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New Jersey Secretary of Higher Education Announces Extension of Partnership Providing Free, 24/7 Virtual Mental Health Services to College Students Statewide

SOUTH ORANGE – New Jersey Secretary of Higher Education Brian Bridges, Ph.D., today announced the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) will extend New Jersey’s first-in-the-nation partnership with mental health and wellness platform, Uwill. Since [launching in May 2023](#), the partnership has empowered students at 44 of New Jersey’s participating colleges and universities to access free, 24/7/365 teletherapy, crisis connection and wellness programming. As of January 10, more than 7,600 students are registered on the platform and nearly 20,000 total sessions have been scheduled.

The announcement was made during the inaugural [New Jersey Higher Education Mental Health Summit](#) held at Seton Hall University. The event brought together over 500 participants, representing a diversity of frontline campus practitioners and mental health experts, for an engaging day of collaboration and learning around strategies to foster stronger student mental health and well-being.

“Today’s announcement demonstrates our continued commitment to providing life-line mental health supports to thousands of college students in New Jersey, in complement to the counseling and wellness services available at institutions across the state,” **said Secretary Bridges**. “Less than a year into this partnership, data-driven insights and testimonials show a meaningful impact. Students are finding virtual sessions with licensed practitioners to be very beneficial, with many seeking help for the very first time, and frontline campus counselors tell us these virtual services are helping them reach more students. We hope students continue to feel encouraged and motivated to seek the support they need for success.”

A recent survey of students registered on Uwill’s platform revealed that 61 percent had not previously had an appointment with a therapist or mental health counselor at their institution. Simultaneously, a survey of mostly counseling staff at participating institutions found that 79 percent agreed the partnership with Uwill has enabled them to provide or enhance mental health support to students after hours. Roughly 33 percent of the appointments were made

between 5 p.m. to 9 a.m. or on weekends, when many physical campus counseling centers are closed.

“Uwill equalizes access to mental health services by empowering students to get help tailored to their needs and preferences from the comfort of their dorm or home,” **said Michael London, Uwill Founder and CEO.** “We are grateful to continue this statewide partnership in New Jersey to help institutions maximize the reach of impact of mental health support for students at all stages along their wellbeing journey. Even right now, during winter break, when students are particularly vulnerable to stressors, they can rely on Uwill support.”

The importance of tackling mental health also follows research that demonstrates its impact on student success and college completion. Results of the annual [Healthy Minds Study](#) have shown that, across all types of campuses nationwide, students struggling with their mental health are less likely to persist and that those at-risk for depression are twice as likely to leave an institution without graduating.

“Student mental health is an issue that all New Jersey institutions of higher learning are working collaboratively to address, as exemplified by the inaugural Summit held today,” **said Dr. Anthony Iacono, Chair of the New Jersey Presidents’ Council and County College of Morris President.** “The availability of evidence-based services, as well as preventive programs, strengthens our campus cultures and ensures students have the necessary tools to stay on track toward their degree. To that end, we are encouraged that the state’s partnership with Uwill will continue because it’s creating room for long sought extensions of and innovations to our campus-based offerings.”

Students will now be able to access services and programming from Uwill at no cost through at least the spring of 2025. The extension of the partnership continues to be supported by the \$10 million in American Rescue Plan funds allocated to OSHE in the State’s Fiscal Year 2023 budget.

The partnership with Uwill also works in complement to other components of Governor Murphy’s Administration-wide strategy to strengthen youth mental health, including through OSHE’s award of [\\$16 million in grants](#) in summer 2023. These grants are helping to increase the capacity of institution-based services by supporting the creation of community provider partnerships as well as professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

