

William James College Awarded \$5.9 Million Grant by the U.S. Department of Education

The Mental Health Services Professional Development Grant Program will support school-based mental health workforce development initiatives.

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NEWTON, Mass.--([BUSINESS WIRE](#))--A \$5.9 million-dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Education will provide scholarships and stipends to recruit and retain graduate students from underserved communities (e.g., first-generation students; individuals with disabilities; ethnic, linguistic, and racial minority groups; and LGBTQ+ groups) who are committed to working as school psychologists and behavioral health counselors in high-need public school districts. Funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Mental Health Services Professional (MHSP) Development Grant Program will support William James College's (WJC) ongoing efforts to build a well-trained and diverse behavioral health workforce that can deliver trauma-informed and culturally responsive care to children and adolescents, and promote inclusive practices in high-need schools across the Commonwealth.

"The pandemic disrupted normal social development, causing a significant increase in anxiety and depression among our young people," said Dr. Nicholas Covino, President of William James College. "It is critical that students receive services in a school setting where they spend most of their day. Without these interventions, the normal trajectory of learning cannot happen. The U.S. Department of Education's financial support will change the lives of youth and families for the better in communities throughout the state."

Over the next five years, the [Center for Workforce Development](#) and the [School Psychology Department](#) at WJC will offer scholarships, stipends, mentorship, and professional development training to 100 of its graduate students who work in high-need schools. Graduate students who enroll in WJC's [Masters/Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study \(MA/CAGS\) in School Psychology](#) or [MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling](#) programs will be awarded \$10,000 scholarships and field education stipends of up to \$10,000 to complete their practicum and internship training at the college's partner school districts, which include Abington, Lynn, Milford, Weymouth, and Worcester.

Congressman Jake Auchincloss (D, MA-04) shared his support, "As one of the only Members of Congress with young children, I am particularly in tune with the priority of youth mental health care. With this grant and beyond, I remain a committed partner at the federal level to funding and programming for the wellbeing of our children."

The MHSP grant will also create career pathways for 100 school-based paraprofessionals to complete their undergraduate studies at local community colleges and through [WJC's bachelor's completion program in Psychology and Human Services](#). College partners include Middlesex Community College, Quincy College, and Quinsigamond Community College.

“Paraprofessionals are an integral part of the school environment where they educate and support students with the most complex needs” said Dr. Gemima St. Louis, Vice President for Workforce Initiatives and Co-Director of the grant-funded program. “This partnership will build capacity in underserved school districts and allow paraprofessionals to pursue academic training, gain new knowledge, and apply effective behavioral health strategies to address the social-emotional needs of students and improve student outcomes.”

WJC's [Center for Behavioral Health, Equity, and Leadership in Schools \(BHELS\)](#), which offers academic and professional licensure programs, will help implement innovative training practices aimed at creating healthy, inclusive, and equitable school climates where students can grow and thrive. BHELS will facilitate group workshops on school-based mental health and lead summer institutes for teachers and school administrators to foster safe and welcoming learning environments for students in the high-need school districts.

“We are grateful to the U.S. Department of Education and the MHSP Development Grant Program for recognizing the need to prepare professionals for mental health careers in our school systems,” said Dr. Jason Kaplan, Chair of WJC's School Psychology Department and the grant's Project Director. “Their investment in the college's behavioral health workforce will increase the number and diversity of mental health service professionals with the requisite knowledge, skills, and expertise to provide culturally responsive services to children and adolescents in underserved communities.”

About William James College

Founded in 1974, William James College is an independent, non-profit institution and a leader in educating the next generation of behavioral health professionals to support the growing and diverse needs of the mental health workforce. Integrating field work with academics, the College prepares students for careers as organizational leaders and behavioral health professionals who are committed to helping the underserved, multicultural populations, children and families, and veterans. William James College alumni can be found making an impact in a variety of settings, including schools, the courts, clinical care facilities, hospitals, the community, and the workplace.

The MA/CAGS in School Psychology at William James College is a three-year, NASP-accredited program, and leads to licensure as a School Psychologist in Massachusetts and many other states. The MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling is a two-year, full-

time or three-year part-time program that can be taken online or on-campus and leads to licensure as a Mental Health Counselor. There are optional program concentrations in Couples and Family Therapy, Forensic and Correctional Counseling, Health and Behavioral Medicine, and Substance Use and Addictions. Students from the School Psychology and Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs can also participate in college-wide concentrations in African and Caribbean Mental Health, Asian Mental Health, Global Mental Health, Latino Mental Health, LGBTQIA+ Studies, or Military and Veterans Psychology.

To learn more about the College, please visit williamjames.edu.