



JED Campus Post Visit Executive Summary Report

Institution: Northern Michigan University

Date of Report: December 2021

Dear Northern Michigan University JED Campus Team,

Thank you for being part of our JED Campus program since Fall of 2017. JED has been impressed by how your team and campus community have prioritized student mental health and well-being through strategic interventions aimed at reducing suicide risk and substance use/misuse issues on campus. Below, you will see a snapshot of feedback from your JED Campus post assessment which acknowledges your accomplishments during the four-year program and recommendations to consider as your campus develops a sustainability plan to continue the work. It is also important to acknowledge the remainder of the work was completed during the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and many steps were taken both before and during this time to address student mental health and well-being.

Strategic Planning

Engaging in an active and dynamic strategic planning process is one of the most important things a college or university can do to ensure the future success of their mental health and substance use prevention efforts. Strategic planning allows institutions to anticipate and evaluate the effectiveness of policies, systems, and programming needs, examine how they deploy both personnel and financial resources to address challenges, and coordinate efforts across campus. It is great that mental health and well-being is seen as a campus-wide issue that has involvement from multiple campus departments and stakeholders.

Notable Accomplishments

- **Emotional Health and Wellbeing.** Emotional Health is seen as a campus-wide issue with significant involvement from multiple campus departments/stakeholders.
 - **Committees.** There is a committee focused on mental health that works on campus wide strategy and planning with representation from the Dean of Students, residential life, counseling services, campus security, faculty, and students.



- **Student Experience.** Your school is working hard to provide an exceptional student experience and to create a campus environment that enhances a healthy balance for students in academics and in their lives.

Considerations for Sustainability

- **Emotional Health and Wellbeing.** Consider establishing separate committees focused on mental health and substance issues on your campus with representation from diverse departments across campus.
- **Strategic Plan.** It would be great to establish a strategic plan for emotional health and wellness consistent with the Campus MHAP guide moving forward.
 - **Institutional Strategic Plan.** Once you have a strategic plan, we recommend you integrate your strategic plan for emotional health and substance abuse into your institution's larger strategic plan.
- **JED Task Force.** It's understandable that committees have been unable to meet due to the disruption of COVID-19. Consider reconvening your subcommittees to continue this work moving forward when there is additional time and stability on your campus.
- **Stay Connected with JED.** Continue to stay up to date with JED resources and incorporate them into your campus-wide campaigns and strategic planning.

Develop Life Skills

Supporting life skills education is a valuable strategy for helping students cope with the stress of university life, make wise lifestyle choices, foster resilience, and achieve academic success. Ensuring that students develop emotional and interpersonal awareness is a true preventive strategy aimed at enabling students to thrive. Your institution has worked hard to be able to accomplish JED's recommendations in this Comprehensive Approach domain by engaging a diverse population of faculty, staff, and students in facilitating these types of programming to reinforce the message that mental health and well-being is a campus-wide concern.

Notable Accomplishments

- **Existing Programming.** Northern Michigan University offers programming and content in nearly all of JED's recommended content areas.
 - **Campus Wide Effort.** This programming is facilitated by staff and students across campus from the counseling center, residential life, academic advising,

financial aid, Dean of Students office, Greek life, athletics, student groups, campus ministries, the Center for Student Enrichment, the police department, and the Diversity and Inclusion office.

- **Physical Health and Wellness.** Northern Michigan University offers programming that provides information about the link between general physical health/wellness and sleep, nutrition, and exercise.
- **Messaging.** Campus-wide messaging educates students that physical health is linked to academic success and emotional health.

Considerations for Sustainability

- **Interpersonal/Emotional Wellness Programming.** Consider expanding your programming to include information about identifying and regulating emotions, promoting resilience, mindfulness, interpersonal effectiveness, distress tolerance, bullying, and transition out of college.
- **Care for Caregivers.** Work on developing more resources and education for faculty regarding their wellness and create a culture of care for the caregivers.

Support Social Connectedness

Research has shown that loneliness and isolation are significant risk factors for mental health problems and/or suicidal behavior. Therefore, supportive social relationships and feeling connected to the campus and local community, family, and friends are protective factors that can help lower risk. Because students often turn to their peers when they are struggling, they are more likely to be open and receptive to programming that is designed and delivered by their peers. Educational and outreach campaigns that are designed and delivered by peers can promote successful navigation of the university experience.

Facilitating social connectedness should go beyond simply encouraging students to get involved on campus. A comprehensive effort should be initiated to create environments that build interpersonal relationships among students, promote cultural inclusiveness on campus, and support connectedness among underrepresented or higher risk student groups. Northern Michigan University has achieved the components of this Comprehensive Approach domain by training and educating residence hall assistants and academic advisors to proactively reach out to students who may be lonely or isolated and connect them with resources. You

have a campus of care and your campus community is truly invested in helping one another and making sure everyone feels welcomed and part of the Northern Michigan University's community.

Notable Accomplishments

- **Campus Inclusiveness.** Your institution is committed to providing programs and services that support inclusiveness. Currently fraternities, sororities, athletics, student government, residence hall assistants, student clubs, and peer mentors support these efforts.
- **Identifying Isolated Students.** Northern Michigan University has systems in place to help identify students who may be feeling disconnected or isolated from others. This is done by:
 - **Academic Advisers.** Advisers are trained to ask about loneliness/isolation and refer/consult when concerned.
 - **Resident Advisers.** You have trained resident advisers to know how to identify, reach out and refer students who may need help.
 - **Communication with Families.** You communicate with families about alerting campus services in case of a concern about an isolated student.
- **Peer Mentoring.** Roughly 10% of your students participate in peer mentoring programs.
- **Identity-Specific Programming.** There are programs in place to support connectedness among the following high-risk student groups: Veterans, LGBTQ+ students, students of color, first generation students, economically disadvantaged students, international students, students with physical/mobility conditions, and students diagnosed with learning disabilities.
- **Off-campus Support.** Northern Michigan University provides suggestions for off-campus communities for students to connect with others that share their identities (cultural, religious, or national groups).
- **Informal Gathering Spaces.** It's great that there are informal gathering spaces for students to connect.

Considerations for Sustainability

- **Peer Educational Campaigns.** You might consider creating peer educational campaigns focused on reaching out to isolated students.

- **Identity-Specific Programming.** JED recommends expanding programming to help support the following student groups: Undocumented students, commuter students, transfer students, non-traditionally aged students, students diagnosed with serious mental health conditions, students who are survivors of sexual assault, survivors of violence, and students in recovery from substance use disorders.
- **Campus Inclusiveness.** Continue to assess the different demographics of students on your campus that may need extra support and help through surveying, student focus groups, and analyzing your data.
- **Mental Health Training.** Conduct an inventory of peer mentoring programs in academics and student life and work to expand participation in those opportunities. All peer mentors should receive mental health training to identify, engage, respond, and refer students of concern as appropriate. Please read our [POV on the shift from the term “Gatekeeper” to “Mental Health Training.”](#)
- **Ongoing Work.** Keep working at fostering a climate of psychological safety for students.

Identify Students at Risk

Students who are struggling often have not had any experience with treatment or seeking out assistance for their problems. Therefore, it is important to identify students with mental health, substance use problems, and/or those who are at risk for suicide before they are in crisis. Three core objectives can strengthen a university’s mental health safety net for students at risk: supporting the transition to university for incoming students with mental health and substance use histories, providing robust screening opportunities at multiple touchpoints in the student experience, and training campus community members to identify, reach out to, and refer students at risk. Interdisciplinary response teams are also important elements of this process as they require cross-campus collaboration and problem solving to respond to students of concern.

Supporting the vision that student mental and emotional well-being is a responsibility for all, it is necessary to increase and enhance training opportunities related to mental health for all stakeholders. Students seek help from peers first, so implementing training for all students on how to identify, reach out to, and support their peers who may be struggling is critical. In JED’s perspective, there should be help all around students and there should be no “wrong door” on campus for them to seek assistance.

Notable Accomplishments

- **Family Information.** Northern Michigan University encourages families to talk to their students about sharing mental health and substance abuse histories with the counseling center.
- **Web-Based Screening Tools.** There are screening tools available on your website for mental health and substance use disorders.
- **Health Services Screening.** Primary care physicians at Health Services screen students at the Health Center for substance use/misuse and mental health and treat students with mild to moderate mental health issues.
- **Mental Health Training.** Your campus has training programs in place to identify students who are struggling, reach out to students who may be struggling, and refer those students to appropriate resources.
- **BIT Team.** There is a well established behavioral intervention team in place.

Considerations for Sustainability

- **Health History Forms.** Consider collecting health history forms from your new incoming students that include mental health and substance use histories.
 - **Additional Consideration.** JED recommends establishing a system for reaching out and giving resources to those students who self identify prior to starting classes.
- **Screening Days.** It's recommended that schools offer substance misuse/abuse screening/wellness days each semester. JED recommends collecting data on the number of students who are screened at screening/wellness days.
- **Health Services Screening.** Consider screening students at every visit to the health center and collecting data on the number of students who screen positively for mental health concerns.

Increase Help-Seeking Behavior

Promoting help seeking is an important early intervention for students experiencing mental health or substance use issues or those that are actively in crisis. Students experiencing emotional distress are often reluctant to seek help because they are skeptical about the effectiveness of treatment and/or they are influenced by prejudices associated with mental illness.

Notable Accomplishments

- **Online Accessibility.** The Counseling and Psychological Services website and the Health Center website were easy to find from your homepage, within 1 to 2 clicks.
- **Mental Health Campaigns.** You offer mental health campaigns for your campus community with the student voice involved in the planning, creating and implementation of these campaigns.

Considerations for Sustainability

- **Peer Counseling.** It's great that you are developing a peer mentoring program where students are trained to support other students experiencing common transition and college-related issues. The establishment of this program will be of great benefit to students.
- **Substance Misuse Campaigns.** You may want to consider creating some campaigns during exam times that contain targeted messages around stimulant misuse and diversion strategies and during high stress times such as exams/finals.

Provide Mental Health and Substance Use Services

JED always has asserted that institutions should offer accessible, consistent, and high-quality mental health and substance use services to students. To make mental health and substance use care more comprehensive, approaches to care should include adequate staffing levels, staff diversity reflective of the student population, flexibility in treatment approaches, and strong partnerships with off-campus providers that can offer supplementary and specialized services. Preserving a student's mental health is critical in preventing substance misuse, risk for suicide, and strengthening their academic success. The provision of substance use education, prevention, and treatment is also essential. Education about the dangers of substance misuse and drug diversion, the connection between substance use and relationship violence, academic performance, and overall well-being, along with a variety of treatment options either on campus or in the community, is an important consideration for the institution. Currently at Northern Michigan University, there is a ratio of 1 FTE clinician to 1,500 to 2000 students in the counseling center.

Notable Accomplishments

- **Triage System.** There is a triage system for quick assessment of students to reduce wait times for service.
- **24-Hour Crisis Line.** Northern Michigan University has a national 24-hour crisis or suicide prevention hotline to your students for after-hours needs.
- **Community Linkages.** You have linkages with local community services to provide ongoing care for students who require longer term mental health care than what can be provided on your campus, as well as students who need substance use disorder care not available on campus.
- **Community Resources.** Your school maintains an updated list of community mental health resources with information about insurance plans accepted at these providers.
- **Alternative Events.** Northern Michigan University offers regular alcohol free events on campus.
- **Medical Amnesty Policy.** Northern Michigan University has a written medical amnesty policy that is made available to students and is well-publicized. Consider reviewing JED's medical amnesty recommendations in the JED Campus Playbook.
- **Emergency Protocols.** Your campus has established written emergency protocols in place for distressed students who may be of harm to themselves or who may be of harm to others and these protocols are shared with all relevant offices.
 - There is a protocol for follow-up with students who have been transported to the ER for alcohol poisoning.
- **Naloxone.** Naloxone is available on campus for on campus security and health center staff.
 - Consider increasing the availability of Naloxone to include on- campus emergency responders, counseling center staff, and students who are deemed at high risk for opiate overdose.
- **Messaging Campaigns.** Northern Michigan University has programs/campaigns to educate students about the links between substance use, poor academic performance, accidents and relationship violence.

Considerations for Sustainability

- **Counseling Staff to Student Ratio.** Your counseling staff to student ratio is 1 FTE to 1,500 to 2,000 students. JED and IACS recommend less than 1:1500 for average utilization of 10-12%.

