

Vision

Recognizing and naming how trauma and adversity impact the adult learner generates a critical brain-based perspective and lens through which the college builds upon skills of resilience to orient pedagogy, support services, and holistic institutional practices encouraging academic access and success for all students.

Mission

Promote understanding in higher education and the larger community of the profound impact trauma and adversity have on the learning brain and academic resilience in higher education, as well as how a strengths-based, trauma-informed campus and community can productively support development of critical importance to academic and workplace success.

Goals

1. Progressively grow and sustain a culture of trauma-informed knowledge and best practices across the institution.
2. Research funding, design, and protocols for ethical and responsible Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) style questionnaire in order to create an empirical portrait querying the link between trauma, adversity, and academic resilience.
3. Develop a digital community that provides resources and networking information by means of literature, research, events, lectures, publications, conferences, and continuing education regarding trauma-informed educational practices, neurobiological insights relevant to higher education, as well as resilience as skill of use in academia and the workplace.

Contact:

Please contact Dr. Jeanie Tietjen at jtietjen@massbay.edu or 781.239.2203 for more information including resources, speaking engagements, and exploring collaboration.



For more information on the **Institute for Trauma, Adversity, and Resilience**, visit:

www.massbay.edu/about-us/institute-for-trauma-adversity-resilience

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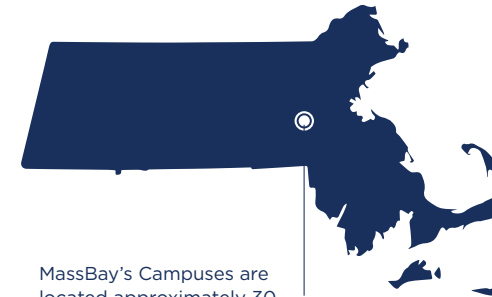
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Institute for Trauma, Adversity, and Resilience *in Higher Education*

Trauma Informed, Strengths-Based Higher Education

Higher education forms a gateway to socioeconomic mobility, empowering individuals to make the kind of meaningful progress the United States critically needs for its workplaces, and domestic and civic life.

Neurobiological research shows, however, that overwhelming stress, violence, and trauma adversely impact the very higher-order functions necessary to academic and workplace success: memory, attention, planning, and problem solving. In response, trauma-informed education has pioneered some of the most significant reforms in the last 20 years.

Thanks to organizations such as the Trauma and Learning Policy Institute, Massachusetts' Safe and Supportive Schools initiative, and the Compassionate Schools initiative in Washington state, the negative consequences of trauma and adversity for K-12 are coming into sharper focus. And now we know those consequences persist and can affect students' academic resilience throughout their lives.

The **Institute for Trauma, Adversity, and Resilience in Higher Education at MassBay Community College** formalizes an ongoing recognition of complex interrelationships between trauma and learning in post-secondary education. It believes that every area of the educational community—from pedagogy to campus safety, advising to financial aid, facilities to college policies and administration—can be informed by understanding:

- the basics of the learning brain;
- the prevalence of trauma, adversity, and toxic stress;
- how resilience as skill can be encouraged through best practices and meaningful supports; and
- evidence that just one relationship can powerfully bolster productive and resilient behaviors.

Rather than a rigidly prescriptive list of teaching or institutional practices, trauma-informed education instead describes a perspective or lens through which practices are evaluated and refined, pursuing academic rigor and inquiry in a supportive community informed by lived experience.



Prevalence of Trauma and Adversity in Higher Education

Possessing remarkable resilience, community college students have dealt with adversity and been exposed to traumatic experiences: some are military veterans who served our country, some have been displaced by political and social upheaval or natural disaster, some have been victims of domestic and community violence, while others have themselves or had family members struggle with addiction; and many have faced systemic racism and inequality.

The Wisconsin HOPE Lab study, the largest national survey assessing basic needs and security of university students, found that:

- food insecurity affects roughly two-thirds of community college students,
- from 36% to as high as 51% experience shelter insecurity, and
- 14% report homelessness in the last year.

In addition to the concrete obstacles poverty and inequality present, physical, psychological, and systemic violence represent stressors that have interpersonal and cognitive consequences.

Research summarized by Education Northwest's *Trauma-Informed Practices for Postsecondary Education* shows trauma impacts attention, self-regulation, and stress management, as well as access to higher-order skills necessary for academic success such as abstract thinking and problem solving.

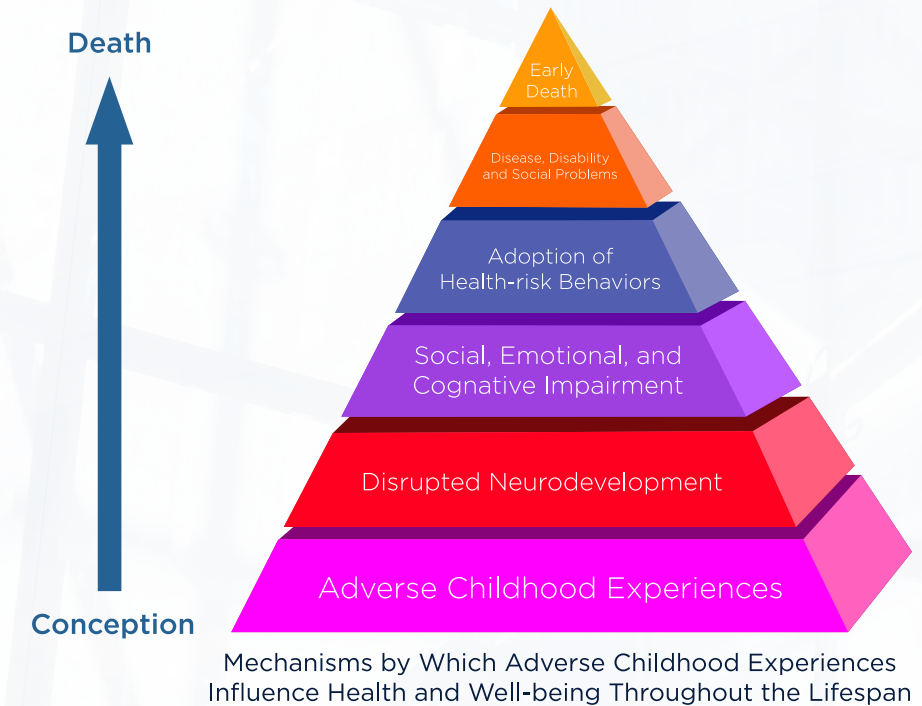


National Prevalence of Trauma and Adversity

Trauma has interpersonal and cognitive consequences that 21st century scientific advances are increasingly able to document and measure.

Traumatic experiences used to be thought of as uncommon, but now leading health organizations, including the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), recognize trauma as not only commonplace, but prevalent. An estimated 70% of adults in the U.S. have experienced a traumatic event at least once in their lives, and the National Center for PTSD estimates that 7-8% percent go on to develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

The CDC's ongoing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study represents a major shift in quantifying trauma's prevalence by looking at how physical and psychological adversity in childhood up to age 18 correlates to development of risk factors for disease and affects well-being throughout life. The ACEs pyramid represents the study's conceptual framework.



Understanding the link between adverse experiences and the learning brain relative to academic success, retention, completion---and eventually workplace viability---represents a growing area of inquiry. www.cdc.gov