Universal Design for Learning
Why it's more important than ever

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Questions or comments? Put them here:
https://padlet.com/SearleCenter/udlp_parkinglot_2023winter

Introduce yourself (name, pronouns, department/program) in the chat!

What we'll do today

- Introductions & parking lot
- Context for UDL: student well-being nationally & at Northwestern
- Impacts of disruptions
- Instructor experiences
- Rationale for UDL

Parking lot

- Place for ongoing feedback or questions
- Can revisit at any point
- We all monitor and respond as needed

Reflect

- Thinking about your teaching during the pandemic:
  - How did you feel?
  - Write a word or two in the chat that describes that

The kids are not alright

> They didn't even seem to be trying.

> It's hard to find the line between being supportive … and just giving up entirely on academic rigor.

- Disengagement
- Decreased performance
- Increased exhaustion, anxiety, mental health referrals
- Looser standards not helpful
- Academic integrity
- Study skills atrophied
- Instructors exhausted

> What they don't want is to sit passively. It reminds them of what they went through with the great pandemic.

> …the personal, relational character of education is inseparable from high intellectual standards.

Discuss

In breakout rooms:

- What resonated with you?
- What was it like from your perspective, as an instructor?
- Any other observations?

Share your takeaways on the padlet, and we'll debrief as a group after about 10 minutes.

What students said

Academic worries

- Difficulty focusing
- Low motivation
- Hard to make friends in class
- Feeling disconnected from the classroom
- Anxiety about going to office hours- nowhere to "hide" on zoom
- Managing asynchronous lectures - esp not falling behind
- Stress about technology/connectivity working
- Impact of grading changes on GPA, graduate school
- Tech worries (connectivity)

ANXIETY EXHAUSTION ISOLATION

COVID worries

- Infection
- Illness
- death

Financial worries

- Family lost jobs
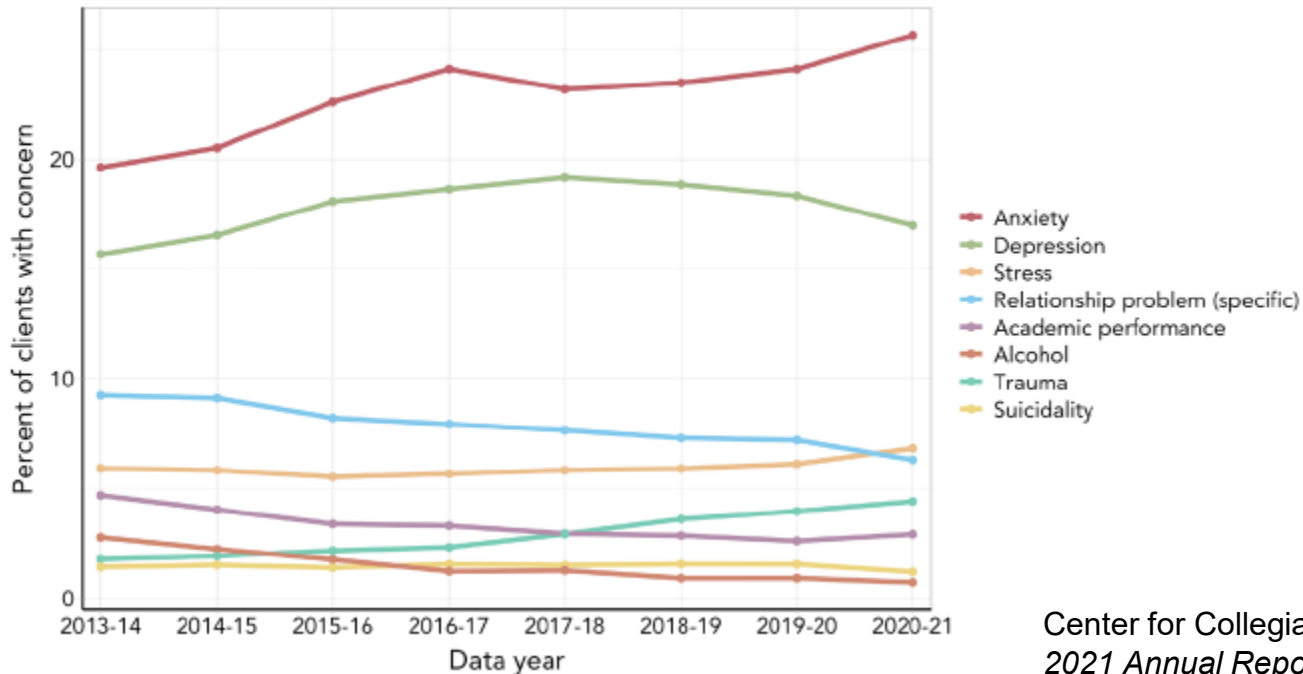- Student must work more

Social worries

- Lonely
- Hard to make friends
- No extra-curriculars

And more…

National University Mental Health Trends
Presenting Concerns

CLICC Trends (Top Concern): Percentage of Clients with Each Concern from 2013–2021

Legend:
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Stress
- Relationship problem (specific)
- Academic performance
- Alcohol
- Trauma
- Suicidality

Center for Collegiate Mental Health. (2022, January). *2021 Annual Report* (Publication No. STA 22-132)

National University Mental Health Trends
Severity

Item	11-Year Change	2010-2021	Lowest	Highest	2020–2021
CCAPS-34					
Depression	+0.16		1.55	1.74	1.71
Generalized Anxiety	+0.27		1.77	2.05	2.03
Social Anxiety	+0.26		1.77	2.05	2.04
Academic Distress	+0.18		1.92	2.10	2.10
Eating Concerns	+0.12		0.94	1.07	1.07
Hostility	-0.13		0.79	0.93	0.79
Alcohol Use	-0.24		0.49	0.73	0.49
Distress Index	+0.18		1.65	1.83	1.83

Center for Collegiate Mental Health. (2022, January). *2021 Annual Report* (Publication No. STA 22-132)

Northwestern | PRACTICUM

National University Mental Health Trends
Severity

| Item	9-Year Change	2012-2021	Lowest	Highest	2020–2021
Prior Treatment					
Counseling	+10.8%		47.8%	59.5%	58.6%
Medication	+1.6%		32.4%	36.1%	34.1%
Hospitalization	-2.0%		8.1%	10.3%	8.1%
Threat-to-Self					
Non-Suicidal Self-Injury	+3.7%		23.0%	29.1%	26.7%
Serious Suicidal Ideation	+2.9%		30.1%	36.9%	33.0%
Serious Suicidal Ideation (last month)	-0.9%		6.1%	8.2%	6.1%
Suicide Attempt(s)	+0.7%		8.7%	10.9%	9.4%
Some Suicidal Ideation (past 2 weeks)	+1.1%		33.9%	39.6%	35.1%
Threat-to-Others					
Considered causing serious physical injury to another person	-5.9%		5.3%	11.2%	5.3%
Intentionally caused serious injury to another person	-2.2%		1.2%	3.4%	1.2%

Item	9-Year Change	2012-2021	Lowest	Highest	2020–2021
Traumatic Experiences					
Had unwanted sexual contact(s) or experience(s)	+7.9%		18.9%	26.9%	26.9%
Experienced harassing, controlling, and/or abusive behavior	+5.4%		32.8%	38.7%	38.6%
Experienced traumatic event	+11.6%		31.0%	42.6%	42.6%
Drug and Alcohol					
Felt the need to reduce alcohol/drug use	-1.5%		25.6%	27.5%	25.6%
Others concerned about alcohol/drug use	-4.5%		13.0%	17.6%	13.0%
Treatment for alcohol/drug use	-2.6%		1.8%	4.4%	1.8%
Binge drinking	-8.8%		32.7%	41.5%	32.7%
Marijuana use	+4.5%		19.1%	26.0%	25.3%

