



Office of Equity and Inclusion Newsletter

July 8, 2024



A Message from Dr. Keith Johnson, Vice President for Equity and Inclusion

“A Call to Action: Closing Disparities of Mental Health Faced by Racial and Ethnic Minority Communities”

Dear Friends,

Minority Mental Health Month, observed every July, is dedicated to raising awareness about the unique mental health challenges faced by racial and ethnic minority communities. This month highlights the importance of mental health care tailored to the needs of these groups and seeks to combat the stigma that often prevents individuals from seeking help.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), mental health issues affect approximately 18.3% of African Americans, 16.3% of Hispanic Americans, 13.9% of Asian Americans, and 28.3% of American Indians/Alaska Natives.

Minority communities are less likely to have access to mental health services. For instance, only 8.7% of Asian Americans and 9.4% of Hispanic Americans receive mental health services, compared to 18.6% of non-Hispanic Whites. When minorities do receive treatment, it is often of lower quality. Only one in three African Americans who need mental health care receive it.

~ continued on page 2 ~



“Life is not the way it's supposed to be, it's the way it is. The way you cope with that is what makes the difference.”
~ Virginia Satir ~

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Stigma around mental health can be more pronounced in minority communities due to cultural beliefs. For example, some Asian cultures may view mental illness as a personal weakness, while Latino cultures might prioritize familial privacy, making it harder to seek outside help. Historical and ongoing discrimination in healthcare contributes to fear and mistrust of mental health services. This is especially true in African American communities where there is a long history of medical mistreatment.

One of our current ETSU students agreed to share his journey relative to mental illness with me. However, given the nature of this topic, I will reframe from naming him. According to the student,

“When I first arrived at East Tennessee State University to pursue [my degree], I was excited yet apprehensive. The change in location, culture, and the pressure of multiple assignments quickly became overwhelming. No sooner did I start struggling to perform my routine tasks, like making my bed and keeping my room tidy, than I turned to prayer, seeking peace of mind. However, my struggles persisted.

My anxiety began to interfere with my studies and daily life, causing chronic headaches from the stress of multiple simultaneous activities. I frequently worried about making mistakes, which did happen in both academic and personal situations. Concentrating on my work became nearly impossible. I recall rewriting assignments with repeated paragraphs without realizing it. By the end of the spring semester, the pressure of final assignments took a toll on my mental health. I struggled with insomnia and unhealthy eating habits, which only worsened my situation.

Coming from a culture where mental illness is stigmatized, especially for men, seeking help felt insurmountable. My primary challenge was that student health insurance doesn't cover mental health care, so I felt trapped in my struggles, knowing I couldn't afford the necessary mental health treatment. My anxiety deepened into depression. I withdrew from activities I once enjoyed and lost interest in everything. Several times, I burned or overcooked food while staring at it. I walked around feeling like a shell of myself, unable to make or complete even small plans without mistakes.

It wasn't until a faculty member noticed my difficulties and inquired about my well-being that my performance began to drop below expectations. I broke down in tears many times, feeling weak and unable to understand what was happening to me. My mind felt like a theater, constantly visualizing moving images, and I interpreted this as a sign that things were going to be difficult. I could not stop thinking about the consequences, I feared losing my mental ability.

Shortly after, I received a call from a university therapist, which was referred by the faculty member. I was diagnosed with anxiety and depression. On my first day of therapy, I was

Continued ~ Message from Dr. Keith Johnson

assisted in developing therapy goals and objectives. I decided to prioritize my mental health over everything else. I received several therapy sessions and gradually found my life improving and meeting all the initial set goals and objectives. I was able to make and complete small plans successfully, which brought me immense happiness and a renewed sense of purpose.

Based on my experience, I learned that as a man is significant to acknowledge our feelings. I realized that it is okay to be not ok, it's okay to feel overwhelmed, anxious, or depressed. Recognizing and accepting these emotions is the first step toward step of recognizing the weak part of us and the need to seek help. Despite the cultural and traditional taboos, and peers' or friends' perceptions of seeking mental therapy, our mental health is crucial.

After this experience, I cannot trade my mental health with anything. When we find ourselves struggling, reaching out is not an option, talking to a counselor or therapist is ideal to receive the appropriate support. Universities often have resources and support systems in place to assist students in need. I could not recognize this by myself, but a referral or linkage was important to open the door to receiving the relevant support.

