



## Board Committee Report

**Action Requested:**  Decision;  Discussion/Direction;  Information

**To:** Executive Committee

**Date:** **January 27, 2026**

**Presented by:** Stephanie Williams – Vice-President, People, Culture & Student Services

**Subject:** 2025 Annual Report: Student Mental Health & Institutional Attestation

### **Motion for Consideration (if applicable):**

That the Executive Committee receive this report for information.

### **Executive Summary:**

The *Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act, 2024* received Royal Assent on May 16, 2024 requiring universities to have a student mental health policy in place, and report annually on the effectiveness of its student mental health policy. This report fulfills that requirement and includes key performance indicators aligned with three areas of focus within Trent's Student Mental Health & Well-being Framework.

The Framework outlines three areas of focus: Culture & Organization, Mental Health Literacy, and Mental Health Support. Data drawn from the Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey (CCWS), the Student Success Survey, and institutional service utilization demonstrate that mental health challenges remain prevalent across the student population, with the majority of respondents reporting average or low mental wellbeing. At the same time, awareness of services and willingness to seek professional help have increased.

Service utilization data indicate consistent demand for mental health supports, alongside a notable increase in case complexity and urgent care needs. Together, these findings reinforce the importance of sustained investment in prevention, early intervention, accessible services, and coordinated care.

### **Analysis/Alternatives Considered:**

The Student Mental Health & Wellbeing Framework provides a coordinated and comprehensive approach to supporting student mental health across the institution.

The Framework is organized around three areas of focus:

- Culture & Organization: inclusive, safe and supportive campus
- Mental Health Literacy: well-being promotion and illness prevention
- Mental Health Support: services and crisis management

The following sections report on the key indicators associated with each area.

## 1. Culture & Organization

Understanding perceptions of the campus climate is important to supporting mental health as it shapes how safe, supported and valued students feel within the Trent community. A campus climate that is perceived as inclusive, respectful and responsive encourage help-seeking, connection, and engagement, all of which are protective factors for mental well-being.

### Perceptions of the climate with respect to mental Health:

Data from the Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey (CCWS), a national survey of post-secondary students that collects information on physical and mental health, help-seeking behaviours, and campus experiences, indicate modest improvements in Trent students' self-rated mental and physical health over time. Average mental health scores increased from 2.24 in 2022 to 2.61 in 2025, while average physical health scores rose from 2.66 to 2.90 over the same period. Responses were collected on a five-point scale from 'poor' to 'excellent', with both scores remaining in the 'fair' range.

These findings suggest incremental improvement in overall student wellbeing. At the same time, they indicate that a substantial proportion of our students continue to face challenges that may affect their academic persistence and overall quality of life. Maintaining a supportive campus climate is therefore essential to enabling help-seeking, connection, and engagement, all of which are protective factors for student mental health.

## 2. Mental Health Literacy

Mental Health Literacy is essential to effective support, as students must be aware of available resources and understand how to access them. When students have clear knowledge of these resources and support, they are more likely to seek help early, before challenges escalate into crises. Increased awareness also helps to reduce stigma by normalizing help-seeking behaviours and reinforcing that support is a shared responsibility within the Trent community. Clear, consistent knowledge of services and how to help others, empowers students to make informed choices about their well-being and enables peers, faculty and staff to guide others to appropriate support when needed.

### Awareness of services and resources:

The Student Success Survey (conducted annually in Fall term), asks students to identify if they are “aware”, “unsure” or “unaware” of particular university services.

In Fall 2025, the Survey indicates that most respondents are aware of services provided by the Student Wellness Centre.

	2025		
	Aware	Unsure	Unaware
Student Wellness Centre	75.6%	15.5%	5.4%

Helping behaviours:

The CCWS results reveal a notable increase in students’ willingness to access professional support for serious emotional distress. In 2023, approximately 40 per cent of respondents indicated that they would pursue professional assistance, rising to 63 per cent in 2025. This increase reflects both greater awareness of available services and a reduction in stigma associated with help-seeking. Students note that they continue to rely on peers, family members, and significant others as important sources of support, illustrating that help-seeking is a shared responsibility across the Trent campus community. Collectively, these trends indicate that students possess a heightened awareness of available resources and are more willing to engage with professional supports, providing evidence of the positive impact of mental health literacy initiatives on campus

**3. Mental Health Support**

Responsive and effective support is essential to supporting mental health to ensure timely, coordinated, and compassionate support during moments of distress. It helps reduce the risk of harm, supports recovery, and reassures students that their safety and well-being are priorities.

