

NJ HIGHER EDUCATION

MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT



**Sustaining Student and Employee
Well-Being in Time of Uncertainty:
Centering Mental Health in a Shifting
Higher Education Landscape**

January 8, 2026

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EVENTS OF THE DAY

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Registration & Continental Breakfast | Campus Center – 2 nd Floor The Gallery & Ballrooms | 8:00 AM – 9:15 AM |
| Resource Fair | Campus Center – 2 nd Floor The Gallery | 8:00 AM – 2:30 PM |
| Opening Plenary Session | Campus Center – 2 nd Floor Ballrooms | 9:30 AM – 10:45 AM |

Welcome to 2026 Mental Health Summit by Co-Chairs
Jason Fredericks, MPA, Raritan Valley Community College
Kha' Sadler, PsyD, Rowan University

Welcome to New Jersey Institute of Technology
Teik C. Lim, PhD, President NJIT

2025 Mental Health Student Ambassadors

*Protecting the Sanctuary in New Jersey Higher Education:
Strategies to Affirm the Mental Health of Immigrant Students, Staff and Scholars*
German A. Cadenas, PhD, Associate Professor of Clinical Psychology, Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, Rutgers University

Review of Logistics & Events of the Day

| | | |
|--|---|--------------------|
| Morning Program Sessions | Kupfrian Hall See Program Descriptions for Room Assignments | 11:00 AM – Noon |
| Lunch and Networking | Campus Center – 2 nd Floor Ballrooms | 12:15 PM – 1:15 PM |
| Presidential Panel <i>State of Higher Education</i> | Campus Center – 2 nd Floor Ballrooms | 1:15 PM – 2:00 PM |
| Afternoon Program Sessions | Kupfrian Hall See Program Descriptions for Room Assignments | 2:15 PM – 3:15 PM |
| Closing Session and Final Remarks | Campus Center – 2 nd Floor Ballrooms | 3:30 PM – 3:45 PM |
| Summit Concludes | | 3:45 PM |

Uwill Well-Being Lounge is open throughout the day with special sessions offered during morning, lunch and afternoon periods.

Please Note: Neither Plenary or Program Sessions are being recorded.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Opening Plenary Session Campus Center – 2nd Floor Ballrooms

Protecting the Sanctuary in New Jersey Higher Education: Strategies to Affirm the Mental health of Immigrant Students, Staff and Scholars



Dr. Germán A. Cadenas



Dr. Germán A. Cadenas is an Associate Professor of Clinical Psychology in the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP) at Rutgers University. He also serves as inaugural Associate Director of the Center for Youth Social Emotional Wellness (CYSEW) and leads the Lab for Immigrant Rights and Mental Health. He has a Ph.D. in counseling psychology from Arizona State University and completed a doctoral internship and postdoctoral fellowship in health service psychology at the University of California Berkeley.

His academic work is community-based and focused on the psychology of immigration and on critical consciousness as a tool for social justice. This includes the development and validation of strategies to support the psychological well-being, education, career/work, and health of immigrants and other underserved communities. His advocacy and research have informed the implementation of policies and programs to support undocumented students and families in higher education and in K-12 schools. At the national level, his research and testimony have reached the policymaking process in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. He currently serves as Senior Advisor on Public Policy for the National Latinx Psychological Association (NLPA). On the global stage,

Dr. Cadenas was a featured speaker at the 17th Annual Psychology Day at the United Nations. He is the recipient of the American Psychological Association (APA) Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychology in the Public Interest.

PRESIDENTIAL PANEL

State of Higher Education

1:15PM-2:00PM

Panelists: **Cindy R. Jebb, PhD**

President

Ramapo College

Anthony Lowman, PhD

Chancellor

Rowan University

Michael J. McDonough, PhD

President

Raritan Valley Community College

Mildred A. Mihlon, PhD

President

Felician University

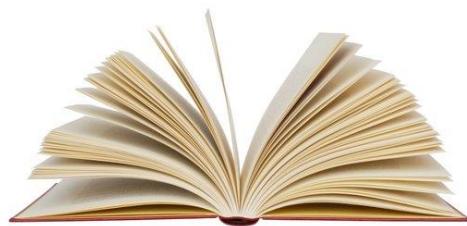
Moderator: **Jessica Steiger**

Deputy Chief of Staff

New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education

“An investment knowledge pays the best interest.”