In my post-mental health therapy, I am careful to prioritize self-care by engaging in activities that bring me joy and relaxation. Maintain a healthy lifestyle with proper sleep, nutrition, and exercise. I am working toward building a support network through [an ETSU center] where I will be serving as a volunteer to support students to engage in spiritual and social support, my spectrum of building shall extend beyond fellow students to faculty and university staff. I have a conviction through literature that a strong support network can provide encouragement and understanding to our mental health needs.

My journey with mental illness and the recovery process has inspired my future research on student mental health, "Exploring Student Mental Health: Challenges in Accessing Care and Innovations in Service Uptake for Improved Health Outcomes". My expectation of this study is to contribute practical solutions and insights that can enhance mental health support systems for students, thereby promoting their well-being and academic success."

There is a significant underrepresentation of minority professionals in mental health fields, which can make minority individuals less likely to seek help due to a lack of culturally competent care providers. Without proper treatment, mental health conditions can worsen, leading to more severe symptoms and complications. This can result in higher rates of hospitalization and poorer overall health outcomes.

Mental health issues can also impact every aspect of a person's life, including their ability to work, maintain relationships, and function day-to-day. For minority communities, this can exacerbate existing social and economic disparities. Minority groups, particularly Native Americans, have higher rates of suicide compared to the national average. This is often linked to untreated mental health issues and a lack of accessible resources.

Continued ~ Message from Dr. Keith Johnson

Minority Mental Health Month is a crucial time to address and raise awareness about the mental health disparities faced by racial and ethnic minority communities. By understanding the data, acknowledging the stigma, and recognizing the outcomes, we can work towards more equitable mental health care. This involves increasing access to culturally competent services, reducing stigma through education, and advocating for policies that support mental health for all.

Often, advocates are unsure of what to do to support a love one or friend who is experiencing mental illness. There are several preliminary things that one can do, including becoming educated. Increase your awareness and understanding of mental health issues within minority communities through targeted education and outreach programs. In addition, advocate for improved access to mental health care for minorities, including more funding for community health centers and training for culturally competent care providers. Provide support for minority mental health professionals and encourage their growth within the field to ensure representation and understanding in mental health services. Also, consider becoming a mental health professional, therapist, counselor or the like to add to an already underrepresented area.

By taking these steps, we can help ensure and encourage progress of closing mental health equity gaps that everyone, regardless of their racial or ethnic background, has the opportunity to achieve mental wellness. ETSU is trying to do just that through its health care programs and counseling center. As we travel this path, let us not forget the university's values which include:

- PEOPLE come first, are treated with dignity and respect, and are encouraged to achieve their full potential;
- RELATIONSHIPS are built on honesty, integrity, and trust;
- DIVERSITY of people and thought is respected;
- EXCELLENCE is achieved through teamwork, leadership, creativity, and a strong work ethic;
- EFFICIENCY is achieved through wise use of human and financial resources; and
- COMMITMENT to intellectual achievement is embraced.

Sincerely,

Dr. Keith V. Johnson



ETSU Behavioral Health and Wellness Clinic

ETSU [Behavioral Health and Wellness Clinic](#) (BHWC) is part of the Department of Psychology's Doctoral program in Clinical Psychology. The staff are graduate student clinicians. All student clinicians are closely supervised by licensed psychologists.

They offer culturally sensitive services to people of the region. They treat individuals, couples, groups, and families. However, they do not accept referrals from the court, and cases are individually reviewed to determine if they are able to provide appropriate services.

BHWC treats a variety of problems including, but not limited to:

- Anxiety
- Challenges concerning sexual orientation or gender identity
- Depression
- Loss/Grief
- Parenting
- Phobias
- Relationships
- Trauma

BHWC provides assessments for:

- ADHD
- Autism
- Diagnostic Clarity
- Learning/School Problems (psychoeducational)

ETSU Counseling Center

The [Counseling Center](#) services for students include:

Self-Help:

- Resources and materials provided that cover the topics of depression, anxiety, ADHD, loneliness, grief, sleep and more!

Let's Talk:

- Informal, Drop-In Consultation. No appointment needed and no paperwork required. Meetings are typically 20 minutes long and are offered first-come first-serve. In-person only. For dates and times, go to the [Let's Talk](#) page.

Bucs Press 2

- 24/7 mental health helpline for ETSU students.
- Provides FREE, confidential crisis counseling over the phone. It is staffed 24/7/365 by counseling professionals under contract with The Counseling Center.
- Call 423-439-4841 (press 2) to talk to someone now!

