



Economic analysis of mental health services at Texas A&M University - San Antonio

January 18, 2023

Dear colleagues at Texas A&M University - San Antonio:

Thank you for collaborating in the 2021-22 Healthy Minds Study to collect survey data about student mental health at Texas A&M University - San Antonio. This memo summarizes how the survey findings and other research can be used to estimate the economic impact of mental health services and programs at your institution.

Quantifying the “need.” An estimated 61.80% of students at Texas A&M University - San Antonio are experiencing symptoms of at least one significant mental health problem, such as depression, anxiety disorders, suicidal thoughts, self-injury, or eating disorders. From your population of 6,741 students, this translates to approximately 4,166 total students with a mental health problem. Among these students, an estimated 46.70% have received mental health services within the past year, whereas 53.30% have not. This translates to approximately 2,220 total students with untreated mental health problems.

Benefits of services and programs. While many of these students would get better without intervention, mental health services greatly improve their chances, based on a large literature documenting the effectiveness of therapy and medication for depression, anxiety disorders, and other common conditions. Campus counseling services lead to large reductions in symptoms and improvements in functioning, according to analyses by the Center for Collegiate Mental Health (CCMH).

In your Healthy Minds data, satisfaction rates are near 82.70% among students who used campus mental health services, suggesting that your services are effective, as in the CCMH data.

Translating benefits into student retention and economic returns. Students with mental health problems, such as depression, are two times more likely than their peers to leave their institution based on our research. Thus, increasing the availability of evidence-based services or preventive programs can reduce this risk and increase student retention. For example, at Texas A&M University - San Antonio, suppose that clinical services and/or prevention efforts were expanded to reach 1,000 of the students who currently have untreated mental health problems. We project this would lead to the retention of 78 students per year who would have otherwise departed without graduating.¹ This could save approximately \$311,619 in tuition revenue for the institution,² and



would increase the total expected lifetime earnings of these students by more than \$15,518,868.³ On average, providing high-quality mental health services to these students would cost less than \$1,000,000.⁴

Note also that mental health is correlated with higher satisfaction in college and higher reported likelihood of donating as a future graduate, based on data in the Healthy Minds Study.

We hope you find this analysis helpful, and we would be glad to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Daniel Eisenberg, Ph.D.

On behalf of the Healthy Minds Network team (www.healthymindsnetwork.org)

¹ [% Hypothetical students served %] students * [% Attrition rate among students w/ MH problems %] attrition rate among students with mental health problems * 0.2 relative reduction in attrition

² 2 yrs * [% Overall Avg Tuition Rate %] weighted-average of annual tuition amount per student * [% Students retained %] students retained

³ \$100,000 earnings per year of college education (from economic research) * 2 years college education * [% Students retained %] students retained

⁴ [% Hypothetical students served %] students * \$1,000 (generous estimate of treatment cost per student)