



# SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AND HEALTHY WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENTS IN THE APPLIED ARTS

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## BACKGROUND:

High stress jobs exist across many fields of discipline. This can be exacerbated in the fine arts where there is high productivity over concentrated time periods, which are paired with creative output. While this has been recognized in the arts, research conducted to promote healthy work environments is almost non-existent. Behavioral patterns that start as students can also continue in the workplace. In general, college students already have barriers to successfully talk about mental health and wellness while on campus. Therefore, the current project addressed an arts community at Wichita State University (WSU).

## METHODS:

Shocker Studios is a space for every class that an applied arts student will have to take in order to get their degree. The applied arts department is made up of six degrees (e.g. Animation, Acting for Film, Audio Production, Collaborative Design, Filmography, Video Game Design). The goal of this project was to empower students and have a safe space for students to talk about their own mental health needs. The methods included qualitative interviews which led to key themes about negative mental health which informed a quantitative survey. Department faculty and leadership provided consultation in the design and dissemination process.

## RESULTS:

Sixty-six students responded to the survey indicated several negative symptoms. Mental health days available to students were also notably under-utilized and thought to be due to stigma. The % of respondents that indicated "experience to any of the following in the last 2 months" to these statements include:



## DISCUSSION:

Success in the applied arts field derives from a healthy work-life balance. From these results, it seems as if students are struggling to find a healthy middle ground to safely discuss their needs in the workplace, as well as keep up with the demands of their current workload without feeling overwhelmed. Educating students on healthy self-care practices now can lead to a successful future, and promote productivity, with a smaller chance of burnout. Workplace wellness is a critical issue for all adults and should be considered and evaluated in other settings. Further study is needed to find the most efficient way to support a healthy work environment for applied arts.

## WORKPLACE GOALS:

