

December 9, 2021

Dr. Brigitte Madrian
Dean and Distinguished Professor
Marriott School of Business
Tanner Building Campus Drive
Provo, Utah 84602



Dear Dr. Brigitte Madrian,

As agreed in our November 4 contract, we are submitting the attached report entitled, "BYU Marriott School of Business Mental Health Initiative." We at Peak Consulting have worked as a team to research and prepare this report over the last few weeks.

In this report we acknowledge the efforts already made by BYU Marriott to improve the mental health of your students following the tragic suicide of a cherished student. Based on the research and collected insights of our team, we give three recommendations on how BYU Marriott can achieve the overall goal of strengthening the mental health of your students and lowering stress. We have concluded that these recommendations will have a positive impact on the lives of BYU Marriott School students.

Thank you for trusting Peak Consulting with finding solutions to lower the stress of BYU Marriott School students. We look forward to seeing you when we present our recommendations. If you have any additional question regarding the attached report, please contact Aurora Warner at (801) 234-5678 or warner_consulting@peak.com

Sincerely,

Madelyn Kerr
Madelyn Kerr

Sydney Springer
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Aurora Warner
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BYU Marriott School of Business Mental Health Initiative
Peak Consulting

December 9, 2021

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Executive Summary

BYU Marriott is striving to make a positive difference in the lives of their students following the suicide of a beloved student. Mental illness among college students is a serious matter, and we commend the changes already made to improve the students' mental health. We give three recommendations as to how BYU Marriott can further their efforts in bolstering the mental health of their students.

1. Conduct thorough and frequent training for faculty, staff, and students on common signs of mental illness and how to handle mental health crises in themselves and others;
2. Implement simple yet effective policies to reduce stress levels while maintaining high academic performance;
3. Increase awareness and use of campus resources through a public relations campaign.

1. Provide Thorough Trainings

Proper trainings provided by BYU CAPS for professors and other staff members in BYU Marriott is key to cultivating a safe place for students. Professors need to be accessible to students and trained to offer them meaningful and appropriate support. Trainings, such as QPR's suicide prevention course, will prepare staff for mental health and suicide crises. One goal of the training is to instruct professors on effective ways to reach out to their students and provide customizable resources.

2. Implement Helpful Policies

After receiving thorough training, staff can implement a few helpful policies in their classrooms. First, professors can change the time of due dates from 11:59 p.m. to earlier in the day to encourage students to get proper rest and manage their stress levels. Second, professors can take more time on the first day of class to make students aware of on-campus mental health resources. Third, professors can encourage students to complete a quick mental health self-screening offered through BYU CAPS.

3. Sponsor Public Relations Campaign

The final section discusses how BYU Marriott can sponsor a public relations campaign, through the School of Communications, with the goal of generating awareness about existing resources. This campaign should also increase use of mental health resources offered by BYU Marriott and decrease overall anxiety and depression in students.

Introduction

One in four young adults has a diagnosable mental illness (see Figure 1¹). Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young adults and third leading cause of death for college students. Half of college students who dropped out of school for mental health reasons did not access mental health resources, and 39 percent of all college students experience a significant mental health issue. Over two-thirds of young adults don't seek treatment for depression or anxiety.²

One in four young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 have a diagnosable mental illness



Source: *Active Minds*

Figure 1

Brigham Young University boasts top programs in the country, excellent test scores, and a student body with maturity and values unlike most college campuses. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Director Steven A. Smith told *Y Magazine* that BYU has “an especially high degree of self-defeating perfectionism in our student body,” and that when students “don’t perform as well as they believe they should, they become depressed and anxious.”³ BYU Marriott School is no exception, and has a competitive nature as a nationally ranked program for undergraduates and graduates.

Peak Consulting acknowledges the efforts BYU Marriott has made in response to the suicide of a beloved student. Mental illness among college students is a serious matter, and one we know you in leadership take seriously. We commend the changes already made and hope to lend our talents and perspective to the cause.

Peak Consulting has worked with universities across the country to implement ways for school leadership to lower stress levels for their students. We believe that mental health advocacy isn't one person's responsibility, but rather a collective effort. Our mission for this project is to bolster the mental health of BYU Marriott School students while teaching them how to recognize their personal limitations and practice self-care, and we have three recommendations on how to achieve this goal:

1. Conduct thorough and frequent training for faculty, staff, and students on common signs of mental illness and how to handle mental health crises in themselves and others;
2. Implement simple yet effective policies to reduce stress levels while maintaining high academic performance;
3. And increase awareness and use of campus resources through a public relations campaign.