BucsPress2 isn't a substitute for counseling and should be used as crisis support and planning

Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

The [American Psychiatric Association](#) notes that racial/ethnic, gender, and sexual minorities often suffer from poor mental health outcomes due to multiple factors including inaccessibility of high quality mental health care services, cultural stigma surrounding mental health care, discrimination, and overall lack of awareness about mental health.



Raising awareness of minority mental health is a priority. Mental health issues are treatable and preventable, but access to the resources and providers from one's racial or ethnic group is often challenging.

The [Center for Disease Control](#) maintains that everyone benefits when people from racial and ethnic minority groups can thrive. Individuals can:

- Learn about [mental health](#).
- Learn about healthy ways to [cope with stress](#) and [respond to loss](#). Engage in these practices, when possible.
- Share [information](#) on mental health, healthy coping skills, and resources with family, friends, neighbors, and others in your community.
- Talk about mental health and use [non-stigmatizing language](#).
- Learn about [implicit bias](#). Implicit biases are unintentional attitudes, behaviors, and actions that are in favor of or against one person or group.
- Learn about [microaggressions](#). Microaggressions are everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults. They communicate negative messages to people because of their membership in a marginalized group. Microaggressions can be intentional or unintentional.
- Make ongoing efforts to avoid implicit bias, microaggressions, and other forms of discrimination.

Mental Health Myths [Quiz](#).

Free Webinar - Student Mental Health and Safety

How can safety officers, mental health professionals, and campus police collaborate effectively to ensure student safety? What innovative ways can colleges help students, and how can technological solutions, like teletherapy, help institutions meet the demand?

The Chronicle of Higher Education will host a free virtual forum on the state of campus mental health on July 16, 2024 at 2:00pm. [Click here](#) to reserve your seat.

Other Mental Health Resources

[Asian Mental Health Collective](#)

Aspires to make mental health easily available, approachable, and accessible to Asian communities worldwide.

[Black Men Heal](#)

Limited and selective free mental health service opportunities for Black men

[Black Mental Health Alliance](#)

Supports the health and wellbeing of Black people and their communities

[Black Mental Wellness](#)

Mission: to provide access to evidence-based information and resources about mental health and behavioral health topics from a Black perspective, to highlight and increase the diversity of mental health professionals, and to decrease the mental health stigma in the Black community.

[NAMI](#)

- NAMI for African American students, [here](#)
- Racially diverse students and students living with a disability, [here](#)

[PFLAG Tri-Cities](#)

Offers support to family/friends of LGBTQ+ community

[Pride Community Center of the Tri-Cities](#)

Created to nurture and empower the LGBTQ+ community of Northeast Tennessee

- Contact: info@pridetricities.com
- Location: 300 E Main St Suite 159, Johnson City, TN 37601

[Steve Fund](#)

Dedicated to supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of young people of color

[StrongHearts Native Helpline](#)

A domestic violence and dating violence helpline for American Indians and Alaska Natives, offering culturally appropriate support

- Call [844-762-8483](tel:844-762-8483) daily from 7 AM to 10 PM CT, or chat through their site

[Therapy for Black Girls](#)

Dedicated to encouraging the mental wellness of Black women and girls

[Therapy for Latinx](#)

Therapists who either identify as Latinx or have worked closely with and understand the unique needs of the Latinx community

[Trevor Project](#)

Information, support, suicide prevention, and crisis intervention for LGBTQ+ youth (ages 13-24)

- Available 24/7 (year-round)
 - Contact: Text START to 678-678, call at [1-866-488-7386](tel:1-866-488-7386), or chat through their site
-

Reflections on Minority Mental Health Awareness

*Minority Mental Health
by Khia Hudgins-Smith*

Minority, by definition, is “the smaller number or part, especially a number that is less than the whole number” and “a part of a population thought as differing from the rest of the population in characteristics and often subjected to differential treatment” (“Minority,” 2024). One of the critical reasons why minority mental health is significant is that mental health conditions do not discriminate based on race, ethnicity, or cultural background. BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), LGBTQAI2S+, those with disabilities, physical and mental, veterans, first-generation, international, single parents, those who began their education later in life, and those recovering from addiction are all considered minority groups on a college campus.

