UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

The University of Toronto
Student Mental Health Annual Report
Ministry of Colleges University Research and Evaluation

Reporting period: September 1, 2024, to August 31, 2025
Date submitted: January 30, 2026
Contact: Christina Bartha, Sr Executive Director Student Mental Health Systems Policy and Strategy
Chris.bartha@utoronto.ca

Introduction

The University of Toronto is the largest university in Canada, with over 100,000 students attending more than 700 undergraduate and 300 graduate programs across three urban campuses. Serving a diverse population of students, the University's mental health strategy has evolved to reflect and include a broad range of services that respond to the dynamic needs of our students. The current mental health strategy is built on a continuum of services that optimize access to early intervention, health promotion, and counselling services, as well as hospital partnerships that support the acute mental health needs of students. The publication of the 2019 Presidential and Provostial Task Force Report and its 21 recommendations have guided the development of a U of T mental health strategy and a formalized tri-campus mental health service model that is aligned with the Stepped Care Model (SCM), endorsed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada (*Figure 1)*.

The SCM is a flexible, evidence-informed service model that offers a continuum of options that matches service intensity to student need. The U of T model has been informed by the principles of a healthy campus approach, outlined in the Okanagan Charter of 2016 and the newly published Limerick Framework of 2025, as well as the guidance provided by the National Standard for Mental Health and Wellbeing for Post Secondary Student (MHCC 2020). Access to care that is responsive and inclusive of the diversity of U of T students is a key priority reflected in our approach to campus services.

Figure 1 – U of T Stepped Care Model

The delivery of services is supported by interprofessional mental health teams, student life staff, divisional and faculty professionals. Its ongoing development is informed by many tri-campus student advisory committees and peer support approaches customized to the needs of each campus. The student voice

actively informs all aspects of service delivery, evaluation and efforts to enhance ongoing resource navigation tools for students.

In 2022, U of T established the institutional leadership position of Senior Executive Director, Student Mental Health, Systems Policy and Strategy (Sr ED). Reporting to the Office of Vice-Provost, Students (OVPS), the Sr ED's annual goals focus on the optimization of student mental health services in collaboration and alignment with local campus initiatives.

In 2024-2025, U of T launched its long-term plan to measure the effectiveness and impact of its mental health strategy. This was enabled by a new institutional health centre data strategy, with current results reflected in this report. The OVPS Student Mental Health Advisory Committee and a bi-annual student perception of mental health care survey (conducted in 2022 and 2024, and planned for 2026) provide ongoing feedback to inform student mental health planning and priorities at U of T.

The annual report is aligned with the nine steps of the SCM. All administrative data is reflective of activity for the period September 1, 2024, to August 31, 2025.

Summary of Activities

Step 1: Information and Education

Self-directed resource navigation and access to online and in-person wellness and mental health information is available to students through a variety of mechanisms. In 2020, U of T launched *Navi*, a navigation chatbot, that can respond to a wide array of general questions about U of T, including those pertaining to wellness and mental health resources. In 2024-25, approximately 30% of questions posed to Navi pertained to health and mental health, which equated to 11,165 messages. The top mental health queries related to "talking to someone," "accessing healthcare," "venting," and "academics."

Given the size and complexity of the U of T environment, in 2025 an existing institutional website was re-designed to offer simplified and streamlined navigation of resources for students. The **Tri-*Campus Student Mental Health Resource Portal*** (https://mentalhealth.utoronto.ca) guides the user to curated resources and, in compliance with Bill 166, links students to updated information regarding privacy and confidentiality https://U of T.me/privacy-and-confidentiality-at-U of T. The mental health resource portal had 55,522 page views from September 1, 2024, to August 31, 2025.

First-entry undergraduate students are a key audience for information-sharing and awareness. Annual orientation events and activities highlight, for both domestic and international students, the mental health supports and resources that are available throughout the year. Recognizing that students are undertaking an important developmental transition into university, orientation is followed by ongoing reinforcement and outreach of this information through communications from Student Life, health centres, and Faculties.

Step 2: Self-guided resources and activities

Self-guided or self-directed resources are available, at no cost to students, through U of T published websites and the Telus Health Student Support App, funded by U of T and available 24/7 in over 140 languages. Self-directed resources provide general information about mental health, self-screening tools, and various ways for students to connect with more formalized supports. Students can access low-barrier options that address stress management, life skills and information on many other aspects of health and wellbeing. In the past academic year, over 10,000 users accessed self-guided resources through the Telus app, which links students to many other websites and associated services.

