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## BEYOND THE THERAPEUTIC

### *Addressing Mental Health through Landscape*

College students are continually suffering from mental illnesses. Additionally, the increase in demand for psychological services on campuses will continue to rise if this problem is not addressed. The solution lies beyond just professionals within the scope of psychology and treatment. All areas of university life can contribute to this issue, including the design of the university campus. The landscape has clear effects on mental health, and when designed right, campuses can positively affect students psychologically. Furthermore, everyone can contribute to the university design process by these three steps, which in turn creates a culture of mental health advocacy, for not only students, but everyone:

#### **Step 1: Addressing how spaces make you feel**

*The next time you are outside, take notice of how you feel in certain spaces. Are there places where you feel most calm? Most safe? What elements do those spaces have? If you are a student, are there places at your university that are your favorite? Are there places where you prefer to be in when you need time to recharge? If so, what elements are in those spaces and how are they working together?*

#### **Step 2: Identifying potential risk factors**

*Going beyond Step 1, recognize spaces that make you feel anxious or that you try to avoid. Why are you avoiding this space? What elements are in this space? Try to identify the differences between elements in spaces that you enjoy versus spaces that you avoid. Additionally, try to identify how the elements in the space that you avoid are working. Why are these elements provoking negative emotions for you? What elements cause you stress and anxiety and could be potentially evoking the same emotions in someone else? Comparing the elements in spaces that you avoid versus spaces you enjoy, start to think about how you would alter the space to make it more enjoyable and restorative.*

#### **Step 3: Addressing people who can fix the problem**

*Taking in the work that you have done in Steps 1 and 2, Step 3 asks that you to take your recommendations and concerns to the correct people who can help. Most universities have a department that is in charge of all of the development and design of campus, so reach out to them. Outline what elements you find could be improved, include your reasoning, and encourage them to help find a solution. If you are not on a campus, try and contact someone in a local organization that can point you in the right direction of someone who can help. On campuses, encourage students to take part in the steps and evaluate how their university campus affects their mental health. Connect them with resources, organizations, and funding initiatives that support this work.*

#### **Resources to contact:**

- University Landscape Architect
- Counseling Services
- Campus Safety
- Campus Planning and Real Estate
- Office of Student Life
- Student Organizations

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