



Community of Inquiry, Practice, and Action on Mental Health in Higher Education

The Academic Success Center (ASC) at CSUSM invites members of the faculty to join the second Community of Inquiry, Practice, and Action (CIPA). A CIPA is a group of faculty and staff who come together as a group to learn about a topic or issue related to student success, work collaboratively to incorporate that learning into their practice, and develop a project to effect change on campus. The 19-20 CIPA will be led by Dr. Jay Robertson-Howell from Student Health and Counseling Services and will focus on students' mental health in higher education and at CSUSM. You can be a valuable contributor to this Community.

A *community of inquiry* is a group of individuals who collaboratively engage in critical discourse and reflection to construct personal meaning and develop mutual understanding ([Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007](#)).

A *community of practice* is a group of individuals who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of interest in order to improve their practice ([Wenger-Trayner, 2015](#)).

These concepts have been combined in faculty development to create communities of inquiry and practice, groups with a dual focus on learning and on adapting that learning to influence teaching practice. The CIPA adds a third concept to the mix: the *community of action*, a group that works together to identify and tackle issues head-on. Combining these three frameworks creates a group based around collaborative learning, a focus on local context, and positive institutional change.

The 19-20 CIPA will be centered on students' experiences at CSUSM and mental health in higher education. With the combination of frameworks described above, the CIPA's goals are

- **Inquiry:** to dive into the literature on student mental health in higher education
- **Practice:** to understand the impacts on student well-being at CSUSM and tie our experiences to the research as well as to institutional data
- **Action:** to collaboratively develop a project that directly addresses mental health issues for CSUSM students

Why study mental health in higher education? Mental health disorders are as prevalent among college students as same-aged non-students (Blanco C, Okuda M, Wright C, et al. 2008). Because of increased demand for services and increasing mental health severity (National College Health Assessment, Spring 2008), college counseling centers have moved from a developmental model to providing more acute care to their students. Anxiety (48.2%), followed by stress (39.1%), depression (34.5%), suicidal ideation (25.2%) specific relationship concerns (22.9%), family concerns (21.2%), interpersonal functioning problems (18.8%), sleep problems (15.8%), and loneliness/social isolation (15.5%) are the most frequent concerns among college students (AUCCCD 2016-2017 Survey). Yet, many students go untreated. Many barriers to accessing treatment have been identified including time, privacy concerns, lack of a perceived need for help,

stigma, and cultural factors. As campus members, it is important to be able to recognize possible signs of mental health related issues while understanding the possible barriers to accessing help.

CIPA faculty will review the literature on mental health in higher education, and compare and contrast it with their own experiences and with CSUSM student data to answer questions such as the following:

- What are the student mental health needs at CSUSM? When do these mental health needs generally emerge? Are there other life factors that contribute to the mental health needs of CSUSM students?
- What are the mental health impacts academically and socially? How are some students resilient in regard to their mental health challenges and other students are not?
- How do we break down the stigma of seeking mental health services? What are the cultural implications?

Overview of the CIPA: As participants of the CIPA, we ask that you commit to

- Meeting as a community of inquiry, practice, and action about once a week during the Fall semester and every other week during the Spring semester. Community meetings will take place on Friday afternoons from 1:30 to 2:30pm. The total meeting time will be 25 hours over the Fall and Spring semesters. Meetings in the early and mid-Fall will focus on *inquiry*, or investigating and learning about the topic; those in the mid-to-late Fall will focus on *practice*, or connecting the earlier learning to our work; and those in the Spring will focus on *action*, or developing a potential solution to an issue raised during the inquiry. [A tentative schedule is located here.](#)
- Engaging with the literature in preparation of the weekly meetings during the Fall semester. Readings will require no more than 1 hour per week (about 9 hours total for the semester).
- Working collaboratively as a community of action to develop a project focused on mental health and wellness at CSUSM. Please note that the CIPA will be focused on the development of this project, not its implementation. Implementation will be led by the Academic Success Center in collaboration with identified partners. Faculty who participate in the CIPA are encouraged to be involved in implementation process, but it is not an expectation of the CIPA itself.

Who can apply? Faculty from any discipline and of any rank/status are encouraged to apply.

How will faculty be selected? Faculty will be selected based on these criteria:

- Clearly articulated interest in the CIPA's goals;
- Diverse representation with regard to disciplinary area and years of service;
- Availability for the meeting times.

What is the compensation? Faculty who participate in the CIPA will be awarded a \$500 stipend from the Academic Success Center. Stipends will be distributed toward the end of the Spring semester.

To apply: Fill out our [Application Form](#). The priority deadline for applications is the end of the day on Thursday, May 16. We will begin reviewing applications after that date. Application will remain open until faculty seats in the CIPA group are filled, or until the beginning of fall semester.

If you have any questions, please contact Jackie Duerr, Director of the Academic Success Center (jduerr@csusm.edu).