

Department of Chemistry Graduate Student Wellness Report 2017: Overview

What is this report?

This report was created by DCGSAC in conjunction with the Department of Chemistry administration in response to the Graduate Student Wellness survey that was conducted during April 2017. The results are meant to inform students, staff, and faculty of the perceived issues the Department of Chemistry may have with regards to the mental health and well-being of graduate students.

What is the goal of this report?

The goal of this report is to share the findings of the Student Wellness survey, provide a list of resources for anyone seeking mental health help, and continue a dialog between the graduate students and faculty to improve the overall well-being of the Department of Chemistry.

How were responses collected and processed?

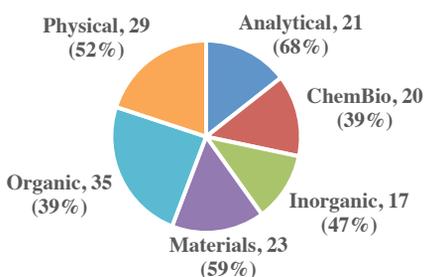
Responses were collected via an anonymous online survey administered by DCGSAC from April 12 to April 24, 2017. Raw data was received and analyzed by a clinical psychology graduate student assisting with this study in accordance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) #16690. The survey consisted of questions on topics such as happiness, health, depression, anxiety, advisor support, social support, etc.

What are the report outcomes?

This report is a joint effort between the DCGSAC Student Arbitration sub-committee and Department of Chemistry administration. The most significant (attention demanding) data presented in this report—those of the depression and anxiety scales—have led to an analysis of current graduate student mentoring by faculty and how to improve it as well as how more mental health resources can be provided for graduate students.

Survey Demographics

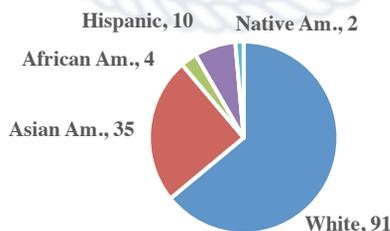
Respondents by Area
(% of total students in area)



Department at large:

Analytical: 31 ChemBio: 51
Inorganic: 36 Materials: 39
Organic: 89 Physical: 56

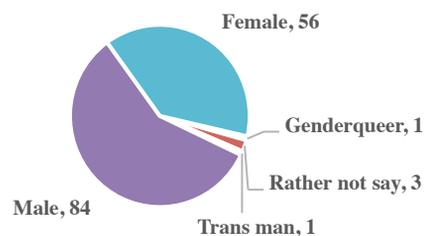
Respondents by Race/Ethnicity



Department at large:

White: 166
Asian American: 79
African American: 6
Hispanic: 20
Native American: 3
Unknown: 28

Respondents by Gender Identity



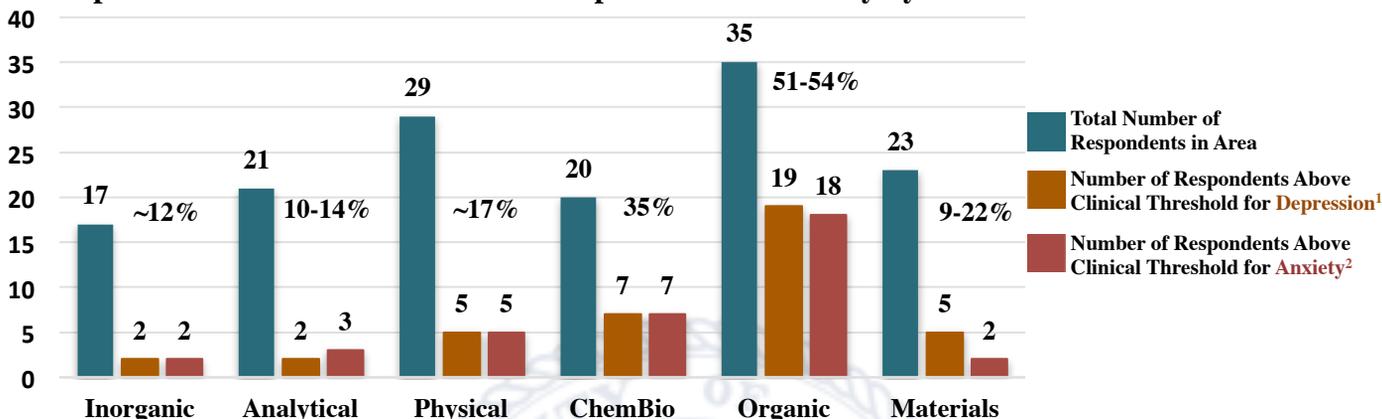
Department at large:

Female: 108
Male: 194

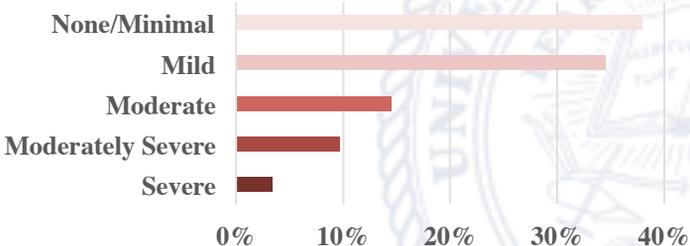
Department of Chemistry Graduate Student Wellness Report 2017: Trends from Survey

Trends from Multiple Choice Questions

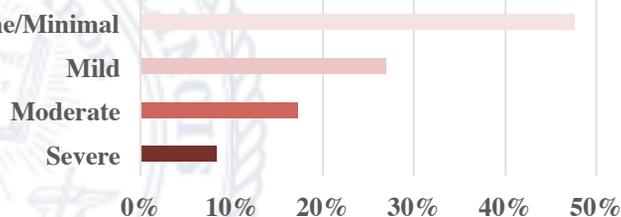
Respondents Over the Thresholds for Depression and Anxiety by Area



