

1. Name and email of proposers: (redacted)

2. Short Descriptive Title

Bobcats FIRST (*Focusing on Inner Resilience & Skills to Thrive*)

3. Vision/Rational/Statement of the Problem: Summary of QEP Idea

Every year students from all over Georgia, the nation and the world converge at Georgia College to figure out what they are interested in and essentially determine what path they would like to take for their futures. These students bring a tangible energy with them to campus, however, they sometimes do not possess the skills or understanding of how to manage their world when things do not work out as they had planned. Additionally, these students have often not been given the proper tools or knowledge on how to be resilient and navigate life's challenges in a healthy and productive manner, which can then contribute to their experiencing increased mental health challenges. Mental health in college students has been a concern for many years, but COVID-19 appears to have exacerbated these challenges faced by college students and showcases a real need for campuses to provide early and continuous intervention to assist students in navigating their college experience.

Over the span of ten years (2009-2019), stress, anxiety, and sleep difficulties were identified as the top 3 academic impacts to Georgia College students' success (GC National Collegiate Health Assessment, 2009-2019). These impediments were the same every year, in the exact same order. However, data from the 2021 GC NCHA (1,138 student participants and 17.93% campus surveyed) shows a significant change in the top three spots for academic impacts. Procrastination (never seen in the top ten scale) moved in to the number one spot, while stress (39%) moved to number two, and anxiety (34%) moved to number three. Forty-six percent of GC students felt that procrastination was a reason they struggled with their academics. Procrastination is a reoccurring theme of the 2021 GC NCHA with 70% of GC students listing procrastination as the top problem or challenge they had to deal with in last 12 months and 67% of those students stating that procrastination caused moderate or high distress. Forty-seven percent of GC students reported having problems or challenges with academics, and 90% of those who indicated this was a problem said that it caused moderate or high distress.

In terms of psychological indicators in the 2021 GC NCHA, students reported the following surrounding overall levels of stress experienced: 22% of students reported low levels, 49% reported moderate levels, and 25% reported high levels. Additionally, regarding loneliness and belonging, results showed that the majority of students felt they lack companionship some of the time (40%) or often (18%); that they felt left out some of the time (48%) or often (17%); and that they felt isolated from others some of the time (42%) or often (20%). As well, 22% of students indicated experiencing moderate psychological distress and 23% of students had serious psychological distress.

Georgia College also conducted the *Healthy Minds* survey in December of 2020 with 772 student participants (13% campus surveyed) responding. The data regarding loneliness and belonging was similar to the NCHA data: results showed that the majority of students felt they lack companionship some of the time (42%) or often (23%); they felt left out some of the time (44%) or often (25%); and they felt isolated from others some of the time (41%) or often (24%).

Students were also asked if and how often their emotional or mental difficulties have hurt their academic performance during the past 4 weeks: 21% said none; 29% said 1-2 days; 27% said 3-5 days and 23% said 6 or more days. Forty-five percent of students reported having positive mental health on the Flourishing scale, leaving 55% not flourishing.

Georgia College students would benefit greatly from having targeted programs and activities designed to enhance their mental health and well-being. Courses and programs focusing on time management, stress management, coping and resilience skills, conflict resolution, as well as identifying and responding to mental health challenges would not only impact individual students, but would in turn make our campus a safer and healthier place to learn and work for all students, faculty, and staff. This QEP aims to increase student success, retention, and quality of education through the implementation of both academic experiences and programmatic activities that are relevant and inclusive of students with various social identities and designed to increase student resilience and develop greater student responsibility.

4. Expected Outcomes

Core Areas: Procrastination, Stress, Anxiety, Depression

I) *Resilience & Self Efficacy*

Student Success Goals:

- a. Demonstrate attainment of a self-efficacy score for assessed students that significantly improves over time (pretest/post-test comparison for individuals and groups).
- b. Demonstrate attainment of a resilience score for assessed students that significantly improves over time (pretest/post-test comparison for individuals and groups).

Student Learning Outcomes:

- a. Students will be able to articulate what stressors are and three coping mechanisms to alleviate stress, anxiety, depression.
- b. Students will recognize the variety of causes of procrastination and apply appropriate techniques to manage these time inhibitors.

II) *Mental Health Education and Awareness*

Student Learning Outcomes:

- a. Students will be able to recognize and identify signs and symptoms of mental health challenges.
- b. Students will identify two on-campus resources to assist with mental health challenges.
- c. Students will be able to positively respond to mental health challenges and seek appropriate care and services.
- d. Students will differentiate between healthy and stigmatized attitudes and beliefs of mental health and mental health services.