Center for Collegiate Mental Health. (2022, January).
2021 Annual Report (Publication No. STA 22-132)

National University Mental Health Trends
Utilization

Four Year Trends in Percent of Campus Served by Counseling

TRENDS IN UTILIZATION RATES

| Year	Rate
2017-2018	13.0
2018-2019	13.4
2019-2020	13.0
2020-2021	10.7
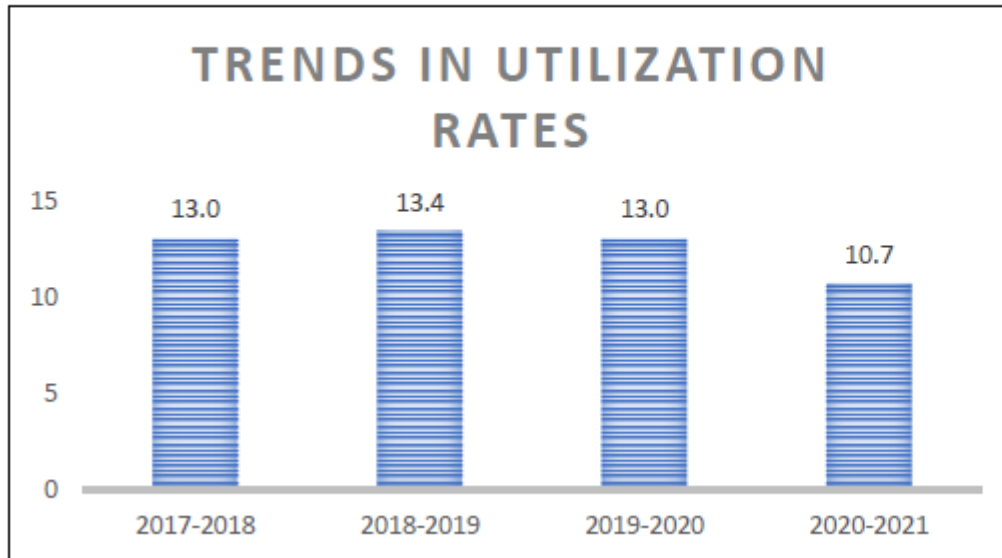
Prior to the COVID Pandemic, counseling centers had been managing increases in utilization. This graph indicates how the trend shifted during the pandemic. The expectation is that the percentages will rise again in 2021-2022 since many universities and colleges have returned to routine operations.