Benjamin Franklin



MORNING PROGRAM SESSIONS

11:00AM-NOON

Kupfrian Hall Classrooms

ROOM
202

Building Community Using the Sanctuary Model

Dr. Angelle Richardson, PhD, LPC, Associate Professor and Department Chair | Mercy University

This workshop introduces Sandy Bloom's Sanctuary Model as a framework for building community and promoting wellness in higher education. Participants will learn the model's core principles, explore the S.E.L.F. (Safety, Emotion, Loss, Future) framework, and see how Community Meetings can be integrated into campus practice. The session will include real examples of successful implementation to support the well-being of students, faculty, and staff.

ROOM
108

Q.P.R. for Athletics — Building a Team Approach to Suicide Prevention

Dr. Christopher McKittrick, PsyD, LPC, Director of Counseling and Prevention Services | Monmouth University

Callie Brown, LPC, Athletics Performance Clinical Counselor Monmouth University
This session introduces evidence-based Q.P.R. (Question, Persuade, Refer) suicide prevention training for the unique context of college athletics. Participants will learn to recognize warning signs, intervene effectively, and connect student-athletes, coaches, and staff to life-saving resources. Attendees will gain certified skills to foster resilience, reduce stigma, and strengthen a culture of care within athletic communities.

ROOM
211

Swipe Less, Live More: Helping College Students Build Healthier Relationships with Their Smartphones

Dr. Brendan Sullivan, PsyD, Counseling and Psychological Services; Staff Psychologist | Seton Hall University

This session presents Seton Hall University's "Screentime Management" protocol, designed to help students develop healthier relationships with smartphones and other technology. Participants will learn the theoretical foundations, see evidence of its effectiveness in counseling settings, and engage interactively with key steps of the protocol. Attendees will gain practical strategies applicable for supporting students, enhancing personal well-being, and implementing screentime management in diverse campus contexts.

ROOM
203

Creating a Culture of Inclusion and Well-Being: Building Bridges Through Collaboration

Dr. Sudha Wadhwani, PsyD, Staff Psychologist, Coordinator of Inclusion & Community Initiatives, CAPS | Montclair State University

Dr. Ashante S. Connor, EdD, Msc. HRD, Associate Vice President for Inclusive Excellence & Special Assistant to the President | Montclair State University

Jonnine DeLoatch, MPA, Assistant Dean of Student Belonging | Montclair State University

Adela Caceres, MA, Director, Advocacy & Outreach – OSB | Montclair State University

This session explores how a university can embed multiculturalism, inclusion, and belonging across all levels and units. Leaders from Student Development and Campus Life (SDCL), and the President's Office will share their initiatives, collaborations, and guiding principles that foster a campus culture of care, well-being, and connection. Attendees will gain practical tools, strategies, and opportunities to share best practices for advancing inclusion and belonging at their own institutions.

ROOM
208

The Power of Kindness: Building Healthier Workplaces for Higher Education Staff

Shunda L. Williams, EdM, Executive Director - Human Resources Essex County College

This session addresses staff and administrator well-being in higher education, emphasizing the role of kindness, reflection, and organizational wellness practices. Participants will explore HR-informed strategies to foster supportive workplace cultures, strengthen collegiality, and enhance retention. Through interactive discussion and guided reflection, attendees will gain practical tools to sustain personal wellness and implement institutional approaches that prioritize employee mental health.