Student support service usage rates:

Over the past academic year, Counselling and Health Services have consistently delivered comprehensive mental health and wellness support to a significant proportion of the student population, reflecting both the ongoing demand and the essential role of these services in promoting student health and wellbeing.

Total counselling appointments were relatively stable between 2023–24 and 2024–25, reflecting ongoing demand for services and the Counselling team’s capacity to respond effectively to evolving student needs. Initial appointments, representing students accessing counselling for the first time, remained steady, while follow-up appointments, reflecting ongoing sessions for students already engaged in counselling, increased from approximately 541 in 2023–24 to 730 in 2024–25, a growth of roughly 35%. This trend demonstrates sustained engagement and

continuity of care, highlighting the development of ongoing therapeutic relationships that support effective mental health intervention and positive student outcomes.

Urgent care appointments have more than doubled over the past three years, rising from 107 in 2023–24 to 156 in 2024–25, with 115 recorded in the fall term of 2025 alone. This increase reflects the heightened complexity of student presentations and underscores the need for rapid-response capacity and robust case management supports.

The fall term of 2025 has already seen a very busy start, with approximately 993 counselling appointments provided across both campuses. Of these, 427 were initial appointments and 445 were follow-up appointments, indicating sustained demand for services and the continued delivery of effective mental health support at the beginning of the academic year.

Health Services data further demonstrate the scale and intensity of campus-based mental health support. During fall 2025, the clinic conducted 1,434 physician appointments and 1,349 nurse appointments, including 314 urgent care visits. A total of 208 students accessed services specifically for mental health concerns. Compared with fall 2024, the average number of mental health appointments per student increased by approximately 13.6 per cent, indicating more intensive engagement patient. By providing this urgent care on campus, students were able to access timely support without relying on external emergency or walk-in services.. Physician mental health appointments increased from 841 in 2024–25 to 980 in fall 2025 alone, further demonstrating rising demand and case complexity.

#### Workshops and Group Programming

In 2025, the student health and wellness teams delivered targeted programs to support student wellbeing, including:

- *Surfing the Waves of Emotion*, an eight-week psychotherapy group focused on emotion regulation and communication skills
- *Unmasking Autism*, a five-week process group for self-identified autistic students
- *EVERYbody Project*, delivered in partnership with Eating Disorders Ontario, a gender-inclusive body image intervention. The group was offered twice and facilitated by student placement learners within counselling and wellness services in Durham.
- *Mood Walks*, delivered in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association of Ontario, were offered in fall, winter, and spring terms and led by trained Peer Wellness Educators in Durham
- Campus wide workshops on work-life balance and academic support for mature and transfer students

#### Health Promotion

Health promotion activities play an important role in prevention, early intervention, and creating shared responsibility for student wellbeing across the Trent community. Throughout the academic year, the Counselling and Wellness team participated in all major orientation and transition programming at both the Peterborough and Durham campuses, including Summer Kickstart, Orientation Days, Support Alleys, and Pathways to Success programming during the Spring, Fall, and Winter terms. These activities ensured that both incoming and returning students received clear, consistent information about available wellness services, understood how to access support, and were exposed to messaging that normalizes mental health needs and help-seeking.

Trent also hosted Thrive Week programming in both the Fall and Winter semesters, with themes focused on building connections and supporting wellbeing during the winter term. Programming was intentionally designed to reduce isolation, promote resilience, and reflect the diverse experiences of students, including dedicated events and resources featuring Black-affirming speakers and content. Community partners were invited to participate in tabling and awareness-raising activities, increasing visibility of both on-campus and local supports related to substance use, gambling and gaming, sexual violence response, trauma therapy, urgent and crisis care, and provincial services such as Good2Talk and Connex Ontario.

Additional health promotion initiatives included the Harm Reduction Fair, Halloween *Condoms and Candies*, Gender Affirming Care Fair, Trans Day of Remembrance vigil and reflection drop-in, *Pee for Pizza* pop-up STI testing, and Exam Care kits tabling.

#### Community Partnerships and Referral Pathways

Trent maintains strong collaborations with local and regional partners to extend access to timely and comprehensive care for students. Informal referral pathways include the Lynx Early Psychosis Intervention Program, the Canadian Mental Health Association (Haliburton, Kawartha & Pine Ridge) Mobile Crisis Intervention Team and Brief Services, the Peterborough Regional Health Centre Crisis Response Unit and Adult Inpatient Mental Health Unit, and Lakelands Public Health. Formal partnerships include the Ontario Structured Psychotherapy Program through Ontario Shores, Durham Rape Crisis Centre and Eating Disorders Ontario.