Full Sample Depression



Full Sample Anxiety



Recommended Action for Given Severity of Depression or Anxiety³

None/Minimal: No treatment Mild: Watchful Waiting Moderate: Consider therapy and/or pharmacotherapy

Moderately Severe: Active therapy and/or pharmacotherapy Severe: Immediate initiation of pharmacotherapy and active therapy

References: 1. Kroenke K.; Spitzer R. L. The PHQ-9: A New Depression Diagnostic and Severity Measure. *Psychiatric Annals* 2002, 32, 509-521. 2. Spitzer, R. L.; Kroenke, K.; Williams, J. B.; Löwe, B. A Brief Measure for Assessing Generalized Anxiety Disorder: The GAD-7. *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 2006, 166, 1092-1097. 3. Kroenke, K., Spitzer, R. L., Williams, J. B., & Löwe, B. The Patient Health Questionnaire Somatic, Anxiety, and Depressive Symptom Scales: A Systematic Review. *General Hospital Psychiatry*, 32, 345-359.

Trends from Free Response Questions

Mental Health Information and Access

Participants strongly desired more information on mental health services on campus. A more thorough and consistent presentation of services and information is desired including occasional seminars by outside professionals.

Representative quote: "Make it more clear how to access mental health services. You really have to want to utilize these resources to be able to find information..."

Department of Chemistry

Graduate Student Wellness

Report 2017: **Survey & Next Steps**

Trends from Free Response Questions Continued

Training for Advisors/Mentors

Many participants felt their advisors had not received enough formal training in being effective mentors, or in approaching a student about mental or physical wellness concerns in a productive fashion.

Representative quote: “In some cases, [faculty] try to motivate students by insulting them, creating hostile lab environments, being passive aggressive, and other damaging tactics.”

Lack of Accountability for Advisors

A perceived lack of accountability on the part of the PIs was common. Some students felt their concerns could not be effectively voiced without fear of reprisal.

Representative quotes: “Faculty have too much power over their students and there is no system in place to stop advisors from mentally and emotionally abusing their students...” “My committee doesn’t seem to be invested in guiding my education. Professors have either not been present or disengaged for events such as my literature seminar or prelim exam.”

Recommendations & Future Department Actions

Graduate Student Mental Health:

In response to data showing at least 41 graduate students over the threshold for depression and/or anxiety, the Department of Chemistry will place more emphasis on ensuring graduate students have regular access to wellness professionals. This includes the establishment of a monthly time reserved for a graduate student support group run by a professional through the Counseling Center. PIs are highly encouraged to allow students time attend to these events as well as seek any other help they may need.

Further Training & Feedback for PIs:

The Department of Chemistry is seeking to implement new training for PIs with a specific focus on personnel management. The goal of the training is to help students and PIs address expectations and frustrations in a more productive manner. The department will also test two approaches for improved PI training and awareness of mental health: a campus expert on student mental health and related issues will be invited to faculty meetings on a regular basis. This has not been done in the past. In addition, the new Assistant Director of Graduate Diversity and Climate, who is in regular contact with students as an ombudsperson (an impartial intermediate), will prepare anonymized feedback for faculty, subject to approval from the students in contact. While a number of respondents were interested in a more automated feedback system, it creates concerns for anonymity when specific abuses or problems are mentioned by students online; these concerns can be avoided with an ombudsperson serving as an intermediate.

DCGSAC is committed to improving the quality of life of graduate students that feel unsafe, depressed, or anxious due to their work. We will continue to work with the Department of Chemistry administration to find workable solutions to these difficult issues that improve working conditions while maintaining the University of Illinois’ commitment to excellence in chemistry.

Department of Chemistry Graduate Student Wellness Report 2017: Resources

Resources and Avenues for Further Feedback

Know your rights as a graduate student

UIUC Department of Chemistry Graduate Student Handbook:

https://chemistry.illinois.edu/system/files/inline-files/Grad_Manual_Fall_2017_final.pdf

The Department of Chemistry abides by the Graduate College's Policy and Procedures on grievances by Graduate Students. Please review section 8 of the graduate student manual.

UIUC Psychological Services Center <http://www.psc.illinois.edu/>

Our services include therapy, psychological evaluations, couples counseling, mindfulness training, conflict consultations and restorative circles.

Counseling Center <https://counselingcenter.illinois.edu/>

Helps students to address any academic, relational, and emotional concerns. The Center provides free counseling services.

The Mental Health Clinic at McKinley Health Center

<http://mckinley.illinois.edu/medical-services/mental-health>

The Mental Health Clinic at McKinley provides evaluations, consultations, and recommendations for subsequent treatment for a variety of emotional and behavioral difficulties.

Champaign-Urbana Crisis line

217-359-4141

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-8255

Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations <https://oiir.illinois.edu/>

Support of students of color, the LGBT+ community, and other underrepresented students. Offices include: Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center (BNAACC), Asian American Cultural Center (AACC), La Casa Cultural Latina (La Casa), LGBT Resource Center (LGBTRC), Native American House (NAH), and Women's Resources Center (WRC)

Links to resources can also be found on the DCGSAC webpage

DCGSAC wants to hear from you! It is our job to represent your interests and we want to help get you the right resources for any non-research problems you may have. Less sensitive questions, comments, and concerns can be submitted via e-mail to chem-dcgsac@illinois.edu and anonymous questions, comments, and concerns can be submitted at <https://illinois.edu/sb/sec/6498680> (a netID is required to log in to WebTools, but the submission is anonymous).