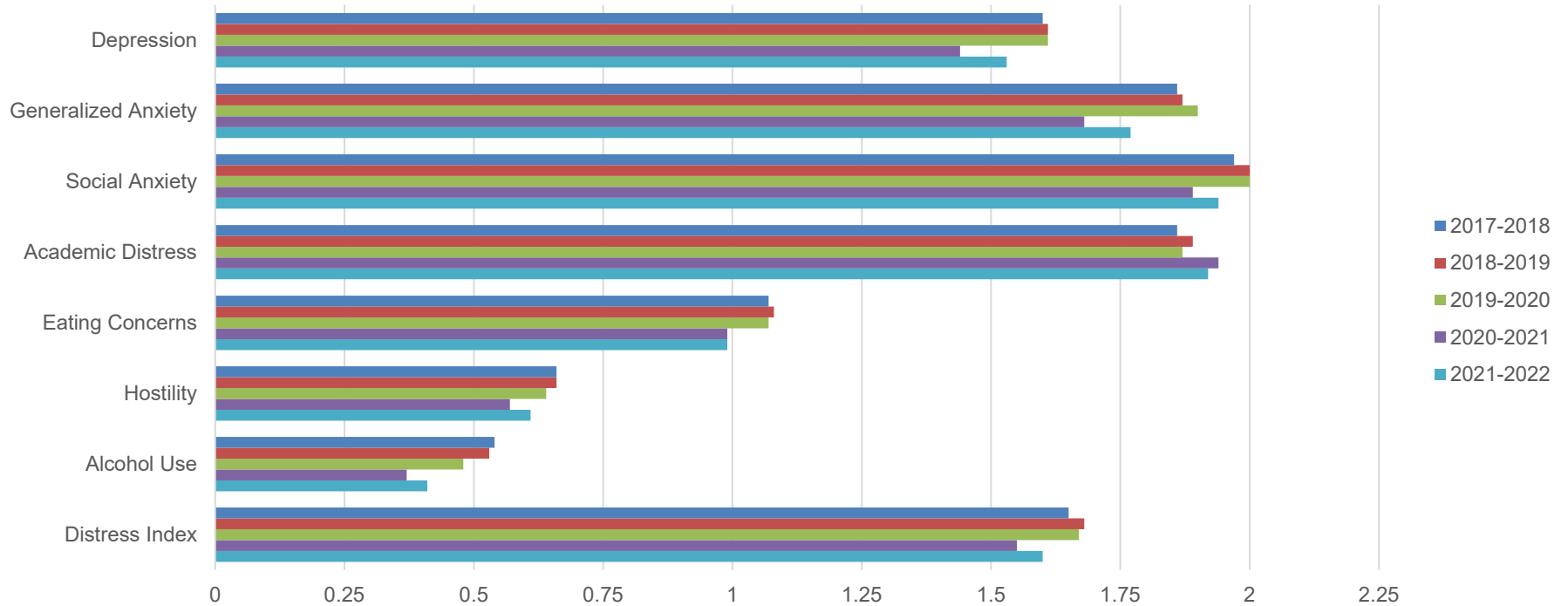Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors. (2021). *Annual Survey: 2021.*
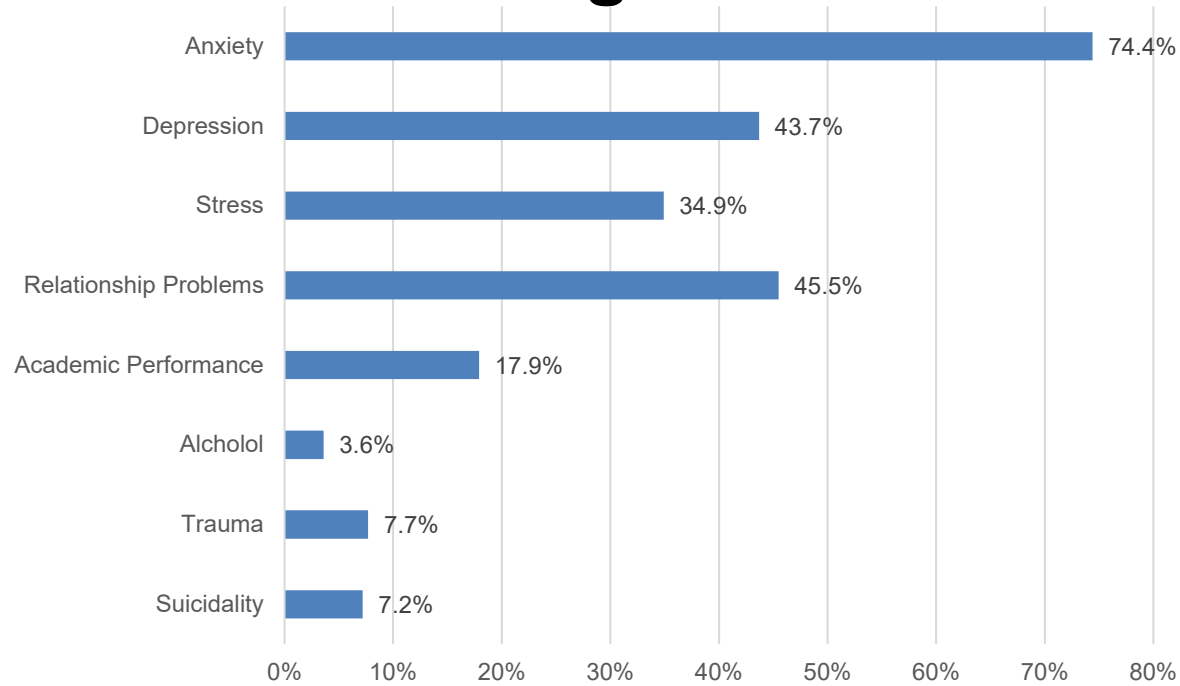
Northwestern CAPS
Utilization

