Jackson, the largest training center in the country (South Carolina – Military Bases). The state also has over 400,000 veterans, one of the largest quantities in the state (State Summaries – South Carolina). Having such a building and program would be an enormous help to military members in the area, as there is no such program in the Southeast United

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<sup>67</sup> Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success. (2016, November 4). Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/cevss/index.html>.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Syracuse University Announces Historic \$20 Million Gift to Support Construction of First-of-Its-Kind National Veterans Resource Center. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://news.syr.edu/blog/2018/02/05/syracuse-university-announces-historic-20-million-gift-to-support-construction-of-first-of-its-kind-national-veterans-resource-center/>.

States. Many members feel the need to travel toward more military friendly areas, and with large joint base numbers coming from Fort Jackson, Fort Bragg, Fort Benning, and Fort Gordon, it is crucial to keep the military members in the area. The University of South Carolina, a large, public, research institute is a central location, which, like Syracuse or Arizona State, would be a perfect location for such a center.

These centers could also help with a new program that is becoming more prominent at universities, a military engagement program. The University of South Carolina recently opened this new program, with Director Jared Evans, a former Marine soldier, and these programs are designed to help veterans learn of the benefits that can assist them. With a largescale installation to promote, support, and house this program, the amount of outreach could see significant expansion, allowing the program to live up to its full potential. H.R. 1652, the Veteran Education Empowerment Act is designed to help build such student centers, as the legislation and its main sponsor, Representative Frankel, pointed out how important it is for military students to have access to a resource that understands their unique station and approach to student life (Frankel, and Lois). These veteran centers are key in providing a supportive environment tailor-made for the over 1 million veterans who attend an institution of higher learning every year.

Higher levels of visibility could lead to more opportunities for veterans to succeed during and post their higher education experience. Another measure that has been enacted at some schools and even at the state level (in Pennsylvania) is military priority registration. It has been shown that 46% of veterans enrolled in higher education work either full or part time. About 45% also have children that are dependent on (Profile of the Contemporary Student Veteran). These dedications outside the sphere of higher education lead to difficulties in obtaining a degree within the time limit that the G.I. bill permits. Should military members have priority access to registering for

classes, they would be able to register and create a schedule that works best around their commitments, meaning they would not have to fear finishing on time. Most universities in the country have switched to electronic registration programs anyway, and have a priority system in place, one usually applied to athletes and honors students. Placing military members at the same level shows appreciation while also allowing them to have less trouble in finding success. The bill, which is currently proposed in South Carolina legislature, has shown that there is zero fiscal impact or burden, showing the nonexistent detriments of such a system. Military students have consistently demonstrated that they are extremely effective students, with an average GPA of 3.35 versus the 2.94 of the non-military students, according to The National Center for Education Statistics.<sup>70</sup>

Another piece of legislation currently important for helping veterans is the Higher Education Act. There is the controversial 90-10 rule which “caps the share of revenue for-profits can take in from federal student aid at 90 percent.” The cap makes it so that veterans and active military are exempt from federal tuition benefits they would otherwise be entitled to (Kreighbaum). The House PROPSER Act recently proposed doing away with this rule all together, as it is an ineffective rule that measures the wrong information and simply costs more money in implementation than it saves, according to Senator Lamar Alexander.

Another piece of legislation that has recently been introduced is H.R. 3608 and S. 2136. The legislation is sponsored by Representative Roe and Senator Blackburn, and its official goal is “To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the ability of veterans to receive in-state tuition using educational assistance administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs,” according to its title. By amending title 38 of the United States Code, veterans receive better help in attaining in-

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<sup>70</sup> Welcome to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://nsduhweb.rti.org/respweb/homepage.cfm>.

state tuition through a simple yet effective manner. The amendment to the code clarifies that the Department of Veteran Affairs must have an updated database of how to receive in-state tuition on their website for different public institutions of higher education.<sup>71</sup> While a subtle change, this is a step toward accessibility, which is greatly important as was mentioned earlier. When veterans and members of the military have an easier time finding the information that is crucial for their actions in pursuing a degree, it greatly adds to their success. It is important to make this process of finding resources as easy as possible for veterans. The legislation is currently in the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs as well as the Senate Committee of Veterans' Affairs.

