

SCOPEONLINE

Depression Screening Day puts spotlight on mental health

Skidmore's Health Promotions, Counseling Center, and Health Services offices this fall are focusing on one of the most common-and treatable-mental health ailments in addition to introducing a new peer-advising program.



Kate Child (l), Jennifer Burden, and Kate Rose Bobseine, representing Health Education, Health Promotions, and the Counseling Center.

have been trained in administering PHQ-9, a nine-question depression screening survey. Students visiting Health Services and the Counseling Center during the year will be invited to take the survey, regardless of the reason for their visit. Click [here](#) to view the survey.

The survey is the most visible tool of Skidmore's participation in the College Depression Partnership (CDP), a national demonstration project funded by the Charles Engelhard Foundation. Health Educator Kate Child explained that the CDP aims to improve the mental health of students through a focus on early detection, coordinated proactive patient follow-up, and better adherence to outcomes-based treatment.

According to Child, "Mental health issues are incredibly common on college campuses. Over the past decade there has been a marked increase in both the number of college students with mental health needs and the intensity of those needs.

"Data suggest that Skidmore students are facing the same mental health issues as college students across the country. More than half of Skidmore students report at least one symptom of depression while a little less than 15 percent meet the criteria for clinical depression, which is characterized by at least five persistent depressive symptoms."

She added, "Students with grade-point averages below 3.0 are twice as likely to experience depressive symptoms. In addition, students who sleep less than seven hours per night are significantly more likely to report depressive symptoms than those who get at least eight hours of sleep each night.

"The good news about depression is that most cases can be treated successfully through therapy, medication, or both," said Child, adding, "Increased amounts of exercise can also help to treat depression." Skidmore's Counseling Center schedules appointments and the center's psychiatrist may prescribe antidepressants. For an appointment, visit the Counseling Center office, located on the first floor of Jonsson Tower, call ext. 5555.

Helping to promote awareness of National Depression Screening Day is a new group of Health Peer Educators, working under the direction of Jennifer Burden, director of Health Promotion. Burden is teaching an Honors Forum class titled [Health Peer Education](#) and all 12 students (10 sophomores and two seniors) are serving as Skidmore's first crop of Health Peer Educators. This group is receiving the training and knowledge they will need to provide innovative and educational outreach to the student body.

Burden is pleased with the class composition: "We did reach out to sophomores specifically because our hope is that they will continue to work with us during their remaining years at Skidmore. But we also felt that it was important to include the perspective of older students in the group well."

Study topics include alcohol use, body image, stress, mental health and depression, disordered eating and relationships. Projects thus far have included a poster campaign announcing National Depression Screening Day and a poster campaign to promote the PEERS drunk driving simulation program. Future projects will include interactive bulletin boards, restroom readers, and Residential Life outreach.

Peer education became a reality this fall after a number of discussions about how best to influence campus culture and support health among students, explained Burden. "The program is structured to allow students to shape its direction and to encourage their participation. We are teaching the students all about health and wellness and making sure they have the skills that they need to do programs on campus. They will have quite a bit of freedom in deciding what topics they want to cover with their fellow students and determine how to achieve their goals. We think this allows for the creation of programs that really speak to students and will as a result be more influential with them."

Tags: [health services](#), [counseling](#), [health promotions](#), [jennifer burden](#), [kate child](#), [kate rose bobseine](#)

