Bringing Theory to Practice Psychosocial Well–Being Grant

1. Name of institution: UCLA

2. Name and contact information for person at the institution directing the implementation of your initiative and the BTtoP grant.

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3. Please offer a short synthesis/description of your initiative, targeted outcomes related to students’ psychosocial well-being, and relevance of the initiative to your institution’s mission or strategic planning.

The UCLA Stress and Resilience Assessment (SARA) Project aims were to:

1) Develop a novel, brief self-assessment tool called the UCLA Stress and Resilience Assessment (SARA) that enables individuals to assess their own recent life stress, and current resources and capacities that promote or sustain psychological resilience.

   We completed this development, and used a programmer to design it into an engaging survey instrument that took about 20 minutes to complete. The survey evaluated stress and resilience-promoting factors, along with awareness of current resources (see Appendix). Results show strong early psychometrics for the instruments in the survey. In addition we added a series of 8 brief weekly email reminders, or “nudges,” that were sent to those in the study and which provided suggestions about different activities that would help promote resilience, and linked these explicitly to campus resources.

2) Implement SARA in pilot testing of UCLA undergraduate and graduate students, to assess the basic psychometric properties of the new instrument, to collect preliminary data on the concurrent and predictive validity of the assessment tool, and to explore the possible effects of increasing awareness about stress and resilience on participation in resilience-promoting activities and on well-being (increased positive and decreased negative affect, increased satisfaction with life).
We delivered the instrument via email to 4,000 students (2,000 graduate, 2,000 undergraduate) who were randomly selected from the registrar’s database, as planned. We then randomly assigned those who consented to SARA+ and SARA- conditions, to see if there might be an effect of the stress and resilience assessment itself. The program automatically randomized 1,249 individuals who consented to the active SARA+ condition (n = 651) or a control group, the SARA- condition (n = 598). A total of 880 students completed baseline assessments at Time 1 (T1) (SARA+ [n = 464]; SARA- [n = 416]), and 440 completed follow-up assessment at Time 2 (T2) (SARA+ [n = 232]; SARA- [n = 208]). We found the psychometric properties of our stress and resilience assessments to be good (Resilience Index, alpha = .88), perceived stress alpha = .82, .83 at T1 and T2 respectively, and the chronic stressful life event index alpha = .75. We also found robust concurrent validity of our resilience and stress measures, which showed positive and negative correlations, respectively, with increased satisfaction with life; lower depression and anxiety; higher positive and lower negative affect; and better general health (r’s range .2 to .74; all ps<.001). We found a major pre- to post-study difference reflecting increases in resource awareness and utilization, which we believe is primarily due to exposing students to information they were not previously aware of, and to weekly reminders about the availability of these resources.

4. Please briefly describe any substantive changes you have made to date regarding your project goals or objectives or changes in the project’s implementation.

We added the weekly “nudges” for everyone to increase awareness of campus resources. We think the SARA+/− randomization had little impact relative to the direct exposure to the resources by way of both our questions about resources (e.g., by asking if a student is aware of a resource, we create some awareness!) and the weekly blasts. We did not find a significant impact of the stress and resilience randomization design on resource utilization and awareness. It may be that more specifically targeted feedback would have a greater effect. Whatever the cause, the two conditions are being analyzed together to determine what factors may be associated with changes in mood, affect, and/or perceived stress among our students.

5. Please describe whether, and in what forms, your initiative has been infused into ongoing aspects, opportunities or experiences at your institution.

We have incorporated SARA into our UCLA Healthy Campus Initiative, and this has stimulated closer interactions among researchers, student groups, and members of the initiative, to develop new ways to incorporate stress-resilience promotions into campus life. Indeed, our Office of Student Affairs created a new division specifically to promote resilience, and we have several other efforts
started now to build tiered intervention services, among which variations of our resilience promotion will be a key part. The support of AACU has been of great value in stimulating these campus-wide efforts, and helping us obtain initial data to promote future research and additional programming.

6. Please describe as succinctly as possible major lessons or learning to date.

One of the hardest things to accomplish at UCLA is “penetration”, given the size of our campus population (~70,000) and their diversity in background and goals. It is unlikely that any single “message” will appeal to all stakeholders in our campus. Our survey response rate (31%) is typical for student surveys. We have expanded our characterization of stress awareness on campus, and now have in hand data showing that 28% of students feel discriminated against, 35% had fights with significant others, 64% felt overwhelmed by demands at school, and 58% worried about paying for rent, food, clothes or tuition. These findings offer us a strong motivation, as well as clear targets, for future interventions.

7. Please provide a timeline of next steps and key milestones for the project as you envision at this point.

We plan to continue analysis, publish the results, and use the findings to inform future campus programs aimed at reducing experiences of stress and promoting resilience. For example, we have been looking at differences between graduate and undergraduate students, males and females, and by race/ethnicity and program or major in stress, resilience and resource awareness and use. A subsequent larger study would be an ideal follow-up to this one which served as a pilot study.

8. Please address the financial aspects of your initiative:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category/Description (BTtoP)</th>
<th>Expense</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personnel</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stipend for K. Knudsen (staff) &amp; work study student for data analysis and implementation</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web programmer</td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Participant Expenses</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Incentives #1 (baseline)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incentives #2 (final)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lottery Prizes (final)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>$</td>
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  a. We spent $ on personnel and $ on incentives for our participants.

  b. Within the personnel expense we spent $ of matching funds for salary support for K. Knudsen (staff member).

  c. There are no balances remaining.