Everyone deserves access to high-quality mental health care and support, regardless of their identity. Promoting minority mental health is crucial for building a more inclusive and supportive society since minority communities often face unique challenges and barriers when it comes to accessing mental health care and support, including inequalities, cultural stigmas, and limited resources contributing to disparities in mental health outcomes among minority groups.

Raising awareness about minority mental health is essential to ensure that individuals from all backgrounds receive the care and support they need. By acknowledging and addressing the specific mental health needs of minority communities, we can work towards reducing these disparities and promoting overall well-being. Additionally, promoting minority mental health can help reduce stigma within these communities, and by openly discussing mental health issues and providing culturally sensitive resources, we can help individuals feel more comfortable seeking help when needed. Which, in turn, can lead to better mental health outcomes and overall well-being for minority populations.

Overall, addressing the importance of minority mental health is essential for creating a more inclusive, supportive, and equitable society on campus and in the surrounding community. By recognizing and celebrating the diversity of experiences within minority communities, we can empower individuals to prioritize their mental health and seek the care they deserve.

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Visit these websites to learn more about minority mental health:

[Mental and Behavioral Health - African Americans | Office of Minority Health \(hhs.gov\)](#)
[Psychiatry.org - Mental Health Disparities: Diverse Populations](#)
[Prioritizing Minority Mental Health | Health Equity Features | CDC](#)

Upcoming Events



Equity & Inclusion CONFERENCE

It's time to register for ETSU's sixth annual [Equity and Inclusion Conference](#) taking place September 26-27, 2024 in the D.P. Culp Student Center.

[Call for proposals](#) will be accepted through July 12, 2024. Proposals should facilitate engagement, discussion, and learning. We particularly encourage proposals that involve multiple presenters or perspectives and provide opportunities for attendees to engage in dialogue and reflection. Proposals can cover various topics and relevant issues that contribute to creating and perpetuating an inclusive environment. Learn more [here](#).

We welcome submissions from a diverse range of individuals and organizations, including professors, administrators, students, community organizations, and advocates for equity in education. [Submit your proposal](#) today for a chance to share your knowledge, expertise, and ideas with a dynamic community of individuals and organizations working toward equity and inclusion in higher education.

The conference is open to anyone who wishes to attend. Community members as well as higher education professionals and students from other institutions are welcome and encouraged to join us.

ETSU Employees: \$85

\$100 After September 19

ETSU employees may utilize their education benefits to cover the cost of registration. If you elect to use this option, please be sure to select the appropriate ticket type when registering.

Higher Ed Faculty/Staff: \$100

\$125 After September 19

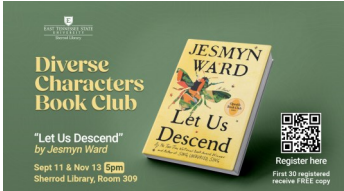
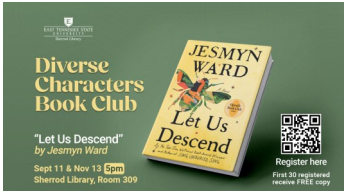
Community Partner/Member: \$100

\$125 After September 19

Students: Free

[Register](#)

Upcoming Events ~ continued

July 2024				
Thursday	July 4th	Independence Day University Closed		
Friday	July 5th	University Closed		
August 2024				
Monday	August 26th	Fall 2024 Classes Begin		
September 2024				
Monday	Sept. 2nd	University Closed		
Wednesday	September 11th	Sherrod Library Diverse Characters Book Club  First 30 to register receive a FREE copy of the book. Register here	Sherrod Library Room 309	5:00-6:00pm
Thursday and Friday	Sep. 26th -27th	6th Annual Equity and Inclusion Conference		D.P. Culp Student Center
October 2024				
Monday-Tuesday	October 14th-15th	Fall Break		
November 2024				
Wednesday	Nov. 13th	Sherrod Library Diverse Characters Book Club 	Sherrod Library Room 309	5:00-6:00pm

Did you know....

August is Intersectionality Awareness Month.

B.U.C.S. Academy/Quest for Success 2024



B.U.C.S. Academy

Building Up College Success

PROGRAM DATES
JULY 14 - AUGUST 2, 2024

- THREE-WEEK IMMERSIVE SUMMER PROGRAM
- THREE CREDIT HOUR SUMMER COLLEGE COURSE
- HOUSING, MEALS AND ENTERTAINMENT



E EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
Mary V. Jordan Multicultural Center

For more information

Email: bucacademy@etsu.edu / Call: 423-439-4844

APPLY HERE



August 19 - 21, 2024

QUEST FOR SUCCESS



WHAT IS QUEST FOR SUCCESS?

