

Graduate student mental health 2015

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Background

GPSC wanted to evaluate the impact of graduate and professional students on graduate and professional student health in order to take steps to create low-cost interventions across campus that can improve graduate and professional student quality of life in school. GPSC along with the Office of Research and Assessment, were interested in graduate student health. A sample of 3000 UA graduate and professional students were emailed with instructions to complete the survey in the spring of 2015; 309 students completed the survey (10.3% response rate). Responses were analyzed separately for Master (N=139) and Doctoral students (N=157). There were 196 female, and 102 male respondents. Ages ranged from 21 to 64 years old, with a modal age of 25.

Summary:

Many students report feeling that their physical health has decreased since beginning graduate school; however, the majority of students report that their health is fair to very good.

- Many students report that their sleep is worse than when they started graduate/professional studies.
- Many students report that their exercise routine is worse than when they started graduate/professional studies.
- Many students report that their diet is worse than when they started graduate/professional studies.
- Many students report that their mental health is worse, and that stress has increased, since they began graduate/professional studies.

Doctoral and masters students showed similar patterns for survey responses.

Recommendations

- Increase student access to diet and exercise programs offered through campus rec.
- Increase student access and awareness of mental health services offered through CAPS.

Results -- Doctoral students

Doctoral students showed a drop in subjective rating of physical health from the start of graduate studies (M=7.69, 95%CI [7.42 7.96]) to their current subjective ratings of physical health (M=6.63, 95%CI [6.32 6.94]). Most doctoral students say they get enough sleep on 2 and 5 nights per week (126/146 respondents). Most doctoral students report that sleep is worse (82/146 respondents), or has not changed (48/146 respondents), since beginning graduate/professional studies.

Most doctoral students report that their exercise routine is worse (72/146 respondents), or has not changed (26/146 respondents), since beginning graduate/professional studies. Most doctoral students report that their diet is worse (61/146 respondents), or has not changed (45/146 respondents), since beginning

graduate/professional studies. Doctoral students showed a drop in subjective ratings of mental health from the start of graduate studies (M=8.01, 95%CI [7.74 8.29]) to their current subjective rating of mental health (M=6.59, 95%CI [6.20 6.97]).

A majority of doctoral students report “more than average” current stress (71/142 respondents), or “tremendous” stress (33/142 respondents). Most doctoral students endorsed School (72% of respondents), Education-related (71% respondents), Financial Concerns (56% respondents), and Work (54% respondents), contributions to current stress levels.

Results -- Masters students

Masters students showed a drop in subjective rating of physical health from the start of graduate studies (M=7.64, 95%CI [7.38 7.89]) to their current subjective ratings of physical health (M=6.64, 95%CI [6.31 6.98]). Most masters students say they get enough sleep on 2 and 5 nights per week (100/134 respondents). Most masters students report that sleep is worse (91/134 respondents), or has not changed (33/134 respondents), since beginning graduate/professional studies.

Most masters students report that their exercise routine is worse (84/134 respondents), or has not changed (23/134 respondents), since beginning graduate/professional studies. Most masters students report that their diet is worse (79/134 respondents), or has not changed (41/134 respondents), since beginning graduate/professional studies.

Masters students showed a drop in subjective ratings of mental health from the start of graduate studies (M=7.85, 95%CI [7.55 8.15]) to their current subjective rating of mental health (M=7.09, 95%CI [6.75 7.43]). A majority of masters students report “average” stress (41/130 respondents), “more than average” current stress (59/130 respondents), or “tremendous” stress (25/142 respondents). Most masters students endorsed School (75% of respondents), Education-related (72% respondents), Financial Concerns (55% respondents), and Work (63% respondents), contributions to current stress levels.

NAGPS Institute: NAGPS believes in data-driven advocacy and sharing information with anyone interested in graduate and professional students’ issues and higher education advocacy.

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