1. Provide Thorough Trainings

Effective change begins at the top of any organization. Peak Consulting believes that proper training for professors and other staff members is key to cultivating a safe space for students. We are not proposing professors need to be professional counselors, but rather professors should be trained to identify signs of mental distress, reach out to students, and recommend appropriate resources.

The training can be provided by BYU CAPS services or other mental health professionals and should be given at the beginning of each school year. Professors do not need to be required to attend every year, but should complete the training every three to five years to stay updated on evolving protocols and language. Professors should always be encouraged to participate in years they are not required to do so.

Professors Accessible for Students

A survey by Boston University's School of Public Health revealed that less than 30 percent of professors have received training from the institution they teach at, yet 70 percent of professors surveyed say they would welcome the guidance.⁴ According to the survey, only 51 percent of professors surveyed were confident they could recognize signs of a student in mental distress—however, professors are often in “key positions to notice performance issues or behaviors that signal a deeper suffering.”⁵

For example, a student may stop attending class or ask for accommodations, such as extensions, on assignments when they are unwell. Since BYU Marriott classes have smaller class sizes than general education and religion classes, professors are more accessible to offer meaningful support to students in need, and should be thoroughly trained to do so.

Prepared for Tough Conversations

Professors must be able to listen to students with empathy. Students may come to professors in time of need, and regular training can equip professors with appropriate responses. Professors should not sound rehearsed when speaking with students, but

role plays may prove useful for professors who are unused to speaking about mental health. By genuinely listening to students' concerns, professors can demonstrate they genuinely care about their students' health, which in turn should help the students know they are seen and be more likely to open up about their challenges.

We also recommend the training to include the completion of QPR certification to prepare staff specifically for suicide crises. People often shy away from talking about suicide directly, believing that discussing suicide will encourage the individual to act on their thoughts. QPR Institute dismantles that misconception.⁶ If a student is having suicidal thoughts, professors need to be able to have an honest and sincere conversation, using appropriate language.

Familiar with Warning Signs

According to the American Psychological Association, 93 percent of teachers express concerns over students' mental well-being, but the vast majority feel ill-prepared to respond.⁷ One goal of the trainings is to instruct professors on effective ways to reach out to their students. Some students may become defensive, unresponsive, or upset when asked about their mental health, but these reactions should not be a sign to assume the student is safe.

The training should also cover at what point staff should reach out to students and provide resources. Every professor needs to know the campus protocol for students with mental illness, and regular training from professionals ensures that professors will be prepared and sensitive.

2. Implement Helpful Policies

Dallin H. Oaks, first counselor in the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and former president of BYU, said that “seemingly small things bring to pass great things.”⁸ At Peak Consulting, we know that BYU Marriott leadership is already doing many small things to make a significant difference in their students’ lives. We believe that a few more details can have a larger impact on the stress levels of students when implemented by professors in classrooms, such as: encouraging professors to change the time of due dates from 11:59 p.m., discussing on-campus mental health resources on syllabus day, and having students complete regular mental health self-assessments.

Changing the Time of Due Dates

Nearly 96 percent of college students sleep less than eight hours each night, with over half of college students sleeping fewer than seven hours per night.⁹ Sleep is vital to mental and physical well-being. Adequate sleep improves memory, overall health, and peak performance.¹⁰ Late due dates play a significant role in creating sleep deprivation, particularly with most classes having the same 11:59 p.m. deadline. Encouraging professors to adjust due dates to times earlier in the day, such as when class starts, can drastically decrease stress levels and promote healthier sleeping habits, thus leading to overall well-being.

Discussing Resources in Class

On the first day of classes, most professors take time to review the syllabus before jumping into the course material. However, because the syllabus is often skimmed and only grade-related policies are covered in depth, other vital information—such as university health policies and on-campus resources—is overlooked.

Professors should spend a moment demonstrating how to schedule a CAPS appointment, reviewing signs of burnout and anxiety, and emphasizing that their role is to help students succeed, which includes balancing stress and school. Through this

extended effort, students should not only be aware of on-campus resources, but also feel safer reaching out to their professors for help.

Completing Mental Health Assessments

Professors can do a lot to incentivize students to prioritize their health over grades. One way of accomplishing this is by offering extra credit three times a semester for completing a quick mental health self-screening offered through BYU CAPS, as shown in Figure 2.¹¹ This two-to-five-minute mental health screening allows students to self-assess how they are doing mentally and emotionally, and provides guidance based on the evaluation's results (Low, Moderate, and Elevated). Hotlines and specific links to further steps—such as scheduling an appointment with a counselor—are included with the results.

Sample of BYU Counseling and Psychological Services' (CAPS) Online Mental Health Self-Assessment¹²

CCAPS – Screen	(0) Not at all like me				Extremely like me (4)
3. My heart races for no good reason	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
4. I feel out of control when I eat	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
5. I don't enjoy being around people as much as I used to	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
6. I feel isolated and alone	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4

Source: BYU CAPS

Figure 2

Peak Consulting recommends professors encourage the self-assessments to be taken at the beginning of the semester, during midterms, and once more during finals week. The results stay completely confidential, so professors can create short quizzes students complete on their honor to earn the extra credit points at the end of the semester. CAPS is not alerted to the test results either.

The CAPS mental health self-assessment is a great tool for both professors and students to reflect on their personal stress and health levels and act accordingly. Knowing about resources is not enough; students need to be familiar with using these available on-campus resources, such as this mental health self-assessment, and class incentives are an excellent way to encourage this proactive behavior.

3. Sponsor Public Relations Campaign

Lastly, students are not aware of most resources BYU Marriott already provides. Take Harry, for example. Harry is a business major in his senior year, balancing his leadership minor classes, group projects, club leadership, and an anxiety disorder. He is aware he has some anxiety, but when he starts having panic attacks Sunday nights thinking about all he must do that coming week, he knows he should probably get help.

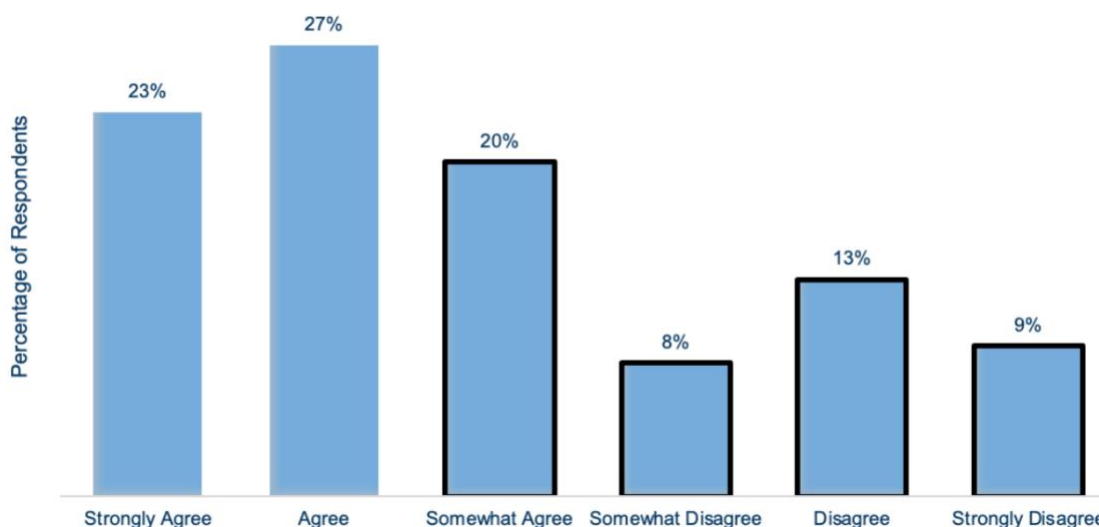
Harry logs onto the Marriott School website and easily finds ways to contact his professors, reserve a room, review the school's COVID-19 policies, and read up on his classmates' projects. After clicking around for some time, he finally finds the CAPS landing page, where he tries to schedule an appointment online. There are no appointments available until after finals. Shannon Tapanna is BYU Marriott's designated counselor and she has some openings but can do only a limited number of sessions. Harry heard rumors of other services available to him as a student but can't find anywhere to learn more.

Harry is an example of a student with a mental health challenge he's already aware of. But if he struggled to find help as soon as he realized he needed assistance, how can students who don't know what constitutes as depression or anxiety seek help before it's too late? BYU Marriott has resources in place; the students just aren't aware of what those resources are or how to access them.

Figure 3 examines college students' degree of knowledge about their school's mental health resources, and only 50 percent agree or strongly agree that they are familiar with

what their campus offers.¹³ This means half of students' feel unfamiliar with existing resources, and that is another obstacle for students who need help.

College Students that Know of On-Campus Mental Health Resources¹⁴



Source: *The Healthy Minds Network*

Figure 3

We propose a public relations campaign sponsored by BYU Marriott, with the goal of generating awareness for the student body about existing resources. Three objectives for this campaign include:

1. Increase awareness of CAPS services, specifically BYU Marriott counselor, Dr. Tapanna;
2. Increase use of mental health resources offered by BYU Marriott;
3. And decrease anxiety and depression in students.