Step 3: Health Promotion

Health promotion, inclusive of education, early intervention and prevention activities, is reflective of steps 1 through 5 of the Stepped Care model and now represents a significant amount of activity at U of T.

All students have access to robust health promotion activities through large-scale student events, drop-in programming, organized workshops and mental health educational events. Professional staff work with trained student leaders who play a key role in student engagement and delivery of many of these programs. In 2024-25, across the three U of T campuses, we recorded over 28,000 contacts between students and our health centres' health promotion activities. Within these numbers, approximately 6,000 students registered for workshops and events that promoted mental health literacy, wellness strategies and engaged students in the benefits of early intervention. Customized workshops were designed and delivered to specifically address the needs of students who identify as Indigenous, BIPOC, 2SLGBTQIA+, or as having specific mental health needs in the areas of eating disorders and attention difficulties. New in 2024-25 were additional drop-in programs offering students flexible, real-time support to take a break from their studies and engage with peer support and professional staff. These programs led to 2,000 student contacts focused on health and wellbeing.

Step 4: Peer Support

Peer support is an important element of post-secondary mental health support models. Each fall and winter term at U of T, a team of trained students provide low-barrier, flexible support at each U of T campus. Many students report that talking to a peer is their first engagement with mental health support and the experience makes it easier to approach more formalized counselling from a health centre. At U of T, students who provide peer support services receive specialized training and ongoing supervision from a mental health professional to ensure the model is delivered within the appropriate scope of skills of a peer support role.

In the 2024-25 fall and winter terms, there were approximately 300 peer support meetings between students, with access maximized by hosting sessions in campus libraries and other student-friendly spaces.

Step 5: Guided Learning (Resource Navigation)

U of T, as a large complex university, recognizes the importance of helping students to find the right resource at the right time for the right need. Linking back to Step 2, resource navigation is integrated throughout the Stepped Care Model; within Step 5, support extends beyond self-directed efforts to include 1:1 student support with the help of navigators employed at the health centres and through peer support programs mentioned in Step 4. Recognizing that students may approach faculty members, librarians, and staff for information, each year updated mental health information is provided to these partners enabling them to redirect students to relevant resources. Key resources include: the Mental Health Resource website, NAVI, and Telus Health Student Support, which provides access to students for both information and real-time counselling 24/7.

Step 6: Group Therapy

For students who require more formal supports, structured group therapy is offered at the three campus health centres. Evidence-based group therapies such as CBT and DBT, offer both skill-building and mutual support for students who require more formalized support led by professionally trained counsellors. In 2024-25, almost 300 students enrolled in group therapy and attended 1,271 group sessions.

Step 7: One-to-one counselling sessions

Timely access to mental health counselling has been a priority of the U of T. In 2021, adoption of the Stepped Care model included the institutional introduction of the single session or "one at a time" (OAAT) model, which has improved access and virtually eliminated wait times for counselling. To align with student needs, schedules and the realities of urban, commuter campuses, the OAAT model allows a student to book an in-person or virtual appointment the same day, the next day or within 5 days. The model does not require or presume the student must return for further appointments but allows for additional follow-up sessions or referrals to other services along the Stepped Care continuum where indicated.

In 2024-25, the U of T health centres delivered:

- 106,000 appointments to 18,519 unique students with approximately 50% (53,706) for mental health concerns.
- 14,013 OAATs to 6,423 unique students both in-person or virtually.
- 86% of students (5,540 unique students) utilized between one and three OAAT sessions.
- Over 95% of OAAT appointment requests were booked without delays, virtually eliminating wait times for students to access care.

To better respond to the specialized needs of our diverse student populations, customized programs were designed and delivered throughout the year. In 2024-25, the University offered drop-in supports to Muslim and Jewish students and facilitated student connections to culturally specific resources and counselling. For Indigenous, BIPOC and students who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+, additional low-barrier programs were offered in consultation with EDIA partners and trained counsellors as well as student groups.

Recognizing that post-secondary students are now managing multiple stressors and demands, U of T augments its campus services with 24/7 telephone support and counselling through Telus Health Student Support (THSS). In 2024-25, Telus responded to 3,360 student engagements; 60% of this activity took place between the early afternoon and midnight, enabling student access to support outside of traditional clinic hours. Telus services are available in over 140 languages, providing culturally responsive access to the diverse student population at the university.

