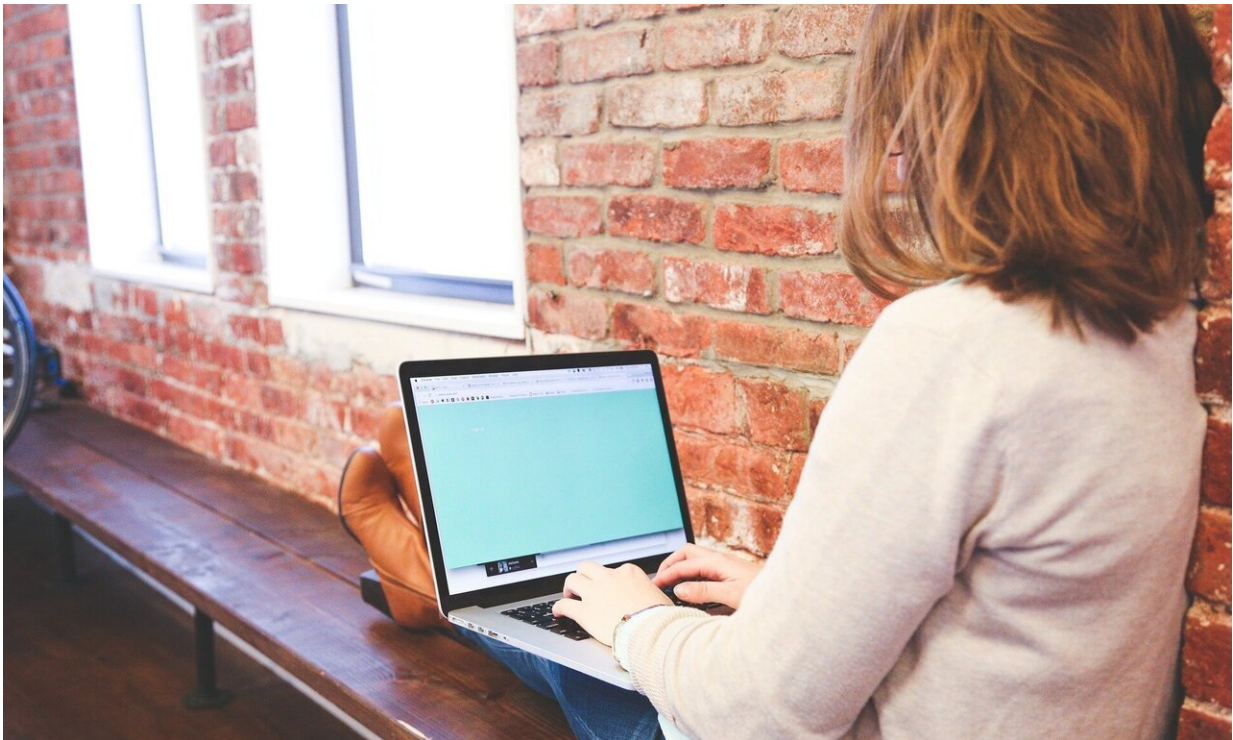


# Student led efforts can help make college campuses 'safe and stigma free' zones

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*The Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (JAACAP)* reports on a study following a four year effort to change the stigma of mental illness at Indiana University, which drew the attention of students and faculty; increased awareness of discrimination and prejudice; and decreased prejudice and increased inclusion.

The study evaluated the effectiveness of the "U Bring Change to Mind" (UBC2M) campaign—a [student](#) led program designed to reduce the [stigma](#) of mental health problems. While initial stigma levels among college students were much lower than levels reported in the [general population](#), the study documented a significant reduction in the stigmatizing attitudes and beliefs, and a greater willingness to interact with others on campus who face mental health challenges. Results of the UBC2M campaign showed an 11 to 14 percent reduction in stigma documented by the study. This rivals well-funded, national programs, while requiring minimal support for sustainability.

"The development of UBC2M was different from the start," said Dr. Bernice Pescosolido, Chair of the Scientific Advisory Council of Bring Change to Mind, the advocacy group founded by actor Glen Close to end stigma by starting the conversation. "The students read the science of change, developed principles for their club, and built a broad coalition of support organizations across the campus including the campus cinema, classes and professors.

"The New Student Orientation program, and even the Office of Enrollment Management got involved," Dr. Pescosolido added. In collaboration with Ms. Close, Indiana University was chosen as the national pilot site and engaged professors in evaluating the effort from its beginning.

With new studies of college campuses showing an unexpectedly high level of mental health challenges among US [college students](#), more parents and college administrators have raised concerns about how to respond. Many higher education institutions have reconsidered their campus mental health services but have found that the degree of service need is beyond what current resources are already able to address.

Following changes in attitudes, behaviors and engagement among the

2019 entering class through their junior year, Dr. Pescosolido and her team worked with UBC2M students to administer a web-based survey. The survey asked students about their general ideas about mental illness and their opinions about interacting with students, faculty and staff who face mental health challenges.

Over 1,000 students completed both waves of surveys with over 80 percent reporting that they were aware of the anti-stigma effort. As students' level of participation increased, they reported greater decreases in stigma. Those who had only heard about UBC2M reported no change in prejudice, however they did report a more favorable perception of campus culture overall.

"We are very excited about the results, especially after seeing the comparatively low levels of stigma among entering students. This is a sustainable, scalable approach that builds stability into student clubs that often face the wonderful but inevitable changes in student involvement with minimal, but critical, 'skin in the game' from the [campus](#)," concluded Dr. Pescosolido.

**More information:** Bernice A. Pescosolido et al, Empowering the Next Generation to End Stigma by Starting the Conversation: Bring Change to Mind and the College Toolbox Project, *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jaac.2019.06.016](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2019.06.016)

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