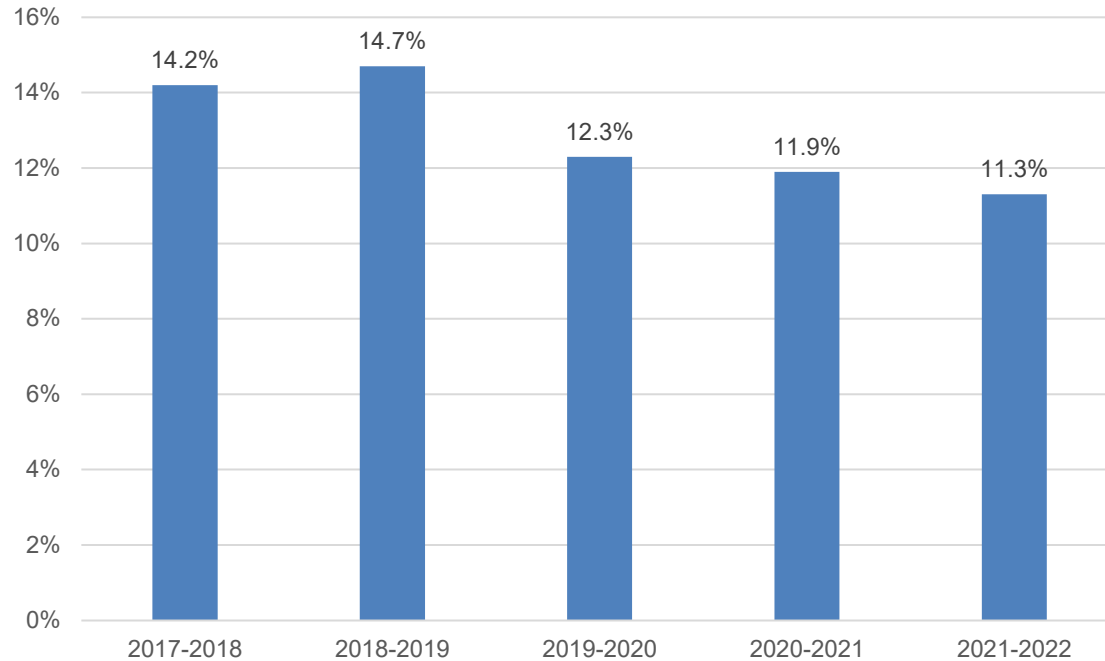# Impact of Far-Reaching Social Concerns Pandemic

- Increased social isolation
- Interrupted/delayed achievement of expected developmental milestones
- Significant and pervasive grief and loss reactions
- Increased anxiety

