Steve Fund Fall 2020 Report – *Recommendations and Implementation Strategies*

Excerpted from the [**Steve Fund Fall 2020 Report**](https://vpess.wwu.edu/files/2021-02/ESS%20Planning%20-%20Steve%20Fund%20Fall%202020%20Report.pdf)

*Institutions of Higher Education should:*

H1. Build Trust Through Racial Trauma-Informed Leadership

1. Encourage and listen to student voices to better understand their lives.
2. Adopt a communications strategy that demonstrates em­pathy towards the injustices and inequalities that students of color are experiencing.
3. Evaluate and tap into the growing number of mental health digital applications, teletherapy resources, and other technol­ogies to meet the mental health needs of students of color.
4. Know that there is not a single best approach to providing student services and supports, and that adaptability is at a premium.
5. Expand campus-wide training on implicit bias, systemic racism, racial trauma, allyship, and wellness.

H2. Take a Collaborative Approach to Promote Mental Health for Students of Color

1. Partner with enrollment management, faculty, and staff to maintain contact with remote learners.
2. Ensure that student life, academic affairs, and other staff coordinate efforts to support the mental health and well-be­ing of students of color.
3. Form mental health task forces and DEI committees to col­laborate using tools such as the EMHF to identify current cam­pus resources and areas of growth in order to promote a cam­pus culture of wellness.
4. Tap into culturally aligned student groups and clubs on campus and foster their ties to mental health supports to help students simultaneously maintain a cultural connection and reap mental health benefits.
5. Engage campus security in collaboration and training so that all interactions with students, including those in crisis, reflect empathy and respect.

H3. Engage Faculty and Staff to Support Mental Health of Students of Color

1. Adopt course design, classroom policies, and academic advising policies and resources that promote an inclusive culture.
2. Equip faculty and staff with the knowledge and skills to identify signs of mental health distress or crisis in diverse stu­dent populations.
3. Develop a system for faculty and staff to support student mental health crises through a team that is knowledgeable about working with racially diverse students.

H4. Treat Student Mental Health as a Priority Area for Investment

1. Prioritize mental health funding when making budgetary de­cisions.
2. Identify and make available the best telehealth resources and incorporate them into your college or university’s health strategy.
3. Provide access to diverse, culturally competent mental health practitioners to serve student populations.

H5. Leverage Community and External Stakeholders to Promote Emotional Well-Being of Students of Color

1. Partner with nonprofits to offer entering students ongoing professional and peer support.
2. Invest in partnerships with local faith and cultural organiza­tions, government agencies, K-12 schools, and grassroots or­ganizations.
3. Partner with prospective employers to build comprehensive strategies for workforce preparation.

*Employers should:*

E1. Focus on Students’ Transitions from Higher Education to the Workplace

1. Convene virtual conversations between higher education and workforce leaders to ideate programming and solutions across sectors.
2. Develop strategies to smooth the transfer of mental health supports, knowledge, and resources from colleges to work settings, especially in the context of disruptions wrought by COVID-19. The goal is to facilitate:
   1. Development of new peer networks and support systems
   2. Helping new workers apply in the workplace the knowledge and skills they acquired in college
   3. Communication about the availability of culturally competent and trauma-informed assistance
   4. Identification of stressors and techniques for young employees to manage stress and anxiety
   5. Increasing managers’ skills in spotting emotional distress and speaking to young employees about mental health concerns (i.e. those associated with the pandemic or transition to the workplace)
   6. Offering expert help for managers to mitigate disturbing experiences for employees of color such as microaggressions, imposter phenomenon, and isolation
3. Invest in employees’ development of social capital through internships and mentorships — virtual or in-person.

**E2. Help Young Employees of Color Navigate the Workplace**

1. Integrate emotional well-being into all aspects of operations.
2. Retain diverse, culturally competent mental health experts to provide training, practical tools, and guidance to equip leaders and managers as mentors and allies – both in the workplace and through professional networking.
3. Provide high-quality information and tools that support the mental health of employees of color.
4. Encourage and model a culture that allows for safely iden­tifying behaviors and environmental challenges commonly impacting employees of color.

**E3. Conduct a Workplace Culture and Practices Assessment With a 2020 Lens**

1. Assess mental health and emotional ramifications of recruitment processes and the burdens carried by young applicants of color.
2. Conduct assessments of employee mental health and emotional well-being.
3. Modify leaders’ performance management processes to emphasize supporting the mental health and emotional well-being of supervis­ees, particularly young people of color transitioning into the work­place.
4. Review policies and procedures to ensure that they do not nega­tively affect employees of color.
5. Develop Corporate Social Responsibility programs that include and recognize the importance of serving communities in need.

E4. Promote Understanding of Racial Trauma, Mental Health, and Well-Being in the Workplace

1. Provide learning opportunities to address how em­ployees and leaders may unconsciously contribute to a biased environment.
2. Draw upon mental health experts to illuminate racial trauma and provide appropriate supports to employees.
3. Have company leaders acknowledge social injustice and potential implications for the workplace.
4. Create employee assistance programs that include multicultural counselors and therapists, including those providing telehealth services.

E5. Develop Allies, Advocacy and Mobility

1. Conduct expert-facilitated roundtables for senior leaders from all backgrounds in the company to share their personal stories with young talent of color.
2. Initiate a “speaker series” and other learning opportunities probing global, national, and local events impacting employees’ mental health and emotional well-being.