It has been shown that veteran and military students are in a unique situation when it comes to pursuing a degree of higher education in the civilian world. In its report on the Veteran Education Empowerment Act, Congress found many of the challenges specific to this group of students. Many members have disabilities of some sort, family obligations, and a significant age and academic difference than their peers at the schools (Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success). It was also reported that “the National Education Association found that veteran students can feel lonely and vulnerable on campus and that “connecting student veterans can effectively ease this isolation” by bringing together new veteran students with those who have already successfully navigated the first few semesters of college.” By providing a way for veterans to be mentored and go through challenges with other veterans who have been through similar challenges is a great benefit, and according to Mission United is crucial in re-acclimation.

The Department of Education has produced its own eight keys to veteran success where it promotes the importance of coordination and centralization of veteran students (8 Keys to

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<sup>71</sup> P., D. (2019, July 2). Text - H.R.3608 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the ability of veterans to receive in-state tuition using educational assistance administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/3608/text?r=19&s=1>.

Veterans' Success Sites). It specifically mentions the importance of a designated space for members of the military and veterans, finding that "federally funded Veteran Student Centers and staff have generated improved recruitment, retention, and graduation rates, have helped veteran students feel better connected across campus, and have directly contributed to veteran students' successful academic outcomes," which goes to show the importance of such centers.

It is also important for students to tackle these issues on their end as well. The creation of a supportive culture that veterans can trust and rely on is something that goes a long way. A connected culture with an engaged legislature helps all students, both military and civilian, and among the other changes proposed, creates a higher education that is much more supportive of its students who have sacrificed part of their lives to serve the United States.

### **Recommendations**

- *Support H.R.4162 - GI Bill Planning Act of 2019 would give enlistees six months - instead of just two weeks - to decide whether to pay the \$1200 or opt-out of their MGIB benefit. Additionally, the bill responsibly ends new enlistee enrollments in the outdated MGIB by October 2029.*
- *Support the creation of Veteran and Military Center of Excellences to assist veteran students and their families while obtaining a college degree.*

### **Public Safety on College Campuses**

Over the past 50 years, police forces have become ubiquitous on college campuses. Nearly every university in the nation has some type of police force in operation. The amount of

college campus police forces is approximately 4,000.<sup>72</sup> There is a need for these types of forces because they serve such a unique segment of the general community. College life is vastly different from typical residential life and, therefore, cannot be policed in the same manner or by the same types of forces. Although campus officers are vested with the full authority of regular police officers, their responsibilities differ slightly.<sup>73</sup>

The problems that campus authorities face most often are different from those of their counterparts. Two key areas of difference in city/state level crime and college crime is the presence of mass school shootings and high levels of alcohol and drug consumption. Although both of these problems do occur at the public level, a large portion of them take place at schools of all different types. With this in mind, campus officers would benefit from training programs and regulations that prepare them for the unique types of situations that they will encounter on college campuses (i.e. alcohol prevention and active shooter training). In the past decade, the increased occurrence of mass school shootings at all levels has resulted in the need for tighter policing on campuses.<sup>74</sup> In addition to this, campus law enforcement officers encounter alcohol and underage drinking at very high rates. The consumption and abuse of these substances affect all those involved, ranging from physical, emotional, and sexual violence. As recorded in a National Survey of Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) in 2017, 53.6 percent of full-time college students ages 18 to 22 drank alcohol in the past month; 34.8 percent engaged in binge drinking (five or more drinks on a single occasion for men or four or more drinks on an occasion for women) in the past month; and 9.7 percent engaged in heavy alcohol use (binge drinking on five

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<sup>72</sup> Anderson, Melinda D. "Are Campus Police Forces Really Keeping College Students Safe?" The Atlantic, Atlantic Media Company, 29 Sept. 2015, [www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/09/college-campus-policing/407659/](http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/09/college-campus-policing/407659/).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Anderson, Melinda D. "Are Campus Police Forces Really Keeping College Students Safe?" The Atlantic, Atlantic Media Company, 29 Sept. 2015, [www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/09/college-campus-policing/407659/](http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/09/college-campus-policing/407659/).