Self-Care Stamp Cards

One campaign idea we recommend is the use of check-off cards. The Self-Care Stamp Card can be available digitally through the Y App, and each activity has a purpose related to the resources the Marriott School offers. Stopping by Dr. Tapanna's office,

writing something you're grateful for on the gratitude board located in the Tanner Building's atrium, attending a QPR training, completing a Y Serve project, and attending events that the student council plans are just a few ideas for possible activities.

Some activities can be checked off on the student's honor, but others should require a code to check off. For example, students who stop by the CAPS office in the Tanner Building and learn how to schedule an appointment should have the secretary input a case-sensitive code in order to check off the activity. Incentives to complete the activities can be conducted through monthly raffles, with prizes including stress toys, a free meal at the Blue Line Deli, and even professor perks, such as a 24-hour extension on an assignment.

The goal for each of the activities and raffle prizes is to encourage students to take their mental health into their own hands. Each activity should not take longer than an hour but can benefit students in the long run. Students might not feel the need to become familiar with the resources available until they find themselves in a crisis, which contributes to the cycle of overly stressed students not seeking timely help.

Mental Health "Happy Hours"

We appreciate the messaging and activities BYU Marriott has implemented during finals week this semester. The gift tags with motivational quotes on the Tanner Building stairs and Festive Finals are excellent ideas. Why not make them a regular, frequent source for self-care? Finals are a busy time for students, but most students also feel burnout much sooner than the last week of the semester.

We recommend Mental Health "Happy Hours." Similar to Festive Finals, students can have access to stress-reducing activities, such as massage chairs, yoga and mindfulness workshops, and meditation classes, except on a monthly basis rather than once a semester. Free snacks and water should be available for students during this time so those on a budget or cramming for a test won't have to travel far to seek nutrition. The activities should be at the same time and place every month, such as the

first Friday of the month at 4:00 p.m., to ease the stress of marketing the Happy Hour. While the name implies a single hour, the hour can be extended if time and resources permit to reach as many students as possible.

Peak has a few additional ideas to help students learn to care for themselves and understand their mental and emotional limitations. Semesterly puppy therapy sessions, where local rescues or training services can bring their animals to campus for a short time, will appeal highly to animal lovers. Animals are proven to decrease the blood pressure and stress levels of those around them.¹⁵ Studies also show that gratitude and service uplift moods, increase optimism, and strengthen immune systems.¹⁶ A BYU Marriott specific Y Serve project each month is another simple way to decrease anxiety and depression levels in students.

Biofeedback Therapy Machines

Additionally, we think the presence of CAPS in the Tanner Building should more fully reflect the CAPS located in the Wilkinson Center. Specifically, with the inclusion of a Tanner Building biofeedback machine. Installing a biofeedback machine in Dr. Tappana's office in the Tanner Building for business students to access will improve their quality of care. Biofeedback machines teach users how involuntary bodily responses, such as muscle tension and heart rate levels, can be identified and controlled. A few sessions with this form of therapy can reduce chronic pain, improve sleep, and increase relaxation, and these non-invasive, drug-free machines can be monitored by graduate students.¹⁷

Introducing monthly Mental Health "Happy Hours," implementing semesterly incentives for students to seek self-care, and installing a biofeedback machine for Dr. Tappana are three ways to increase awareness and use of the resources offered by the Marriott School. Students that participate in the activities should have reduced stress levels, coping mechanisms for anxiety and depression symptoms, and increased morale throughout busy and overwhelming semesters.

Conclusion

“There is no health without mental health,”¹⁸ and if anyone can turn the startling statistics regarding college students’ mental health into strategies to decrease symptoms, BYU Marriott can. The care you have for your students is apparent, and Peak Consulting is here to support your continued efforts.

Annual trainings presented by CAPS or other mental health professionals should prepare staff for mental health crises in students and teach them how to identify the warning signs for suicide. Simple classroom procedures can be adapted to spend more time focusing on resources available, such as demonstrating how to schedule an appointment with CAPS on syllabus day and talking openly about the effects of stress and anxiety on overall health. The addition of mental health self-assessments should benefit students long term by teaching them how to recognize limitations in themselves. And the implementation of a public relations campaign to raise student awareness and use of available resources can create longevity for self-care within the student body.

Additionally, these recommendations have little to no cost. CAPS should provide free trainings and QPR certification is free. Adjusting the website to find resources more easily should also have no monetary cost. Mental Health “Happy Hours” may have additional costs depending on the activities offered, but the digital stamp cards should have little to no effect on BYU Marriott’s budget. Costs and time spent on the remainder of the campaign can be offset by utilizing the School of Communication’s public relations students, either through class assignments or the new PR Intelligence Lab.

After you discuss our recommendations, please don’t hesitate to contact us at peak@consulting.org if you have additional questions.

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