ROOM
204

Beyond Survival: Campus Care That Works

Tierra Hall-Edward, MS, LPC, Director, Counseling Services Raritan Valley Community College

Lauren Gmitter, MSW, LSW, Mental Health Counselor | Raritan Valley Community College

Dr. Rikita Singh, EdD, LRC, Executive Director of Student Support Raritan | Valley Community College

This session highlights a holistic model at Raritan Valley Community College that integrates mental health counseling with support for food, housing, and other essential student needs. Participants will learn how this approach reduces barriers, destigmatizes help-seeking, and supports students as whole individuals. Attendees will gain practical strategies and examples to strengthen well-being and foster a more inclusive campus environment

ROOM
205

Centering Mental Health as a Core Institutional Priority: Strategies for Institutional Resilience and Well-Being

Larry Klein, LCSW, Director of Social Services | Bergen New Bridge Medical Center

Angela Prestifilippo, MA, LPC, NCC, Director, Behavioral Health Outpatient Services | Bergen New Bridge Medical Center

This session examines the urgent need to center mental health as a core priority in higher education amidst rising anxiety, depression, and burnout among students and staff. Presenters will explore how sociopolitical pressures, financial challenges, and systemic stressors impact campus well-being, and highlight research-backed strategies for embedding trauma informed, culturally responsive mental health practices across institutional policies, pedagogy, and culture. Attendees will gain insights into holistic approaches that promote resilience, equity, and long-term institutional productivity.

ROOM
206

Art as Advocacy: Engaging College Communities in Mental Health Awareness through Creative Expression

Dr. Melissa Ramdas, PhD, Assistant Professor- Counseling Department Mercy University

This session showcases a campus-wide initiative using the arts to foster dialogue, reduce stigma, and promote mental health awareness. Participants will learn about a student art exhibition organized during Mental Health Awareness Month, which featured original works expressing personal experiences with mental health and created an inclusive space for conversation. Attendees will gain practical guidance for replicating similar programs, integrating art-based outreach into student support services, and building cross-departmental collaborations on their campuses.

ROOM
107

Strength in Connection: Building a University Culture of Wellness, and Belonging

Dr. Peggy Swarbrick, PhD, Professor Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology and ScarletWell Director | Rutgers University

Dr. Amy Spagnolo, PhD, Scarlet Well Program Coordinator | Rutgers University

Dr. Joshua Langberg, PhD, Chief Wellness Officer | Rutgers New Brunswick; Professor and Director, Center for Youth Social and Emotional Wellness, Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology | Rutgers University

This session highlights ScarletWell, a university-wide initiative promoting well-being for students, faculty, and staff through an integrated, strengths-based framework grounded in the 8 Dimensions of Wellness. Participants will learn how collaborative efforts across academic, administrative, and student affairs units foster a culture of wellness through grants, peer support programs, and innovative digital tools. Attendees will gain practical insights on advancing whole-person wellness, enhancing campus climate, and building community resilience through inclusive, interdisciplinary engagement.

ROOM
209

Reframing Racial Trauma in Higher Education: Affirmation, Belonging, and Healing

Dr. Jennifer Jones-Damis, PsyD, LPC, Director of Counseling Center, CAPS | Rutgers University

Dr. Mallory Everett, PsyD, LPC, Associate Director of Clinical Services, CAPS | Rutgers University

This presentation examines how racial trauma impacts Black students in higher education and challenges traditional Eurocentric approaches that pathologize their experiences. Using Black/African psychology as a framework, it emphasizes culture, community, and resilience to promote collective healing. Attendees will gain practical strategies to support racially minoritized students and foster culturally informed mental health practices on campus.

AFTERNOON PROGRAM SESSIONS

2:15PM-3:15PM

Kupfrian Hall Classrooms

ROOM
202

Roll with It: How Coaching with a Wellness Wheel Supports Holistic Well-Being

Hannah Byrd, MA, Student Peer Wellness Coach Program Manager | New Jersey Institute of Technology

This interactive session introduces SAMHSA's eight dimensions of wellness and explores how individuals can take meaningful steps to enhance their well-being. Participants will learn about the Peer Wellness Coaching program at NJIT, engage in a hands-on Wellness Wheel activity, and experience elements of coaching firsthand. Attendees will leave with practical tools to support their own wellness and to help others "roll with it" in times of uncertainty.