The program is designed to help first-generation, Pell grant eligible and other students to acclimated to campus life while building a network of friends, faculty and staff to assist them through their college journey while at ETSU.

The program is for all underrepresented students.

- Students from all minority groups
- First-generation students
- Pell-eligible students

BY PARTICIPATING IN QUEST YOU WILL:

- Gain insight about campus life.
- Eliminate first-day stress.
- Develop strategies for academic success.
- Connect with new and current students.
- Build your personal network of success.
- Attend workshop sessions about time management, study strategies and leadership skills.
- Check in early at your residence hall.
- Meet faculty and staff

APPLY HERE

FOR MORE INFORMATION EMAIL: DISCOVERETSU.ETSU.EDU / CALL (423) 439 - 4844

E EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
Mary V. Jordan Multicultural Center

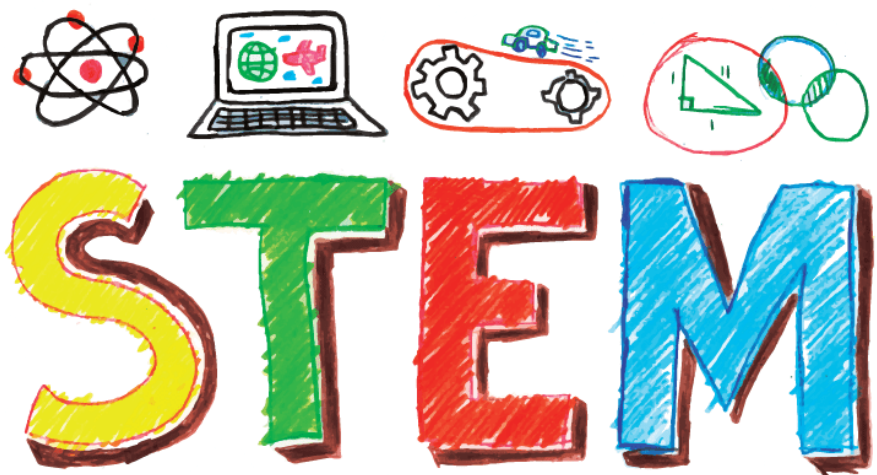
Summer STEM Program A Success



Area high school students attended an Applied STEM Foundation three-week experiential program that covered computing, digital media, engineering, and other STEM concepts. The focus was on ETSU's programs such as Mechatronics, Digital Development, Engineering Technology, Digital Media, and Computing. Each week students were given the opportunity to explore areas and careers in STEM through the use of classroom lectures, various field trips, and speaker presentations.

Two announcements were made to the campers at the conclusion of the program.

1. Students who completed the camp will receive a \$1,000 scholarship toward their tuition if they decide to attend ETSU after high school graduation; and
2. They will receive two academic credit hours towards their degree.



ETSU - A Community of CARE

The [Dean of Students](#) office takes seriously its responsibility to develop, monitor, and maintain a campus environment that is safe and supportive for students, faculty, staff, and visitors. To this end, care processes have been created and a [CARE Team](#) has been formed that meets regularly to evaluate and respond to concerning behavior. Our focus is on prevention and intervention efforts to support students, staff, and faculty. Our goal is to create a community of care.

The CARE Team promotes safety and student support through a multidisciplinary group of staff members who review student behavior that is distressful, disruptive, or concerning. In addition, the team coordinates the application of assessment and intervention services for students of concern.

The CARE Team promotes a safe and productive learning, living, and working environment by addressing the needs of students through coordination of support services, the assessment of information, and the development of a supportive plan of action.



If you are concerned about a student, click here to [submit a CARE report](#).

Additional resources for students and student referral may be found at [BucsCARE](#).

The university's annual Suicide Prevention Plan can be accessed [here](#).

*Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word,
a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring,
all of which have the potential to turn a life around.*

~ Leo Buscaglia ~

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Instagram and Twitter - [etsu_equity](#)

**We would like to
hear from you.**

If you have an announcement, event, accomplishment, etc. you would like to have published in the newsletter send them to Kim Maturo at maturo@etsu.edu.

To add a name to our mailing list, please email Kim Maturo at maturo@etsu.edu.