These relationships facilitate coordinated care for students with complex needs, enhance the availability and timeliness of supports, and ensure the institution can respond effectively to acute and evolving mental health challenges.

#### **Financial Implications:**

Mental health is a prevalent issue in society, and individuals in the traditional student age group (18-24) are particularly vulnerable. Providing proactive education and outreach, support, and creating a culture of care for students helps support positive

mental health within our student population. Experiencing negative mental health can severely impact students' ability to persist in their degree, affecting student retention.

Continued investment in proactive support and preventive education is critical to avoid costly reactive post-crisis follow up support. Furthermore, students with positive mental health and feel like they belong at Trent are more likely to persist to graduation. With the decrease in enrolment, retaining current students is a top priority.

To support Mental Health Initiatives across the institution, there is a reliance on MCURES special purpose grants. Over \$350,000 in direct mental health resources are linked to these various grants ranging from one to three-year terms. The recurring short-term funding periods can create precarity in ensuring stable resources for students, and pose challenges in implementing a long-term strategy for mental health support.

### **Enterprise Risk Assessment:**

Mental health has emerged as a critical area of focus across post-secondary institutions, with increasing societal attention on prevention, early intervention, and crisis response. Inadequate supports or delays in responding to student mental health concerns can carry reputational risks, affect student satisfaction, and negatively influence retention and recruitment. Conversely, robust mental health programming and coordinated care can enhance institutional reputation, demonstrate a commitment to student wellbeing, and reduce the likelihood of acute incidents escalating, thereby mitigating operational, reputational, and financial risks.

### **Next Steps:**

This annual report has been submitted to MCURES on January 31, 2026, and is presented to the Board for information.

### **Alignment with Mission, Vision, Values, Strategic Plan:**

An environment that supports mental health is directly aligned to the Board Directions (2022-26/27), Theme 2: "*Trent University will continue to develop and maintain vibrant campuses that reflect friendly, caring, personal and interconnected culture of Trent*".

### **Consultation:**

The Student Mental Health & Well-being Committee continues to meet and includes representatives from student associations, staff, faculty, and community members.

### **Compliance with Policy/Legislation:**

This report is submitted in compliance with the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security (MCURES) requirement to report annually on the effectiveness of the Student Mental Health & Wellbeing Framework.

- Issued by the Minister pursuant to subsection 19(4) of the *Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act* (MTCU Act), each publicly-assisted college and university is to provide an annual report to its board of governors. This is an ongoing requirement and the report must be publicly available on the dedicated webpage and submitted to the Minister by January 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.

**Committee/Board Mandate:**

The Government of Ontario has mandated that each university present to their boards of governors an annual update on student mental health and the effectiveness of its student mental health policy.

**Supporting Reference Materials (attached):**

1. Appendix A: Submitted Ministry Attestation Form
2. [Student Mental Health & Wellbeing Framework](#)

## Appendix A - Attestation



To whom it may concern at the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security:

I attest that **Trent University** is in compliance with sections 19 and 20 of the *Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act* and the Minister's Directives made pursuant to those sections.

**Trent University** complies with:

- Minister's Student Mental Health Directive (issued September 2024),
- Minister's Anti-Racism/ Anti-Hate Directive (issued September 2024).

I attest that student mental health and anti-racism / anti hate policies are in place in accordance with the legislation and the Minister's directives. As well, I attest that this information will be effectively communicated to students through an email on **September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025**, with direct links to policies, processes and complaints mechanisms. I also attest this email will be sent annually each September to students and the campus community.

The following institutional webpages demonstrate our implementation of the legislative and directive requirements.

- Mental Health Webpage - <https://www.trentu.ca/wellness/mental-health>
- Anti-Racism/Anti-Hate Webpage - <https://www.trentu.ca/chrea/strengthening-accountability-and-student-supports>
  - o Complaints- <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=3-mzllVhrE2u0ngohYEq7MZyU7x3B89DmzO3RkU19IIURFVVLV0dJS0kySEk0S1VXWVVVTINTQIRWVi4u>



**Attestation**

By signing this attestation form I confirm, as the relevant signing authority on behalf of **Trent University**, that the information contained in this submission is true, accurate and complete in all material respects as of the date this attestation is signed.

Name: **Stephanie Williams**  
Title: **Vice President, People, Culture & Student Services**  
Signature:   
Date: **August 21, 2025**