

TOPCARE

December 2018

THE T.E.A.M. PROJECT

In this inaugural issue, we highlight the participation of WKU Baseball team members in an emerging initiative known as the T.E.A.M. project. This multifaceted project was conceived with the following specific goals in mind:

1. Draw increased awareness to the WKU TOPCARE program, highlighting the multiple resources available to our student-athletes in dealing with mental health issues.
2. Utilize the power of social media to promote an atmosphere for open dialogue and an increased peer support network for our students.
3. Provide a method for measuring both actual and perceived effectiveness of this project.

The TOPCARE program was developed as a joint venture between the WKU Athletic Training, Psychology, and Counseling & Testing departments in response to emerging trends in college student-athlete mental health issues. Through this program, students are administered a mental health survey at the beginning of each school year with responses used to identify those individuals who may benefit from intervention and advanced coping strategies in the face of role strain associated through demands of collegiate athletics.

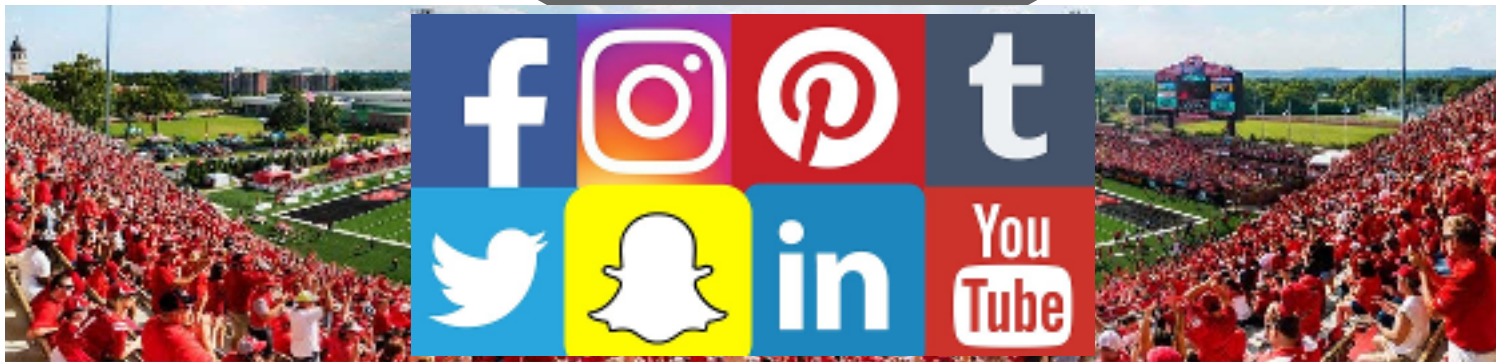


PUTTING THE T.E.A.M TOGETHER



This peer mentoring program was designed as a pilot project, limited to a single intercollegiate athletic team to evaluate project feasibility. Volunteer participants were allowed to choose their own partner with the stipulation that one veteran and one newcomer to the program would make up each group. Each pair was then asked to meet at least twice a week for a minimum of 30 minutes each session (outside of a practice or team function setting) at a time / location of their own choosing in order to freely discuss whatever academic, athletic, or social stresses they might be experiencing. At the conclusion of this project, each participant was asked to repeat the

TOPCARE mental health survey to compare these results to their initial baseline responses. Additionally, a brief questionnaire was administered to gauge each participant's perception of this project.



THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA #WKUTOPCARE

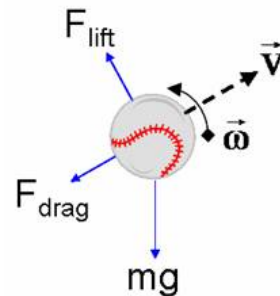
A vital component of the T.E.A.M project involved the use of social media to increase awareness. During each 30 minute session, groups were asked to post a picture together on Twitter with hashtags promoting this program (#WKUTopCare) and any other WKU sponsored event or organization of their own choosing. Utilizing social media, we aimed to draw increased attention to the importance of positive mental health in an effort to destigmatize this often taboo subject. Further, by promoting the TOPCARE program,

we are able to educate a greater audience within the WKU community about the resources available on campus for those seeking help. This project was limited to a relatively small time frame, however the 3 pairs that participated resulted in 5 total posts through social media. While this number appears small, when taking into account the number of twitter "followers" for each individual, there was a potential exposure of more than 3,000 people to the program through this platform.

BY THE NUMBERS

Surveys were utilized in an attempt to capture an objective measure of effect upon mental health at the conclusion of this project. Participants were asked to repeat the in-depth TOPCARE mental health survey developed by the WKU Psychology department to measure risk factors including anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and eating disorders. Likewise, participants were also asked to complete a brief 10 question [T.E.A.M survey](#), developed by Dustin Wilson, ATC, to evaluate participants perceptions of project effectiveness and quality. All surveys were administered

through a hyperlink emailed to each participant in an effort to ensure questions could be answered in a relaxed and non-judgemental environment to maximize truthful responses. One drawback to this method was opportunity for procrastination by participants in taking the surveys, resulting in incomplete results during analysis.



BRINGING IN THE CLOSER

One aspect of this project was to investigate any perceivable effect of a peer mentoring program upon survey responses. Upon completion of this project, only 3 of the 6 participants repeated the TOPCARE mental health survey. Due to the extremely small sample size, all results should be interpreted as anecdotal evidence. Of those three participants, responses did show positive trends in improved mental health. Likewise, questionnaire responses regarding participant perception of the T.E.A.M. project served to be encouraging, with the majority of participants responding favorably to continuing the project and expanding it to include the entire team.



TOPCARE

Supporting the whole Student-Athlete in Health & Welfare by utilizing an interdisciplinary team that includes providing care & resources whose main concern is for you over-all well being.

WHERE

do I go for support or guidance?

- Athletic Trainer
- Sports Medicine Team
- Coaches
- Athletic Staff
- Counseling & Testing Center
- Student Health Center
- Campus Police
- Student Affairs
- Teammates
- Family
- Friends
- SAAC

WHAT

are the areas I can get help with?

- Counseling Referrals
- Substance Abuse
- Disordered Eating
- Support Group Resources
- ADD/ADHD
- Anxiety / Depression
- Suicide
- OCD
- Suicide
- Sleep
- Sexual Assault
- Academic

WHO

would I possibly go see or work with?

- Medical Doctors
- Psychologist
- Therapist
- Title IX Coordinator
- Counselors
- Clinicians
- Athletic Administration
- Academics

DID YOU KNOW?

- Statistically, about 1 in 5 Americans have a diagnosable mental disorder
- 50% of respondents to a recent American College Health Association (ACHA) survey reported having felt overwhelming anxiety in the last 12 months.
- 1 in 4 college athletes show signs of depression
- Between 2009–2015, 35 College–Athletes committed suicide

RESOURCES

Kearns Davoren, A. & Hwang, S. (2014, October 8). *Mind, body, and sport: depression and anxiety prevalence in student-athletes - An excerpt from the sport science institute's guide to understanding and supporting student-athlete mental wellness*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/mind-body-and-sport-depression-and-anxiety-prevalence-student-athletes>

New, J. (2016, January 28). Study: 1 in 4 college athletes show signs of depression. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2016/01/28/study-1-4-college-athletes-show-signs-depression>

Velasco, H. (2017, July 21). Few student-athletes with mental illness seek help. *USA TODAY*. Retrieved from <https://www.usatoday.com>