



Student Perspectives on Campus Mental Health:

Results of the Ontario Post-Secondary
Student Survey (OPSSS)



Eddy Avila, Research & Policy Analyst - OUSA

Hold me Accountable

Introductions & Goals for Presentation - 5 min

OUSA's Advocacy on Mental Health - 10 min

OPSSS & Student Perspectives - 10 min

Collaborating with Students & Reflections - 5 min

/30 minutes

Goals for Today

- Better understand how students are experiencing mental health on their campuses
- Understand the importance of having students as a partner in developing mental health strategies

Introductions

Eddy with a y

Research & Policy Analyst at OUSA

Western USC alumn





OUS A

Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance

Represents 150,000 undergraduate & professional students across Ontario

Comprised of 8 member institutions

Non-partisan advocacy group that strives for an accessible, affordable, accountable, and high quality post-secondary education in Ontario

Student-centric & Student-driven



Why is OUSA talking about Mental Health?

Because improving mental health services for students is a priority for students

Advocacy & Mental Health

- 2018:
 - Saw commitments from all political parties on the need for mental health investments, with \$1.9B allocated toward mental health care (at the time)
- 2017:
 - Additional \$6 M per year allocated to frontline mental health care workers on campus
 - \$73 M invested over 3 years to provide publicly funded psychotherapy to individuals over the age of 18
- 2014/13
 - \$12 M for two years of additional funding for the Mental Health Innovation Fund
 - Received funding from province to create Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health

Government Submissions & Research

Government submissions

- Investing today, shaping tomorrow (pre-budget submission) 2018
- In It Together: Taking Action on Student Mental Health (COU, OUSA, CSA, CO)
- “Shared Perspectives” , 2017
- Healthy Change, 2012

Research

OPSSS & Student Health & Wellness Policy Paper 2018

Current Trends and *the Challenge*

- More student consultation has been occurring on campuses
 - Sexual violence prevention policies, SMAs, long-term strategic plans
- We need to ensure that student consultation is done in a **meaningful** manner, not just a checkbox

“I am smart. I am creative. I am not getting the support I need. Talk to me about my struggles. Help me. Help me help the university. Help me help the university help others.” – Survey Participant

OPSSS Ontario Post-Secondary Student Survey

What are Students Saying?

-
- Conducted every 2 years
 - Based on this data, OUSA releases 3 reports
 - Accessibility, Quality and Affordability

 - Reports for 2017 OPSSS data will be released in the next couple months
 - For some context: 2017 OPSSS data ~8000 student respondents
 - Includes questions about tuition, student financial aid, teach and learning and demographic information

Academic Pressures

“The education system has never seemed to have an interest in the wellbeing or mental health of students. Found myself as well as others mentally drained and stressed over the excessive demands of each course”—Survey Participant

“Don’t push the students to the point that they are stressing so much they are depressed. It feels like universities don’t care about our mental health. They just keep pushing. We need breaks.”—Survey Participant

