



Research in the Works



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Peer Academic Support for Success (PASS): Peer Coaching for College Students with Serious Mental Health Conditions (SMHCs)

Project Goal: Produce a first-of-its-kind empirically supported peer coaching intervention to help college students with serious mental health conditions (SMHCs) succeed academically at college.

Background

- Many psychiatric disorders such as depression, anxiety disorders, psychoses, and eating disorders commonly appear just before or during the years a young person would traditionally pursue a college degree (one's mid-teens and early twenties).¹
- Only 11%² of young adults with SMHCs attend 4-year colleges, compared to 30%² of young adults in the general population.
- College students with SMHCs have higher dropout rates and lower graduation rates compared to college students without SMHCs.³⁻⁵

Given the advantage that a college education provides in today's labor market, it is imperative to provide strong academic supports to successfully launch the college careers of students with SMHCs.

The Peer Support for Success (PASS) coaching intervention provides a full school year of individualized academic peer coaching to freshman and sophomore college students with SMHCs. The goal of coaching is to support academic success and self-efficacy. To achieve these goals, coaching is delivered by a fellow college student (with or without SMHC), and promotes the following skills and capacities:

- ✓ Effective time management
- ✓ Resiliency



- ✓ Self-advocacy
- ✓ Supportive tools, resources, and technology

Project Activities

Researchers at the Learning and Working Center within the Transitions Research & Training Center at UMass Medical School, Wright State University (WSU), Boston University (BU) and UMass Boston (UMB) are leading the development of PASS. This research uses participatory action research methods; partnering with young adults with lived experience with SMHC and college in the design, conduct, interpretation, and dissemination of research findings. PASS is based on two pre-existing peer coaching interventions:


- Wright State University's Raiders on the Autism Spectrum Excelling (RASE) peer coaching intervention for students with autism spectrum disorders; and
- Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation's college coaching intervention developed for students with SMHCs

Development and implementation of the PASS intervention is a 5-year project, with four distinct research phases:

Research Phase	Research Activities
Qualitative Interviews (Phase 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct qualitative interviews with 21 faculty, 7 counseling center staff, 7 disability services staff and 25 college students at WSU, BU and UMB to better understand the academic experiences of college students with SMHCs.
Specify and Develop Adaptations (Phase 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the PASS peer coaching intervention model based on; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge gained from Phase 1 qualitative interviews A review of the current literature on best practices for supporting academic success of college students with SMHCs Modifications to RASE and BU coaching interventions to address barriers to academic achievement in college students with SMHCs.
Pilot Open Trial (Phase 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the PASS intervention on the BU campus for 10 college students with SMHCs. Revise intervention and research protocols based on open trial findings.
Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial (Phase 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a pilot randomized control trial with 50 BU college students with SMHCs randomly assigned to receive the finalized PASS peer coaching intervention or usual supports (control condition). Identify research methods needed to conduct a large, rigorous randomized control trial of PASS in the next stage of research. Disseminate findings through a variety of mechanisms such as written materials, conference presentations, national webinars, a training manual, etc.

References

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