**USI Open Up Mental Health Campaign 2022**

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The key message of the Open Up campaign is around talking about your mental health – to your friends and family, and also to professionals when needed. The aim of the campaign is to encourage students to normalise these conversations, and to check in with one another about their mental health. The theme of the campaign also links in with the notion of society opening up post-pandemic in an acknowledgement of the impact of the pandemic on student mental health, both during the pandemic and as society reopens. Typically, the process of a pandemic means that during the pandemic itself people are generally in survival mode, and as it moves to post-pandemic stage, not only is there a re-adjustment that can engender increased anxiety, but also society as a whole moves into a phase of processing and grieving, which can give rise to increased instances of mental illness.

Within the student community, while there is increased acceptance of mental ill-health, there is an over-normalisation of it too, as in ‘everyone is feeling anxious’, so it’s a normal feeling. There is also the idea that there is always someone worse off than them. These two issues combine to mean that there is a segment of the student population that is experiencing high level distress but not seeking help, because the distress level is normalised, and students are afraid of taking a counselling slot from someone else who might need it more.

Stats from the USI Student Mental Health Report 2019 show the following:

* 34.3% of respondents who had not sought any help on or off campus for their mental health had severe to extremely severe depression levels
* 39.5% of respondents who had not sought any help on or off campus for their mental health had severe to extremely severe anxiety levels
* 29.9% of respondent who had not sought any help on or off campus for their mental health had severe to extremely severe stress levels.

These numbers are concerning, as the same data indicated that students are broadly aware of their distress levels, and yet are still not seeking help.

This campaign is a rolling campaign, and as such may include partnerships with external organisations and sub-campaigns aimed at specific at-risk groups of students.