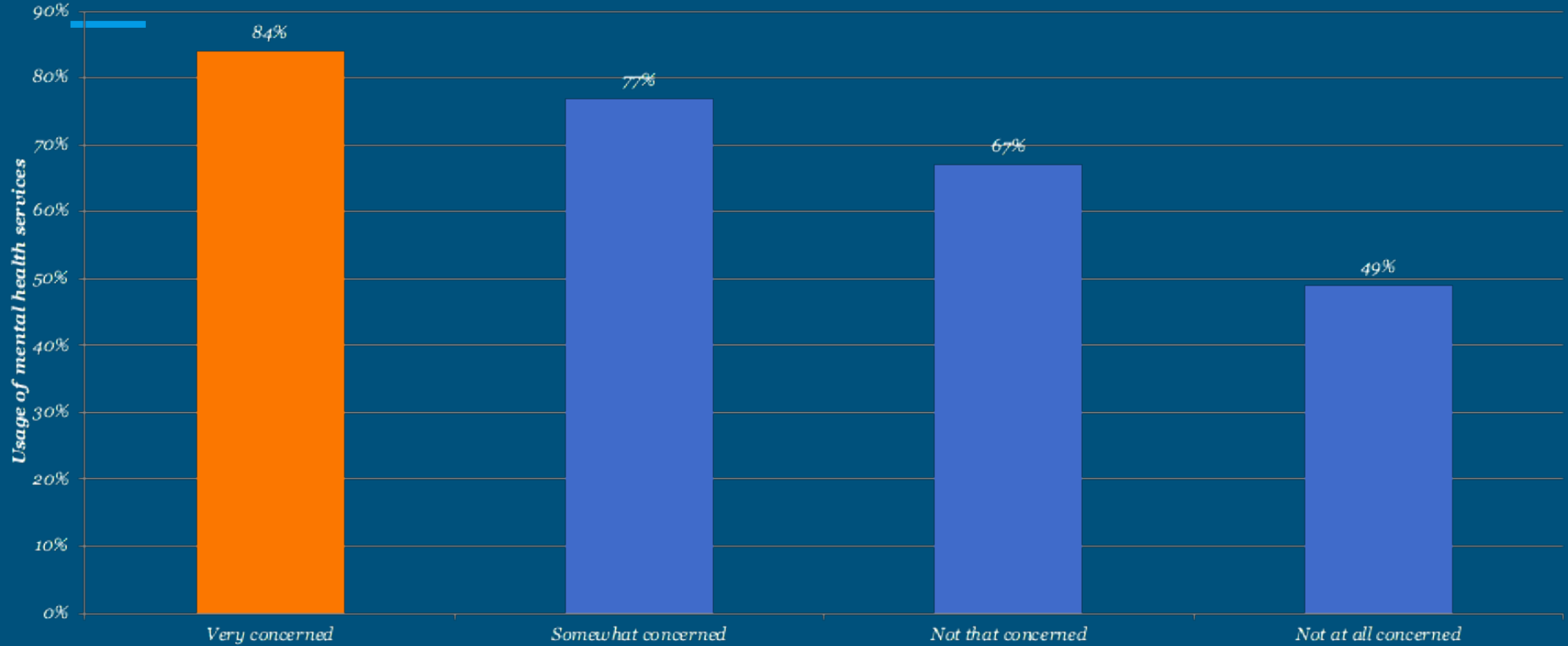
Financial Burdens

“Those who feel the pressure of financial struggles while attending university are found to perform less well than their peers... and may be at higher risk of mental health problems” - Flatt (2013)

71% of respondents were very concerned or somewhat concerned
about having enough money to complete their education

“The data outlined by the OPSSS established that, although clear differences between each marginalized demographic group exist, all of these marginalized students are in a more financially precarious situation.” - Claggett (2018)

Service usage vs student concern with paying off debt



Student Mental Health: Barriers to Access

“Better mental health services: in my experience, it took weeks to get appointments for counselling and seeing a psychiatrist” - Survey Participant

“There needs to be more funding and resources in counselling services, and professors need to be more accommodating. I think universities should expand mental health services to make them more accessible for those who are not currently in crisis by adding more staff to their counselling centres.” - Survey Participant

OUSA's Recommendations

- Identify post-secondary students as a specific population cohort that needs more mental health supports
- Ensuring that a holistic approach to mental health services is taken
 - “Whole of community” approach
- Emphasis on prevention and harm reduction
- Culturally and gendersensitive mental health services for all students, regardless of where they live in Ontario
- Preparing students with mental health resiliency skills, prior to and during, post-secondary education

Collaborate with Students

Most important recommendation: Collaborate with students. Take a system-wide effort which includes **meaningful** input from all stakeholders including students

Students bring lived experiences, important concerns, and innovative solutions to the table.

Reflection

- How does your work impact students?
- Are students actively involved in the planning, creation, and execution of your programs and services?
- Do you have a plan to actively consult with students, in a meaningful way, to improve your programs/services/understanding?
- Is there an opportunity to partner with student leaders and students groups on campus?
 - Student associations, clubs, orientation groups, student athletes, students-at-large
- Are your programs/services accessible for students to provide their feedback?

Let's connect!

Student leaders on your campus

Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA)

Eddy Avila - eddy@ousa.ca

Works Cited

- Flatt (2013) *“A Suffering Generation: Six Factors Contributing to the mental health crisis in North American higher education ”* College Quarterly vol.16 no.
- Claggett, Mackenzie. *Financing Fees: The Inequitable Burden of University Costs*. Toronto: Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, 2018.
- Beckett, Hannah, Stephanie Bertolo, Katherine MacCabe, and Landon Tulk. *Policy Paper: Student Health & Wellness*. Toronto: Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, 2018.
- OPSSS (2015, 2017)

Questions?
