Stigma of Mental Health Conditions as a Barrier to Addressing the Mental Health Crisis in Engineering

November 16, 2023
1:00 PM – 2:00 PM, ET
This webinar is part of a larger series on building community and reflecting to re-envision in engineering education.

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Upcoming Webinars

Before We Begin

Interact with us and each other...

Complete our survey and access webinar materials.
Questions?

Use Q&A pod at any time or...

Wait for the Q&A at the end of the webinar.
Today’s Speakers

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*The University at Buffalo – SUNY*

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Stigma of mental health conditions as a barrier to addressing the mental health crisis in engineering
Introductions & Motivation

Matilde Sanchez-Pena  PhD
Assistant Professor
Teaching Area: Engineering Education
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Nichole Ramirez  Ph.D.
Assistant Director
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Specialty/Research Focus
Cultures of wellbeing, institutional diversity, faculty advancement, equity and inclusion assessment, Data Science teaching and learning, social responsibility, social justice

About VIP
The VIP Model
In VIP, teams of undergraduate students from various years, disciplines and backgrounds work with faculty and graduate students on their efforts in scholarship and exploration. The teams are interdisciplinary – drawing students from the disciplines needed by each project; vertically-integrated – maintaining a mix of undergraduate students from different cohorts; large-scala – often with 10 to 20+ undergraduates per team; and long-term – undergraduates can earn academic credit in VIP for up to four years, and the projects last for many years, even decades.

Award Abstract # 2147193
Collaborative Research: Research: Stigma of mental health conditions in engineering and its relationship with help-seeking attitudes of undergraduates and early professionals

| NSF Org: | EEC Div Of Engineering Education and Centers |
| Awardee: | RESEARCH FOUNDATION FOR THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, THE |
| Initial Amendment Date: | April 25, 2022 |
At the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Describe the role of stigma of mental health condition (MHC) as a factor to tackle the mental health crisis in engineering
- Reflect on their current stigma-driven or stigma-free practices in supporting students with MHCs
- Explore potential research areas to advance the understanding of the complex problem of developing a culture of care in engineering.
Session Plan

- Stigma of MHCs (5)
- Engineering Identity and MHCs (5)
- Interactive Narrative Case (20)
- Wrap up and Q&A (10)
Poll Question 1

What comes to mind first, when you think about someone with a Mental Health Condition?
Stigma of MHCs

Stigma refers to a strong feeling of disapproval about a particular characteristic and can be targeted to a variety of voluntary or involuntary traits of someone (Corrigan & Watson, 2002)

Different types of stigma

Social Stigma

PUBLIC
Discrimination and Devaluation by Others

SYSTEMIC
Reduced Access to Care and Resources Due to Policies

SELF
Internalization of Negative Stereotypes

https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/stigma.html
Poll Question 2

What are our assumptions about what people with a MHC can/can’t do?
mental health stigma looks like

- You shouldn't have kids, you'd just pass on your issues, so selfish!
- Everyone has anxiety, some people are just stronger than you are.
- All women are a bit bipolar!
- Therapy and medications are just scams, you don't need all that.
- Mental illness is just an excuse to life off of benefits and not contribute to society.
- What do you mean "you can't get out of bed," it's not like your legs aren't working.
- Kids and teens can't have mental illness, what have they got to worry about in life?
Engineering Identity & MHCs
What we want to understand

Administration/Management
Policies & Support Programs for MHC – Attitudes of Promotion & Use

Faculty/Supervisors
Course-level policies & Expressed Attitudes towards MHC

Students/Early Professionals
Perceptions of & Experiences with MHC

Without MHC experience

Societal-stigma

Engineering Specific Stigma of MHC

Intergroup Contact Theory

Self-stigma

With MHC experience

Help-seeking attitudes

Identity Threat Model
Exploratory Study

- In partnership with the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI)
- 3 participants
- US Midwest
- Participants involved in NAMI programming
- Narrative Inquiry
- Depth not breadth
Narratives Activity

● Using your handout
  ○ Jane
    ■ Undergraduate engineering student
  ○ Jack
    ■ Late career

Pick One

https://www.mentalhealthtoday.co.uk/

Read + Group Discussion + Open Discussion

Background ➔ Context ➔ Support Structures ➔ Living with MHC
Part 1 - Onset/Background (5 min)

- Read through case then discuss in groups
- Examine the following:
  - Attitudes about MHC before/after diagnosis
  - Sources of stigma
    - Individual (self)
    - Others
  - Reactions (emotion)
  - Actions (behaviors)

Which elements are (or are not) surprising?

Part 2 - Context (5 mins)

- Individual development within engineering culture
  - Which elements of the engineering culture were referred to?
- Interactions between:
  - Stigma
  - Mental Illness/MHC
  - Engineering Culture
- Identify triggers and coping mechanisms

Part 3 - Support Structures (5 mins)

- Identify sources of support
- Potential sources of additional support
  - Where was support lacking?
  - Brainstorm other ways individual could have been supported
    - Engineering
    - College
    - Workplace
    - Other
Part 4 - Living with MHC (2 mins)

- Identify coping strategies, if any
- Sources of ongoing support
- Managing MHC and engineering identity
Takeaways

- Social and Self stigma influenced their experiences getting diagnosis and treatment.
- Elements of the engineering culture contributed to the development of additional challenges while navigating their illness.
- Support systems were critical for them to accept their conditions and learn how to navigate them better.
- They learned to live with their illness and achieve successful fulfilling lives.
Wrap Up

- Revisit outcomes from workshop
  - Identifying stigma
  - Ways to support students with MHCs
  - Ideas for incorporating into current or new research
Next Steps

● Our longitudinal research project
  ○ Expanding scope,
    ■ All undergraduate engineering students
    ■ Stigma
    ■ Help seeking behaviors
  ○ Focus on quant and qual data collection
  ○ Launching survey and conducting interviews
  ○ 3-year longitudinal study w/students and early career professionals

https://www.istockphoto.com/photos/q-and-a
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Questions?
Next Steps

Share your feedback...

Access webinar materials.
Thank you!