ROOM
208

Webs of Support: Understanding First-Year Student Networks

Barry Hendlar, EdM, Assistant Dean, Residential Learning and University Housing | Rowan University

This presentation shares findings from a qualitative social network analysis exploring how first-year residential students seek support for mental health concerns. Results reveal that while students are aware of campus resources, they more often turn to peers and family members within networks shaped by shared identity and experience. Attendees will gain evidence-based insights and practical recommendations for designing interventions that build on students' natural help-seeking patterns to enhance well-being and belonging.

ROOM
211

The Promise and the Peril of Generative AI as Companion and Therapist

Eric Rose, PhD, Executive Director of Wellness; Director of Student Counseling | Stevens Institute of Technology

Priti Shah, PhD, Associate Director of Counseling | Seton Hall University

Ashley I. Robinson, MSW, LSW, Clinical Fellow | Seton Hall University

Dennis Carlson, MA, EdS, Licensed Associate Counselor |Elements Psychological Services

This presentation examines how artificial intelligence (AI) is shaping student support, from everyday stress management to intimate conversations about relationships and mental health. Participants will explore current research, real-world case studies, and ethical considerations, including privacy, consent, and the boundaries of AI as an "attachment-type" figure. Attendees will gain a balanced understanding of AI's potential benefits and risks, along with practical questions to guide responsible use in mental health and relational contexts.

ROOM
209

What Works and What Doesn't Work in Preventing Substance Misuse and Promoting Mental Health in Students

Cori Hammond, MPH, Director, Prevention Services | Partnership to End Addiction

Linda Richter, PhD, Senior Vice President, Prevention Research and Analysis | Partnership to End Addiction

This session examines common pitfalls in substance use prevention—such as scare tactics, one-time speakers, and moralizing messages—and contrasts them with evidence-based strategies proven to promote mental health and reduce risk. Presenters from Partnership to End Addiction will share lessons learned from past prevention campaigns, including the iconic “This is your brain on drugs” PSA. Attendees will leave with actionable, research-informed approaches for designing effective, science-based prevention programs on campus.

ROOM
108

Meeting Students Where They Are: Embedded Mental Health Models in College Counseling

Phyllis Bolling, PhD, Director - Center for Counseling and Psychological Services | New Jersey Institute of Technology

Kalpana Daswani, PsyD, Staff Clinician/Psychologist, Center for Counseling and Psychological Services | New Jersey Institute of Technology

Christopher McKittrick, PsyD, Director - Counseling and Prevention Services Monmouth University

Manda J. Gatto, MSW, LCSW, Assistant Director of Community Based Services - Counseling, Alcohol and Other Drug Assistance Program & Psychiatric Services | Rutgers University

This workshop introduces the Embedded Counseling Center model, an innovative approach to expanding access to mental health care and reducing stigma on college campuses. Presenters will outline how embedding clinicians within specific departments can enhance collaboration, outreach, and support for underserved student populations. Participants will learn about implementation strategies, potential challenges, and examples of successful embedded programs at various universities.

ROOM
107

We're Not Okay (We Promise): Literacy and Mental Health in Higher Education

Kristen Wilson, DSocSci, Director, Behavioral Services | Rowan University

Samantha Van Kooy, MA, Associate Vice President of Student Affairs | Rowan College of South Jersey

This session explores the complex relationship between literacy and mental health, highlighting how reading challenges and poor writing skills can impact mental health and persistence in college. Drawing on emerging research and trends in college readiness, presenters will discuss how institutions can best support students through integrated academic and wellness strategies. Participants will gain practical ideas for reducing stigma, aligning literacy initiatives with mental health support, and promoting holistic student success.

