Case Study: Tackling High Acuity Cases and Diverse Student Mental Health Needs at a Prestigious Private Institution

Mantra Health

## The Challenge

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), a private institution in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is known for its prestigious academic programs, world-renowned research, and diverse student body. In any academic year, MIT students face a rigorous curriculum in a highly competitive environment, which can lead to high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, but the pandemic, along with the country's social and political unrest, led to significant mental health concerns among MIT's student body, 30% of whom are international students.

In fall of 2021, demand rose as students returned to campus following many months of isolation. MIT Medical's Student Mental Health and Counseling Services experienced a 16% rise in service utilization rates and significant (nearly one-third of clinicians) staff turnover. This led to longer wait times for students in need of immediate mental health care.

MIT students are more complex in terms of their needs and where they're at in their mental health journey. There is a lot of support, but some students feel lost. Because MIT has a large campus, many students are not aware of the resources available.



Helen Macharia APRN, FNP-C, PMHNP-B, Mantra Health Provider

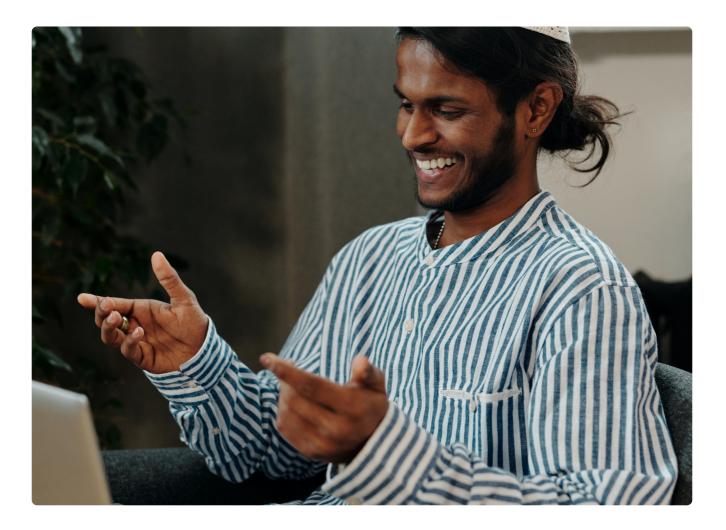


<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts institute of technology | data usa

"Every time someone leaves it takes us about six months to hire a new person," said Karen Singleton, PhD, the Chief of Student Mental Health and Counseling Services at MIT Medical, due in part to the rigorous credentialing that is required of any MIT licensed and credentialed clinical provider. "We were in a challenging situation."

Not only was MIT's counseling center in need of credentialed clinical providers, but students were asking for more diversity in training, discipline, and provider backgrounds. Finding diverse, high-quality providers in a quick manner was proving difficult, which is why MIT turned to Mantra Health for telehealth services.

MIT has a diverse student body, resulting in more diverse mental health needs. The student population includes a large number of graduate students and PhD candidates, in addition to undergraduate students, many of whom are international students, out-of-state students, first-generation students, and students on full scholarships. For this reason, many MIT students face a wide range of emotional, social, economical, and academic challenges.



## **The Solution**

MIT Medical's Student Mental Health and Counseling Services is made up of approximately 30 multidisciplinary clinicians, including psychiatrists, licensed mental health counselors, social workers, and nurse practitioners. The counseling center offers one-on-one therapy sessions, group counseling, urgent care, and mental health resources, among other services. In order to support existing staff and meet the needs of students, MIT established a partnership with Mantra, but that decision was not made without careful consideration.

To ensure that the addition of a new partner did not result in more work for the counseling center staff, Dr. Singleton took scope of care and clinical protocols into account. She wanted to work with telehealth providers who could see patients with mild, moderate, and urgent needs, all while filling coverage gaps and maintaining quality of care. Unlike its competitors, Mantra offered clinical excellence, medical supervision, and a diverse group of clinical providers, all of whom were trained in evidence-based care and could work collaboratively with existing MIT staff to support students of various levels of acuity.