- **Representative Staff.** Continue to actively recruit and retain clinicians of color and other diverse identities.
- **Additional Availability.** JED recommends that counseling services be available outside of normal business hours as well as offered in different areas on campus in order to be more accessible to all students.
- **Community Resources.** Consider maintaining information about sliding scale and low fee community counseling options for students.
- **Insurance.** JED recommends that colleges require students to have health insurance and the school's health insurance plan includes coverage for mental health services.
- **Medical Leave Policy.** While you do have a voluntary psychological withdrawal policy, JED recommends establishing a written medical leave of absence policy and return from leave of absence policy that aligns with JED recommendations that can be found in the Playbook.
- **Memoranda of Understanding.** You might consider maintaining MOU's (Memoranda of Understanding) with community based providers and clinics.
- **Messaging Campaigns.** Consider incorporating messaging campaigns to educate students about the risks of opiate misuse, especially when used in non-pill form or combined with other substances.
- **Community Outreach.** Northern Michigan University would benefit from connecting with community vendors to curtail the marketing and sale of large quantities of alcohol to its students and limit promotions and advertisements for alcohol.

Follow Crisis Management Procedures

Having clear crisis management policies and protocols in place, including a focus on crisis prevention and effective responses when crises occur, is central to the safety of students and the campus community. Clear and accessible emergency and postvention protocols help guide faculty and staff when a student is struggling and provide readily accessible emergency information, including crisis phone numbers, chat, and text services.

Notable Accomplishments

- **Emergency/Disaster Plans.** Northern Michigan University has developed an emergency plan that is shared with relevant stakeholders.

- **Postvention Protocol.** A clear postvention protocol has been established to deal with the aftermath of student death, suicide, or other campus disaster.
 - Consider looking at making this protocol consistent with the [Postvention Guide published by HEMHA](#).
- **BIT Team.** Northern Michigan University has a well-established BIT team on campus that coordinates with counseling services, the health center, and the conduct office.
 - **Case Management System.** It's great that you are considering establishing a case management team to help follow up on students who have been hospitalized or been served by the BIT team.

Considerations for Sustainability

- **Mandatory Leaves.** JED recommends establishing a policy for managing mandatory leaves that includes:
 - **Review Process.** A case by case review process to evaluate whether a mandatory leave is indicated.
 - **Appeals Process.** An appeals process that outlines the process for the student to appeal the leave decision.
- **Family Communication.** Consider having a policy or plan to consider communication with family when a student is on academic probation or not attending classes.

Restrict Access to Lethal Means

As the most empirically supported measure to prevent suicide, it is essential to implement means restriction activities on university campuses. The challenge of managing means restriction is that it requires coordination among several areas and offices in the university: buildings and facilities, security, counseling, student services, among others. This area of concern should be included in inter-department strategic planning. Reviews of campus facilities should ideally occur on a regular basis, especially when the campus is actively engaged in building projects.

Notable Accomplishments



- **Means Restriction.** Northern Michigan University conducts campus environmental scans for potential access to lethal means on an annual basis and restricts access to rooftops, windows, and toxic substances.
- **Firearms.** Firearms are completely prohibited on the main campus.
- **Transport/Escort.** Offering a late night transport/escort system can decrease the risk of accidents and assaults on campus. It's excellent that you have this resource on your campus.

Considerations for Sustainability

- **Breakaway Closet Rods.** Consider installing break-away closet rods in residence halls and apartments to limit the risk of hanging.
- **Drug Collection Program.** It's great that you are developing a drug collection program on campus.

Next Steps

Northern Michigan University is now considered an Alumni of the JED Campus program as of December 2021. This means that you will have continued access to our learning community resources which include our Playbook resources, JED Campus and Campus Professionals webinars, newsletters, JED connection calls, JED Campus Learning Community forum and listserv, and other JED Foundation opportunities. While you won't be having regular check-ins any longer with your JED Campus Advisor, you are able to contact us at any time if you need advice, have a question or need any assistance related to emotional health for your campus. We thank you for the hard work and commitment you have given to this project and we are confident that you will continue to go on to do great work towards protecting mental and emotional health and preventing suicide within Northern Michigan University's campus community.

Sincerely,

The JED Campus Team