or more days in the past month).<sup>75</sup> These rates are higher than those for their non-college-attending peers. Recent data from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) shows that drinking by college students ages 18 to 24 contributes to an estimated 1,519 student deaths each year.<sup>76</sup> In addition, there are an estimated 696,000 assaults by another student who has been drinking and 97,000 cases of sexual assault or date rape each year.<sup>77</sup> Understanding that alcohol use can produce a plethora of concerns, there is a call for strong training in all of the areas linked to it. Examples of areas that would benefit from more training are sexual abuse/dating violence, mental health disorders, alcohol as a gateway drug, and extreme alcoholism. Since campus authorities encounter alcohol and gun related issues so frequently, it would behoove them to be more well versed in how to deal with them seamlessly.

One topic that is starting to gain more attention from critical researchers and sociologists is implicit racial bias in policing tactics. The term implicit racial bias refers to discrimination based on skin color that is not intentionally enacted by any one party. In an article written in 2017, researchers argue that implicit bias, in some forms, still exists in our social justice system. They also argue that this topic is greatly understudied, leaving sizable gaps in our understanding of the levels of racial bias in policing.<sup>78</sup> With campus police forces being modeled after state and local forces, it is imperative that campus forces seek to understand how these biases impact their

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<sup>75</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2019). Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (HHS Publication No. PEP19-5068, NSDUH Series H-54). Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/>.

<sup>76</sup> College Drinking. (2019, December 27). Retrieved from <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/college-drinking>.

<sup>77</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2019). Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (HHS Publication No. PEP19-5068, NSDUH Series H-54). Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/>.

<sup>78</sup> Swencionis, J. K., & Goff, P. A. (2017). The psychological science of racial bias and policing. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 23(4), 398–409. <https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000130>.



standard operating procedures.<sup>79</sup> The primary function of campus authorities is to ensure the safety and stability of the learning environment. Therefore, if implicit bias is present within campus authorities it could be counterproductive to this goal.

In a study conducted by Solórzano in 2000, it was reported that minorities on predominantly white campuses are more likely to experience instances of racial stereotyping and microaggressions.<sup>80</sup> Considering that campus forces were established during the 1960s and 70s at the height of the civil rights movement as a means of containing public protests, it again is crucial that campus forces seek to understand how implicit biases impact their police force as it is possible that the presence and tactics of campus police officers could potentially add to the anxiety of minority students.<sup>81</sup> In an article published in 2000 by Research and Education, stress has been shown to negatively affect the performance of college students, especially minorities. For this reason, implicit bias on college campuses requires further research.

Some campus officers also hold jurisdiction that extends across multiple states. In affirmation of this power, officers are able to deal with issues that are related to students in a streamlined process since they do not have to coordinate with state and local law enforcement to pursue a suspect. With this level of jurisdiction comes the need for specialized training. This specialized training does exist but is not a required standard across different police forces.

The International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administration is the leading authority on campus safety in the nation. This association is certified and able to provide mental health awareness training, sexual assault training, and seminars on alcoholism. While most

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Yosso, Tara & Smith, William & Ceja, Miguel & Solorzano, Daniel. (2009). Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate for Latina/o Undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review*. 79. 659-691. 10.17763/haer.79.4.m6867014157m7071.

<sup>81</sup> Swencionis, J. K., & Goff, P. A. (2017). The psychological science of racial bias and policing. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 23(4), 398–409. <https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000130>.

campus police units do mandate that officers receive some variation of the trainings previously mentioned, they are not required to receive all specialized trainings that are needed to adequately deal with the types of complex issues that they will face while on the job. This creates the possibility that some campus police forces receive the proper training and others do not. With campus officers being one of the first responders to the issues that plague college students, it is imperative that students can expect the same standard of protection no matter what school they choose to attend.

### **Recommendations**

- *Support of the bill 20 U.S. Code § 1011h. Binge drinking on college campuses focused on combatting binge drinking on college campuses.*
- *Support a review of implicit biases within campus police forces as they stand to impact the academic success of students.*
- *Support the pursuit of legislation that will standardize campus officer training on multiple levels.*

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