Helpers not immune to these impacts

Impact of Far-Reaching Social Concerns
Pandemic

Which area(s) of your life have been negatively impacted by COVID-19? (check all that apply)
When asked to endorse negative impacts from COVID-19, 94% of students endorsed at least one area impacted by COVID-19, and 90% endorsed multiple areas being affected.
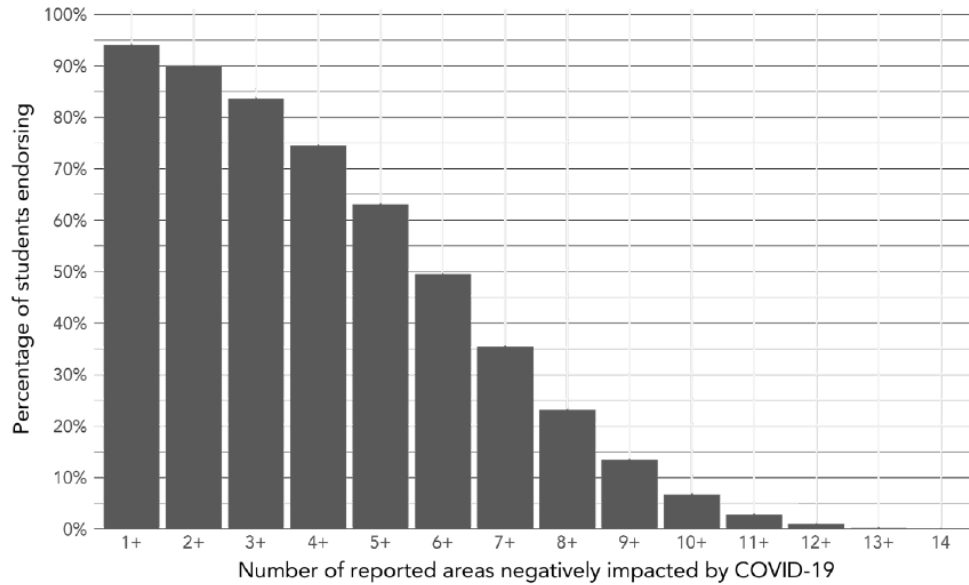
SDS 100 (N = 98,218)	Frequency	Percent
Mental health	71,111	72.4%
Motivation or focus	67,835	69.1%
Loneliness or isolation	65,546	66.7%
Academics	65,258	66.4%
Missed experiences or opportunities	59,886	61.0%
Relationships (Significant other, friends, family)	43,290	44.1%
Career/Employment	41,390	42.1%
Financial	33,709	34.3%
Health concerns (others)	29,230	29.8%
Health concerns (self)	26,207	26.7%
Grief/loss of someone	11,358	11.6%
Food or housing insecurity	8,308	8.5%
Discrimination/Harassment	2,790	2.8%
Other (please specify)	1,304	1.3%

Center for Collegiate Mental Health. (2022, January).
2021 Annual Report (Publication No. STA 22-132)

Impact of Far-Reaching Social Concerns
Racial Injustice

- Collective and repeated trauma experiences
- Increasing distrust in systems among BIPOC students – including mental health systems
- Loss of hope
- Fatigue
- Anger

Helpers not immune to these impacts

Impact of Far-Reaching Social Concerns
Political Divisions

- Increased conflict in relationships
- Anger
- Pessimism about the future
- Pressure to become politically active

Helpers not immune to these impacts

Impact of Far-Reaching Social Concerns
Climate Change

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Helplessness
- Hopelessness

Helpers not immune to these impacts

Impact of Far-Reaching Social Concerns
Economic Uncertainties

- Increased anxiety
- Uncertainty about future
- Feelings of guilt
- Increased pressure to excel
- Increased pressure to pursue "lucrative" majors

Helpers not immune to these impacts

Challenges Facing Universities Related to the Mental Well-being of Students

- Staffing challenges for university counseling centers
- Increasing number of students going to college with pre-existing mental health concerns
- Rising demand for services
- Unhealthy aspects of university cultures
- Systemic and pervasive systems of racism and oppression at universities

Opportunities for Universities Related to the Mental Well-being of Students

- More systemic and intentional focus on true prevention efforts that:
  - Foster healthy environments that promote and sustain well-being for students
  - Develop and empower communities of care so that students are less likely to struggle in silence or alone
  - Normalize struggles and setbacks and support students in recovering and learning from those moments

- Take bold action to identify, disrupt, and remove elements of oppression and racism that have been allowed to operate in their communities

- Leverage what we have learned from new (or new to us) technologies introduced because of the pandemic to foster new ways for people to connect and relate with one another. Continue to use these technologies to provide multiple options for delivery of support services

- Continue to re-imagine employer/employee relationships and expectations given what many learned during the pandemic about work-life balance

Adaptation, experimentation, improvisation

- What have you tried?