### At a glance

96%

of MIT students feel their Mantra provider has helped them accomplish their goals in therapy and psychiatry.

One of the things that we really like about Mantra Health is that it's flexible. At first we thought we didn't need any psychiatry, then we decided to include a few psychiatry hours. Then we decided to add more and then we scaled it back, so it does allow you to have an accordion model where you can expand and contract as needed. That really worked for us.



Karen Singleton PhD, Chief of Student Mental Health and Counseling Services, MIT Medical

Dr. Singleton said, "In terms of equity, I wanted to make sure the telehealth providers matched that same level of care that I was asking my own providers to meet." She also wanted a team of telehealth providers who could be supportive and reliable in crisis situations.

In fall 2021, MIT Medical's Student Mental Health and Counseling Services forged a partnership with Mantra, which afforded existing staff more time to engage one-on-one with students, renew its group counseling sessions, and continue producing its Conversations with MIT Medical podcast. The extended services also helped to reduce wait time, match students with more diverse providers, and expand availability beyond MIT's campus counseling center hours.



Helen Macharia, APRN, FNP-C, PMHNP-B, a Mantra Health provider, started working with MIT students mid-way through the semester, at a time when stress levels and demand for services were high. "It was intense," she said, but she brought her own lived experiences to her one-on-one sessions. As a former international student herself, Macharia understood the unique barriers that many MIT students face. In addition to feeling alone or in a silo, many MIT students have to navigate a new city, campus, language, all while adapting to new weather, food, social customs, and academic pressures.

Because MIT has a diverse student body, the counseling center sees a wide range of acuity. According to Macharia, some students visit the center with mild symptoms or simply to refill medications, while many others battle severe depression and underlying bipolar disorder. Macharia has helped students build social skills, identify on-campus resources, and develop coping strategies in order to thrive on campus.

Acting as an extension to MIT Medical's Student Mental Health and Counseling Services, Mantra has connected students with a wide network of providers and more diverse, quality mental health care.

## Some of the benefits offered to MIT include:

#### **Diverse care**

Among the Mantra providers working with MIT during the 2021–2022 academic year, 64% identified as BIPOC and 27% identified as LGBTQIA+. All were trained in culturallyinformed care and experienced in working with international students, first-generation students, students of color, and students with disabilities.

#### Seamless campus integration

Although MIT offers therapy and psychiatry, Mantra was able to extend these offerings via its collaborative portal, and adapt its protocols to suit the needs of the counseling center's existing model of care. On-campus staff were granted access to real-time communications and on-demand reporting in order to monitor patient care in real time.

#### **Capacity expansion**

In addition to widening access to mental health services and reducing wait time for students, Mantra supplied evening and weekend sessions, so students could meet with therapists outside of counseling center hours. This made it easier for working students or students without transportation to meet with a provider on their own time and in the comfort of their own home. Our staff feel engaged, they're able to devote more time to supervision and outreach again, and we're really in a good place.



Karen Singleton PhD, Chief of Student Mental Health and Counseling Services, MIT Medical

Before partnering with Mantra, Dr. Singleton said, "Not only were [MIT counselors] seeing more students, but they were seeing more acute students and they were doing more acute care. So part of what I really appreciated and the clinicians appreciated about the partnership was the ability to do other things, things that they came to the profession to do."

Data pulled from the 2021–2022 academic year has shown that once patients engage with a Mantra provider at MIT, they remain engaged. Students have also given Mantra providers a satisfaction rating of 4.8 out of 5, proving the success of the partnership.



# About Mantra Health

Mantra Health is a digital mental health clinic on a mission to improve access to evidencebased mental healthcare for young adults. Through augmenting highquality clinical services with software and design, we aim to improve the mental health of over 20 million university and college students through partnerships with higher education institutions and health insurance plans. The Mantra program has been deployed across 50+ campuses to over 500,000 students.

To learn more about our partnerships, please contact us at <u>partner@mantrahealth.com</u>.