In 2024, the findings of a tri-campus Student Perception of Mental Health Services survey indicated that students rated overall health centre services as good / very good.

Augmenting these findings were the results of a unique evaluation of the U of T OAAT model. Findings confirmed the clinical efficacy of the model with students reporting significantly reduced levels of distress at the end of a single session or OAAT counselling session. The findings were well received when communicated to staff and students across the University during tabling events in the fall of 2025.

Step 8: Specialist care – Access to Psychiatry

In mental health service delivery, a subset of clients or students will have more acute mental health needs that require specialized expertise and support. In 2024-25, the health centres, in collaboration with their consulting psychiatrists, provided 10,489 psychiatric appointments to 2,041 students, inclusive of assessments and ongoing care for complex conditions. Utilizing a shared care model, psychiatrists work in partnership with family doctors, community providers and hospitals to provide care for students with serious mental health needs, as demonstrated by Step 9 of the Stepped Care Model at U of T.

Step 9: Crisis Support and Care Team Planning

A priority of the University has been to build more effective partnerships with the acute care hospital system to better meet the complex needs of a students with serious mental illness.

In 2022, U of T launched the first of three hospital partnerships to build a customized post-secondary student navigation model. The goals of these cross-institutional partnerships include:

a) optimize post-hospital stability to reduce the risk of further crises and/or readmission to hospital and
b) provide students with transition support to better address treatment needs and academic planning that focus on the goals of the student.

In 2022, CAMH and U of T launched the University of Toronto Navigation Service (UTN) which supports annually approximately 500 Emergency Department presentations of U of T students. Students present with situational crises that require a range of brief supports; approximately 25% of students will require an inpatient admission. Students supported by UTN experience improved post-hospitalization stabilization, and particularly for those admitted to hospital, enhanced navigation through the complexities of both the health care and university systems.

In August 2025, U of T Scarborough and Scarborough Health Network launched a similar navigation service and the results of this first year will be available in 2027. The service design phase of a partnership between U of T Mississauga and Trillium Health Partners will commence in 2026.

Future Opportunities

The results of the 2024-25 academic year reflect the ongoing and sustained commitment of the University of Toronto to meet the mental health needs of a large and diverse student population. The University will continue to focus its efforts on ensuring students have access to high-quality mental health services across the stepped care continuum.

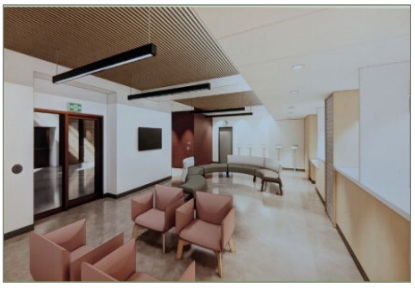
Embedded in this commitment are continued efforts to:

a) Listen to the input and feedback of our students to inform our ongoing planning,
b) Measure both the scale and impact of mental health services, and
c) Collaborate with partners to innovate and improve our service models to reflect the dynamic and changing needs of our students.

Similar to other post-secondary institutions, U of T students are now reporting higher rates of concurrent mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions such as ADHD and Autism. A new collaboration between the UTSG Health Centre and Accessibility Services is exploring better service integration to improve the student experience.

Looking ahead, in 2026, the University will have achieved the goal of revitalizing the therapeutic mental health environments across all three of its health centres, a key recommendation of our students which was featured in the Presidential and Provostial Task Force report. In 2025, UTM and UTSC opened newly built or renovated health centres and in 2026, UTSG will open its new health centre located at the centre of campus. In keeping with its commitments to support student mental health, these spaces are designed to be welcoming and accessible to our many student communities *(Figure 2)*.

In summary, within the framework of the Stepped Care Model, UofT has established a continuum of supports that ensure access to a range of mental health services that are available to match a diversity of student need. Services and resources range from early intervention and health promotion to specialized mental health response models, delivered in partnership with the hospital sector. UofT will continue to develop and deliver services that are responsive to the changing needs of students who attend the three campuses of our university.

Figure 2 – Revitalization of Health Centre Environments

Mississauga – opened in 2025	Scarborough – opened in 2025	St George – opening in 2026