ROOM
203

Building a Culture of Care in NJ Community Colleges

Kathlyn Battle, EdD, Associate Professor / Counselor | Essex County College

Jennifer Chapman, MS, Instructor / Counselor | Essex County College

Ada Torres, MA, Professor, Lecturer / Counselor | Essex County College

Cassandra Johnson, MSW, Professor, Mental Health Counselor | Essex County College

This presentation explores how New Jersey community colleges are fostering campus-wide cultures of care through Mental Health First Aid and QPR suicide prevention training. By equipping faculty, staff, and students with the skills to recognize and respond to mental health concerns, these institutions are building more supportive and responsive learning environments. Attendees will learn how such training initiatives can strengthen prevention efforts, enhance well-being, and promote academic success.

ROOM
204

Promoting Well-Being in Institutes of Higher Education Through Mini-Grant Programs

Pooja Padgaonkar, MD, Asst. Professor in Family Medicine, Director of Student Health Services at Rutgers Health-Newark | Rutgers - New Jersey Medical School

Chantal Brazeau, MD, Chief Wellness Officer Rutgers Health | Rutgers University

Margaret Swarbrick, PhD, FAOTA, Research Professor and Associate Director, Center of Alcohol and Substance Use Studies; Director, ScarletWell | Rutgers University

Shoshana Sperling, PsyD, Training Director, Psychology Internship Program-Newark UBHC; Clinical Psychologist, SHS | Rutgers

Anna Schwartz, MSW, LCSW, Therapist, Student Health Services at Rutgers Health - Newark | Rutgers University Behavioral Healthcare

This session highlights how cultivating a culture of “Joy at Work” can enhance well-being across campus communities. Presenters will share the development and impact of a mini-grant program that empowered campus work-units to design their own well-being initiatives, including a successful project in Student Health Services. The session will also explore how the program expanded to support undergraduate and graduate student-led well-being projects.

ROOM
206

Clarifying Values, Cultivating Empathy: A Core Strategy for Supporting Well-Being through Difficult Times

Shayne Judge, MPH, Sexual & Reproductive Health Education Specialist - Dept of Health, Outreach, Promotion & Education | Rutgers Student Health

Maudi Silver-Mallemat, MA, Program Coordinator - Reproductive Training and Education Initiative | Rutgers School of Nursing, Department of Advanced Practice Nursing

This interactive workshop introduces values clarification as an evidence-based approach to enhance empathy, reduce bias, and strengthen student-centered support in higher education. Participants will engage in scenario-based reflection and guided discussion to explore how personal values shape responses to students in distress. Attendees will leave with practical tools grounded in mental health research to respond compassionately and effectively across campus settings.

ROOM
205

Meeting the Mental Health and Wellness Needs of Justice-Impacted Students

Andrea Falzone, PsyD, Licensed Psychologist/Mental Health Coordinator, Center for Counseling and Wellness | Camden Community College

Sherley Michel-Williams, MSW, LSW, Licensed Social Worker / Case Manager | Camden Community College

Tammy Timbers, MEd, Student Life and Engagement Coordinator | Camden Community College
This presentation explores the mental health and social-emotional needs of justice-involved students as access to higher education expands for individuals who are incarcerated. Drawing on current research, it highlights the psychological impact of incarceration and the challenges faced during reentry into the community. Participants will gain insights into how colleges and universities can create inclusive environments and provide holistic supports to promote the well-being and success of these students

ROOM
207

Boundaries that Support Well-Being and Prevent Burnout

Erin Andrews, LMHC, LPCC, Director, Clinical Affairs, Uwill

Many higher education leaders care deeply about their work, and feel the cost of that care. When crisis becomes routine and expectations remain unspoken, burnout can emerge not from a lack of commitment, but from chronic boundary erosion. In this session, we'll examine what burnout really is, why it is so common in student-facing roles, and how leaders can use boundaries as an ethical and sustainable practice. This training offers tangible strategies you can implement immediately to support your own well-being and the health of your teams.

