Graduate school can be overwhelming. Graduate students often find themselves immersed in an environment of supervision and competitiveness while having to deal with different aspects of social and financial insecurity. Understanding potential stress-related sources will allow us to create strategies to promote campus cultural changes and enhance access to mental health support in our university. As part of my PFTF project, I created and promoted a pilot web survey that was distributed to the UC Davis graduate student community. The purpose of the survey was to (1) assess the general mental health status of graduate students at UC Davis, (2) identify common sources, and (3) assess perceptions and knowledge of on-campus counseling resources.

The survey was based on Evans et al. 2018 (1), with modifications.

**THE PROJECT**

Enhance mental health support services on campus:

- Educate and train PIs so they can identify when graduate students are struggling with mental health problems;
- Educate PIs and graduate students on the importance of work life balance;
- Increase stipend for graduate students, or provide affordable housing for graduate students;
- Enforce quarterly or monthly assessments on the mental health condition of graduate students;
- Promote seminars and workshops on the importance to mental health particularly during the first years of graduate school;
- Promote specialists visits to conduct seminars/talks in person.

**THE SURVEY**

The initial step in addressing a problem is to identify it. The results of this pilot survey could represent a starting point to increase awareness of graduate students’ mental health and to enhance mental health support services on campus. The final report of the Pilot Survey for Mental Health and Well-Being of Graduate Students at UC Davis will be distributed to the office of graduate studies, Student Health and Counseling Services (SHCS), Services for International Students and Scholars (SISS), Graduate Group Representatives, Faculties and Graduate Students. Hopefully, this pilot survey can contribute to promote change in the academic culture and enhance the access of mental health services for graduate students.

**NEXT STEPS**

The survey used the PHQ (Patient Health Questionnaire) and GAD (Generalized Anxiety Disorder) for screening. The PHQ-9 and GAD-7 were used to assess the severity of depression and anxiety, respectively. The PHQ-9 is a widely used tool to assess the severity of depression, while the GAD-7 is a brief measure for the assessment of anxiety disorders.

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**THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY**

Let’s look at the results of the survey.

**What can we do to improve the well-being of graduate students at UC Davis?**

**Promote Cultural Change on Campus**
- Educate and train PIs so they can identify when graduate students are struggling with mental health problems;
- Educate PIs and graduate students on the importance of work life balance;
- Increase stipend for graduate students, or provide affordable housing for graduate students;
- Enforce quarterly or monthly assessments on the mental health condition of graduate students;
- Promote seminars and workshops on the importance to mental health particularly during the first years of graduate school;
- Promote specialists visits to conduct seminars/talks in person.

**Enhance mental health support services on campus**
- Hire more counselors to reduce the waitlist period on campus consultation services;
- Hire counselors that are specialized in the experiences of graduate students;
- Increase diversity within counselors so they can assist students from distinct backgrounds;
- Extend counseling schedules to after business hours;
- Provide continuous and long-term therapy services on campus;
- Provide services for graduate students outside the main campus (Sacramento, Bay Area);
- Improve assistance to graduate students to find therapists outside campus;
- Improve the promotion about the resources on campus.

**REFERENCES**