

## Challenges for the Design of Effective 1<sup>st</sup> year interventions : using presenting concerns to address absent concerns

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## The Centre for Student Support Services (CSSS) at UWC

•Macro service providing developmental, preventative, curative/remedial & leadership services.  
•Shares the Services Division of UWC with financial aid, law, health, sport, residences etc.  
•Has to respond to several levels of imperatives:

- \*Institutional: IOP
- \* NPHE
- \* Students

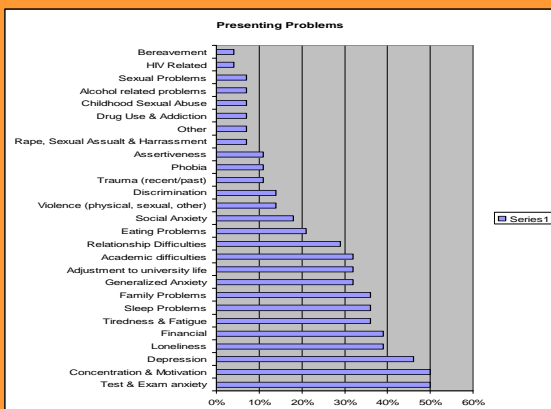


## The research

- Purpose: explore student presenting concerns
- By means of: questionnaire before 1<sup>st</sup> contact with CSSS
- Student demographic details: mirrors that of UWC:
  - 68% female, 32% male
  - 20-24 year olds
  - first language, English, Afrikaans, Xhosa
  - 75% urban
  - 1/3 1<sup>st</sup> yr, 1/3 2<sup>nd</sup> yr, 20% 3<sup>rd</sup> yr, 20% PG students
  - 61% 1<sup>st</sup> generation students
  - 43% referred by self
  - 23% heard about CSSS from faculty offices

## The top presenting concerns

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Symptoms which impair academic functioning
- Symptoms which emerge from psycho-social stressors



## Discussion of research results

### Internal-external tension/psycho-social link

- The student's distress a mixture of both personal and social factors
- Clash of culture between disadvantaged student & HE institution
- Finances
- Lack of prior academic competencies among students
- Language difficulties
- Course selection
- The role of peer support and other support mechanisms
- Addressing socio-cultural challenges of disadvantaged students
- Academic support

## Response

- Treating identified patient
- OR
- Addressing systemic and contextual issues,
- Addressing stress in the collective

## conclusion

- experiences during the 1st year of attending HE are formative
- emphasis on
  - integrated
  - preventative
  - systemic responses
- to meet the diversity of students at an earlier stage
- to make their first year a
  - personally
  - socially
  - academically successful year