

SCOPE ONLINE

Project focus: detection, treatment of depression

Skidmore has been invited to participate in a one-year national demonstration project focused on the early detection and effective treatment of college depression.

The National College Depression Partnership (NCDP) aims to improve the mental health of students by focusing on early detection, coordinated, proactive patient follow-up, and better adherence to outcomes-based treatment. Funded by the Charles Engelhard Foundation, the partnership is based at New York University and involves collaboration among 20 colleges and universities, including Skidmore, Princeton, U.C.L.A. and Sarah Lawrence.

As part of the current project, Skidmore's Health Services Department and Counseling Center will offer voluntary, confidential depression screening to all students using the PHQ-9, a nine-item standardized measure designed to assess depressive symptoms in primary-care settings. Students who score as potentially depressed on the scale will be encouraged to access support, education, and services at Health Services and/or the Counseling Center. Both will actively monitor care and outcomes, with the goal of helping as many students as possible obtain effective early intervention.

At regular intervals, the project team from Skidmore will meet with other NCDP participants to exchange findings and best practices, and to explore roadblocks to better care.

Last year, Skidmore's Health Promotions Office did an anonymous online survey of 643 students to assess their mental health and stress levels on campus. A total of 14.5 percent of respondents indicated that they had suffered from five or more symptoms of clinical depression during the past academic year. The presence of depressive symptoms was correlated with lower grade point averages and with less than optimal sleep patterns. Results at Skidmore fit with national trends, indicating that about 15 percent of college students will be diagnosed with depression in the course of an academic year.



Skidmore Counseling Center & Health Services staff members: Patty Bosen (left) Julia Routbort, Andrew Demaree, Michelle Lapo, Val Schultz.

"We're really excited about being selected for this project," says Patricia Bosen, clinical director of Health Services. "It gives us a chance to collaborate with our colleagues at the Counseling Center and to make sure that students understand that we care about how they are doing in all aspects of their lives." Andrew Demaree, project manager and associate director of the Counseling Center adds,

"We're especially hoping to be able to help students who might not otherwise have come in to the Counseling Center. They might be suffering from fatigue, loss of appetite and decreased motivation, but might not recognize that they are clinically depressed. This project means they will get the help they need."

Goals for Skidmore's participation in the project include earlier detection of students with depressive symptoms, better collaboration between Health Services and the Counseling Center, and being able to help students who might be less likely to see counseling initially.

Students will be invited to participate in the screening whenever they visit Health Services. Participation is voluntary and results will be kept confidential. For information on this program, please contact please contact Demaree at campus ext. 5555.

Tags: [ncdp](#), [charles engelhard foundation](#)