Uwill WELL-BEING LOUNGE

Stop by to enjoy the relaxed atmosphere in the Uwill Well-Being Lounge in the Campus Center, Room 235.

Everyone is welcome.

Join us at any time throughout the day or stop by for a scheduled experiential session.

Introduction to Mindfulness

11:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Explore the potential of mindfulness; what it is, why it matters, and how to apply it in daily life. This session includes guided practices for all levels of experience.

Lunchtime Meditation

12:45 PM – 1:15 PM

Learn three basic meditation techniques that will help you self-regulate no matter what life throws your way.

Mindful Communication

2:15 PM – 2:45 PM

Experiential workshop focused on key skills for enhancing workplace well-being.

COMMITTEE AND LIAISONS

2026 NJ Higher Education Mental Health Summit Chairs

Jason Fredericks, MPA, Raritan Valley Community College
Kha' Sadler, PsyD, Rowan University

Committee Members

Leigh M. Bello-Bryan, PhD., Essex County College
MaryAlice Breuninger, Independent Colleges and Universities of New Jersey
Jacob C. Farbman, EdD, APR, New Jersey Council of Community Colleges
Angela Garretson, PhD, New Jersey Institute of Technology
Jennifer Keyes-Malone, New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities
John Kolligian, Jr., PhD, MBA, Princeton University
Ariella Panek, EdD, County College of Morris
James Pillar, EdD, Monmouth University
Steve Reynolds, Independent Colleges and Universities of New Jersey
Eric Rose, PhD., Stevens Institute of Technology
Jessica Steiger, New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education
Linda Uhrig, Independent Colleges and Universities of New Jersey
Melissa Van Der Wall, Ramapo College
Donna M. Vazquez, MSW, Rowan College at Burlington County

NJIT Liaisons

Office of Government and Community Relations -
Angela Garretson, PhD, Chief of Public and Community Affairs

Strategic Events and Conference Services -
Albert Martinez, Director, Operations and Conference Services
Jill Shah, Events and Reservations Assistant
Angeline Sosa, Assistant Director, Operations and Conference Services

NOTES

resource fair participants



**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**

Bergen
New Bridge
Medical Center
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 **charlie health**



 **high focus**
treatment centers

 **Mantra
Health**



The Kristin Brooks Hope Center



resource fair participants



New Jersey Governor's Council on
Mental Health Stigma
Eliminating Stigma to Ensure Equity for All



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
New Jersey Health Care System





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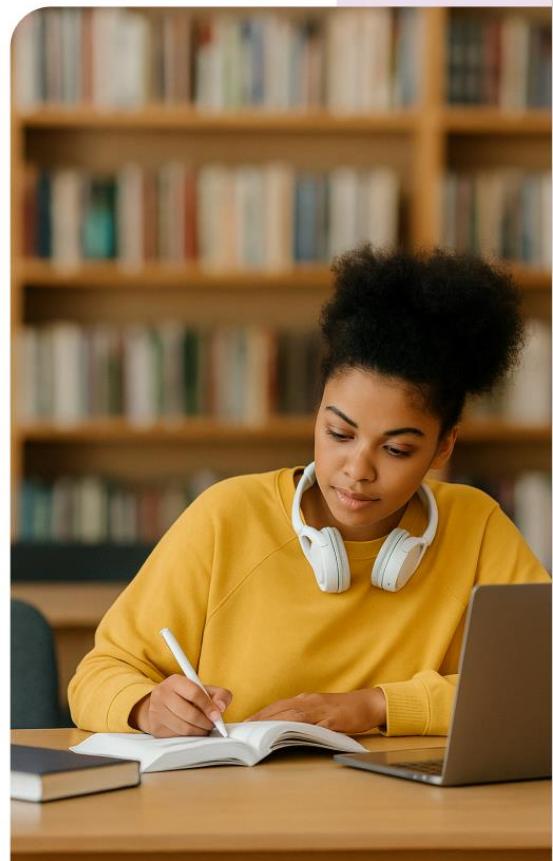


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