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J420 Strategic Planning

Goals:

Demystify misconceptions associated with mental health.

Break the stigma associated with seeking mental health help.

Persona: Nicki is a full time college student working part time in the service industry. She lives in an apartment off-campus which she pays for each month independently. Nicki faces other financial burdens such as her phone bill, electricity, water, groceries, gas, etc. and does not receive any financial assistance outside herself. Nicki's mother is a single mom, so Nicki qualifies for financial aid to help with school tuition. She is able to stay organized throughout the busy semesters and has begun to find balance in her routine. However, she sometimes struggles with symptoms of depression and anxiety. She doesn't think she needs to seek professional help and would be concerned on how to afford it. Nicki believes she faces the same amount of anxiety and uncertainty about the future as her peers as a result of the pandemic. She has friends that utilize mental health counselling, but is unfamiliar with the services accessible on her campus.

Objective 1:

Increase traffic to campus counselling and psychological service websites by 80% by the end of December 2022.

Strategy 1: Emphasize the prevalence of mental health disorders among college students.

A lot of college students are not familiar with the way the Covid-19 pandemic impacted mental health, especially in young people. The more we are able to prove that this is a nationwide crisis, that students are not alone, the more willing they may be to seek help.

Tactic 1: statistical infographic of mental health disorders on a specific campus. Posting such on university media platforms like Twitter and Instagram will help in combatting one communication challenge: loneliness. Feelings of loneliness decrease the likelihood of sharing personal experiences with others. We can emphasize in the infographic the recent increase and prevalence of disorders historically, generally, and as a result of the pandemic.

Tactic 2: bathroom stall flyers advertising anonymous mental health support groups and campus counseling sites. Encourage students to bond with similar others in conversation about mental health. Many students have expressed feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and uncertainty, not realizing this is a universal experience for students across the country. Young adults aged 18-22 scored the highest loneliness score of 48.3 in a recent study of 20,000 adults, making them the generation feeling most lonely (US). We can advertise it as a way to strengthen this generation in a time where they are disproportionately vulnerable to mental health issues.

Strategy 2: Showcase the availability of services.

Concisely providing location-specific services that are available to students would help to combat the challenge of time availability.

Tactic 3: “*Did you know?*” bulletins with QR codes to mental health services that are location specific - showing the nearest services to where the code is located. Codes should be placed in areas where students frequently wait. Such as elevators, busses, bathrooms, and food/beverage check-out counters. If students are able to get a list of resources and indication of when to use them, they may be more likely to find out more about them. We could also include here the number of students already utilizing their campus services to decrease feelings of loneliness.

Tactic 4: easy sign-up option via link to receive newsletters or schedule an appointment. This tactic would be most successful on advising center websites of universities or directly to student emails.

Objective 2:

Increase advocacy messages about mental health stigmas, symptoms, and self care practices by 50% by the end of Spring 2022 semester.

Strategy 3: Persuade action through university/celebrity personnel.

Familiar faces strike attention, combatting another communication challenge: short attention spans due to limited time availability. Whether a familiar face is the KU chancellor, a member of student government, or a KU basketball player - students may care more about what they have to say about our campus.

Tactic 5: short video testimonials (~30 seconds). In a conversational tone, an advocate can briefly talk and post about the importance of mental health, early indications of poor mental health, common misperceptions, and at-home self-soothing techniques.

Tactic 6: high-profile university personnel share their personal experiences with mental health and encourage students to share their own. At the end, showcase campus mental health campaigns and social media pages. This strategy would be best used on Instagram, Tik Tok, or Snapchat with embedded links.

Strategy 4: Organize in-person seminars and peer support groups.

This strategy aims to increase awareness with mental health, become familiar with how it impacts their campus, and decrease feelings of isolation.

Tactic 7: have an advocate meeting students exactly where they are: on campus. Encourage conversation about symptoms, solutions, and recommendations. Help students get more comfortable sharing experiences and finding a space to build relationships with others having similar struggles. For example, the "Let's Talk" campaign at Cornell University, “sends mental health counselors to popular student venues around campus to offer students informal opportunities to speak with clinicians.” (Active minds, inc.)

Tactic 8: organize mental health anonymous support groups that meet on campus ~3 times a week. By talking to students on campus and informing them of seminars and support groups, we can easily decrease barriers to campus services and encourage help-seeking behavior.

References:

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