

[Cowen Institute receives Kresge Foundation grant to support mental health of college students](#)

Keith Brannon

kbrannon@tulane.edu



Photo by Shutterstock

[The Cowen Institute](#) at Tulane University has been awarded a grant by The Kresge Foundation to support a “NOLA Mental Health and Wellness Pilot” program for New Orleans college students. The grant will fund a partnership between the mental health app MetaPro, and post-secondary focused organizations College Beyond, College Track, and the Cowen Institute, to provide high quality mental health services to college students in those programs.

“The COVID-19 public health crisis has exacerbated barriers faced by college students, in particular students from historically marginalized populations. Many of the students who participate in College Beyond, College Track, and the Cowen Institute’s programs have directly experienced the pandemic’s devastating impacts, through illness, death of family members, unemployment, and lack of access to resources. Mental health support is needed now more than ever,” said Amanda Kruger Hill, Cowen Institute executive director. “We are grateful for the Kresge Foundation’s generous support, which makes this initiative possible.”

New Orleans is a focus city for Kresge, and the foundation’s Education Program seeks to increase college access and success while reducing inequitable outcomes. Sound mental health and wellness are important components of student success. Through this grant, college students will be able to access mental health services and connect directly with counselors and therapists for support through an app on their phone.

The Cowen Institute, while maintaining participants’ privacy, will analyze how students interact with mental health services via the app and share findings with the college attainment ecosystems both in New Orleans and nationally. Through its New Orleans College Persistence Collaborative, the Cowen Institute will foster awareness of mental health and wellness resources and programming with college persistence practitioners from around the city.

“As an organization focused on improving college completion through addressing trauma and social-emotional health, we are excited to bring this resource to our students. Optimal mental health is essential for academic success and ultimately college success. MetaPro provides a practical solution to longstanding barriers in connecting college students with quick access to mental health services,” said Erin Wheeler, College Beyond executive director.

“The pandemic has been difficult for everyone, but low-income, minority communities in New Orleans have been hit especially hard. Our students have lost family members, including grandparents who served as their primary guardians, and some have needed to take on long hours at work to support their families while attempting to balance virtual schooling. For some of our students, physically attending college provided a refuge from a chaotic home life or community violence, offering housing security, stable internet, a quiet space to complete homework assignments, and a promised meal. The loss of that has placed an immense emotional strain on them. Mental health plays a pivotal role in the work we do with

students and this partnership with will hopefully eliminate some of the barriers to access that our students face when seeking out much-needed, high-quality mental health services,” said Clara Baron-Hyppolite, site director of College Track New Orleans.