- How has it worked?

- What have you learned?
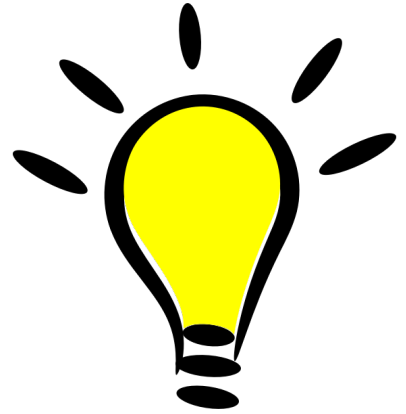
Impacts of innovations

- AccessibleNU – e.g. requests for notetakers declined by 60%.
- Recordings, attendance/deadline/grading flexibility helped many
- Crucial to continue – 43% of ANU students report a psych condition as either their primary or secondary disability.

Myth of Average

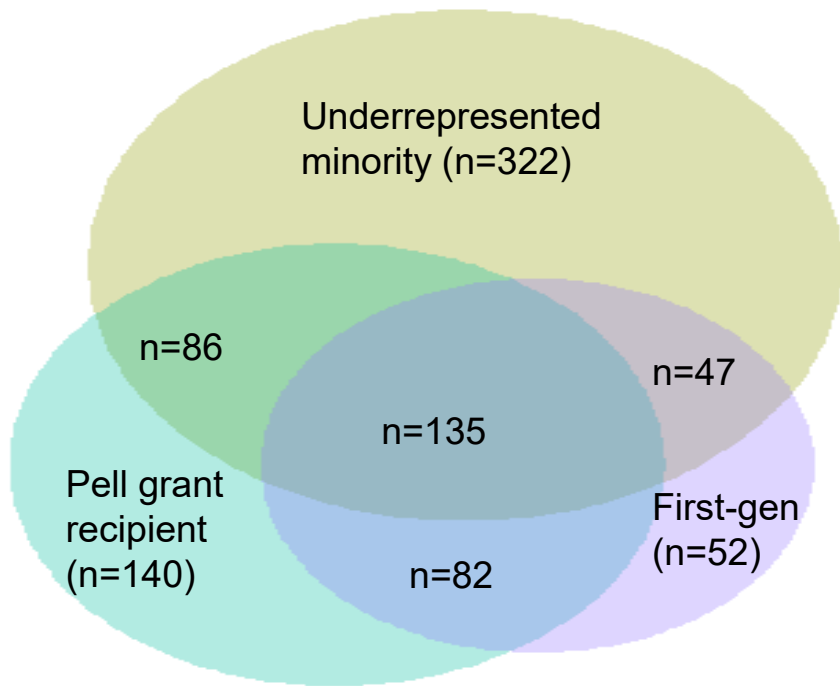The average Northwestern student is…..
EXCEPTIONAL!

After that, there's a lot of variability. Here's what we track:

Class of 2025 Demographics

Fall 2021 Entering Class	2,086
Total URM	590 (28%)
Total Pell	443 (21%)
Total 1st-gen	316 (15%)
Total NOT in these groups	1,222 (59%)

Underrepresented minority (n=322)

n=86

n=47

n=135

Pell grant recipient (n=140)

n=82

First-gen (n=52)

What we don't see

- Background knowledge
- Language skills
- Curiosity/interest
- Ability to focus
- Self-confidence
- Various stressors, past and current
- Various invisible disabilities – mental health and other
- Other…

What it means

- Even "smart" students struggle
- That struggle is not the same for everyone
- One-size-fits-all … fits few, or none

What does UDL offer?

- Decreases need for "special considerations" and therefore reduces instructor workload
- Reduces sense of shame for students
- Designing "around the edges" increases effectiveness of instruction for all students

Looking ahead

Multiple means of engagement

…of representation

…of expression

- can be implemented in small steps (+1)
- To be continued…