5. Student Population: All undergraduate students will be impacted by programming in this QEP.

- a) First-Year students: First Year Seminar
- b) Sophomores: GC2Y

- c) Juniors: Junior Wellness Days
- d) Seniors: Senior Capstone & Senior Exit Exam
- e) Other: Departments that employ student workers

6. Strategies/Actions/Activities

Peer Mentorship Program

A Peer Mentorship Program will assist with program and education implementation. Peer Mentors will be upper class students (Juniors or Seniors), who demonstrate high levels of resilience and emotional intelligence, and ideally have a desire to eventually enter a helping profession (providing an opportunity for both collaboration with the Psychology department and a transformative experience). Students would undergo an application and selection process, as well as comprehensive training before serving as a Peer Mentor. Peer Mentors would be available to students outside of the classroom for opportunities to discuss mental health challenges, life as a GC student, and serve as a resource to encourage students to seek out further interventions as needed. Peer Mentors would be paid a stipend for the year. Mentees would participate in the program voluntarily, or via a referral from Counseling Services. Additionally, it is a goal that a Peer Mentorship Program will help to alleviate some of the existing strain on our Counseling Services through providing lower-level interventions and opportunity to learn coping strategies.

First Year Seminar (FYAS)

First year seminar will have a lab component added to the context of the class. This lab would consist of a weekly or biweekly addition to seminar that is a required part of the student's seminar grade. The teaching team includes the FYAS faculty member, a staff lab instructor, and a peer mentor. The teaching team would communicate monthly about course goals and student progress. Together the teaching team also forms a mini "intervention team" if issues arise with individual students and provides an additional level of support for students outside of our current CARE Team reporting system.

One person (with input from support departments across campus) or a small team of coordinators will develop curriculum and class materials; staff would only be expected to deliver the content and interact with the students. The coordinator(s) would prepare weekly lesson plans and any associated presentations or handouts, which would help to ensure consistency of messaging. We recommend that this individual also coordinates the Peer Mentorship Program.

GC2Y Courses (Area B)

This QEP is attempting to involve students in every class level. Since GC2Y is primarily a course taken by sophomores, these courses might provide a good opportunity to deliver some mental health/wellness programming, perhaps utilizing the 4th hour in some of the course sections. Specific programming is to be determined since ultimately, faculty teaching the courses should be involved in determining what programming might be a good fit for these course sections.

Junior Wellness Days

Since there is no shared Junior experience, we are requesting to have four wellness days/weeks for Juniors per academic year (minimum 4 days) to provide this group of students with mental health resources, events, and programming. Juniors will have the opportunity to complete depression, anxiety, and substance use and abuse screenings, attend programs around issues Juniors might be struggling with (cohorts, internships, class schedules, etc.), and meet with on-campus resources showcasing areas where students could receive assistance to reduce stressors and receive resources to enhance their academics. These wellness weeks/days will give direct attention to Juniors and provide them with take home resources as well as on the spot interventions to help alleviate some of their stressors and current mental health challenges. Junior Wellness Days will be incentivized for participation with giveaways.

Senior Capstone & Senior Exit Exam

Each department does capstones differently, but each can include an exit survey to understand if any of the efforts put in place through this QEP have helped them or if they participated in certain aspects of the programming. Seniors can always be asked about which mental health resources were the most beneficial to them and what recommendations they would make for others. The exit survey will provide information on the types of resources most widely used and those that were ineffective or least used, allowing for modification of the QEP from year-to-year.

On-Campus Offices Employing Students

Specific training would be developed and provided for those offices on campus who provide employment opportunities to students to educate on how to navigate and support their student employee's mental health, identify and recognize mental health challenges that arise, and information on how to provide referrals to resources for students when needed. Such trainings could include the National Council for Mental Wellbeing's *Mental Health First Aid*, the QPR Institute's *Question, Persuade, Refer* training, select Kognito training modules/simulations, etc...

7. Possible Means of Assessing Outcomes/Activities

- Pre and post tests for all 4 class components
- Ulifeline screenings (online screenings assessing Depression, Anxiety, Substance Use and Abuse) on targeted Wellness Days and Promotional events
- E-Checkup To Go (online assessment for alcohol & marijuana) utilized on wellness promotional days and in classes for extra-credit
- ACHA National Collegiate Health Assessment every 2 years (every odd year Spring Semester)
- Summative assessments after every experience and program
- *Healthy Minds* survey given in 4 years (we can also give on our own at any time with additional costs)
- SBIRT screening - Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment is a comprehensive, integrated, public health approach for early identification and intervention with patients whose patterns of alcohol and/or drug use put their health at risk provided through College of Health Sciences School of Nursing

- Get Connected Survey from Campus Life – used to encourage students to find places to get involved on campus, which can lead to a peer support system
- Post Capstone experience (Seniors)
- Checkpoints across campus: e.g. The Learning center, Writing Center, and Advising to provide a mental health triage to students seeking services as well as provide a list of resources (i.e., GC Mental Health Initiative Lookbook) to students as needed
- GC Journeys as a resource for surveying
- Housing Skyfactor Satisfaction Survey

8. Anticipated Resources Needed

While more will be identified and anticipated during more in-depth planning, some additional necessary resources will include:

- A new position created for the person in charge of overseeing the Peer Mentorship Program and general program implementation (e.g., creating content, scheduling, training, collaborating with campus departments, etc.).
- Funding dedicated to incentives and giveaways to encourage participation at events, programs, and to increase survey participation.
- Funding dedicated to payment of Peer Mentors.