



A University-Level Mindfulness Peer Education Program: Development and Evaluation Outcomes

JOURNAL ARTICLE

KELSEY MADISON DIETRICH 

M. GABRIELA BIDART 

**Author affiliations can be found in the back matter of this article*

VIRGINIA TECH.
PUBLISHING

ABSTRACT

Mindfulness practice has benefits for health and stress management. The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) offers peer education certification programs for universities to expand access to health and wellness education. However, few studies have examined NASPA-affiliated peer education program development or outcomes in university settings. We outline the creation and evaluation of a mindfulness peer education program after one year of implementation at a large public university in the midwestern United States. The program incorporated group discussions, self-reflective writing exercises, and guided mindfulness exercises to promote student learning and mindfulness practice. Program activities included The Mindful Jar, alternate nostril breathing, gratitude practice, mindful eating, and body scan meditation. Seven in-person on-campus programs were facilitated during the 2019–20 academic year with 116 college students completing program evaluations. Ten learning outcomes were rated on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). On average, all learning outcomes were achieved. All five mindfulness activities were endorsed as favorite program aspects, with the body scan meditation as the most commonly chosen. Results indicate that mindfulness can be offered to university students via peer education programs. Future research about the short-term and long-term implications of peer education programs are warranted to better understand the role of this educational approach on student biopsychosocial outcomes.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Kelsey Madison Dietrich

Department of Psychology,
East Carolina University, United
States

dietrichke23@students.ecu.edu

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Dietrich, K. M., & Bidart, M. G. (2026). A University-Level Mindfulness Peer Education Program: Development and Evaluation Outcomes. *Journal of Peer Learning*, 17(1): 1, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.21061/jopl.130>

In 2024, the National College Health Assessment of 24,473 students from 38 universities found that 78% reported moderate to high stress and 41.2% had a mental health disorder commonly related to anxiety (31.5%), depression (24.1%), and trauma (7.0%) ([American College Health Association, 2024](#)). It has been documented that college students experience high stress levels due to different sources, including academic, interpersonal, financial, and career-planning stressors ([Beiter et al., 2015](#); [Britt et al., 2017](#); [Karaman et al., 2019](#)). Notably, the prevalence of college student stress is increasing ([Knapstad et al., 2021](#)). Additionally, college students who reported experiencing chronic stress were significantly more likely to utilize frequent maladaptive health behaviors ([Dalton & Hammen, 2018](#)). Thus, effective opportunities for stress management to promote health and wellness are crucial for college students.

Mindfulness has been conceptualized as an approach to experience the present moment with a sense of nonjudgment and acceptance, fostering a state of open awareness ([Kabat-Zinn, 2015](#)). Dvořáková and colleagues ([2019](#)) postulated that mindfulness training could be used as a preventative tool to support college students through the transition to higher education and to manage stress-related symptoms. It was found that students with higher levels of trait mindfulness, the use of mindfulness in daily life, were more likely to have less self-reported stress and better emotional wellbeing during their first year of college ([Kingery et al., 2020](#)). Furthermore, it has been suggested that mindfulness training could improve trait mindfulness over time ([Kiken et al., 2016](#)), which could be useful for alleviating student stress during the transition to college and throughout their academic endeavors.

Ample research supports the use of mindfulness practice as a coping strategy for college students struggling with anxiety, depression, and stress ([Bamber & Schneider, 2016](#); [Cherry & Wilcox, 2020](#); [Dawson et al., 2020](#); [Halladay et al., 2019](#); [Koppenborg et al., 2022](#)). Meta-analyses of mindfulness interventions for college students have found significant improvements in anxiety ([Bamber & Morpeth, 2019](#)) and depression ([Ma et al., 2019](#)), both with pooled moderate effect sizes. Narrative reviews of qualitative studies concluded that college students found mindfulness-based interventions to be helpful for managing anxiety, stress, relationships, learning, and self-care ([Bamber & Schneider, 2022](#); [Crowther et al., 2020](#)). Additional studies with college student samples demonstrated that mindfulness-based interventions increased life satisfaction ([Dvořáková et al., 2017, 2022](#)), decreased sleep problems ([Greeson et al., 2014](#)), improved interpersonal competencies ([Huerta et al., 2021](#)), and were positively associated with resilience ([Frelich & Debb, 2019](#)) and self-regulation ([MacDonald, 2021](#)).

Mindfulness training has been implemented on college campuses across contexts, such as within student health services ([Mahfouz et al., 2018](#)), college courses dedicated to mindfulness practice ([de Bruin et al., 2015](#); [Dietrich & Bidart, 2022](#); [Kumar, 2021](#); [Medlicott et al., 2021](#)), and other college courses that integrate mindfulness practices into their content ([Chinnery et al., 2019](#); [Miller et al., 2017](#); [Strait et al., 2020](#); [Vilvens et al., 2021](#)). These trainings have provided students with immediate improvements in their biopsychosocial health. Moreover, longitudinal benefits of mindfulness initiatives have been identified on college campuses. For example, students who completed a semester-long mindfulness course, and then continued sessions twice per year, demonstrated increases in wellbeing, dispositional mindfulness, and problem-focused coping abilities six years after completing the course ([de Vibe et al., 2018](#)). Another longitudinal study found that students who completed a mindfulness-based intervention sustained significant improvements in self-confidence and evaluation-related anxiety up to 2.5 years post-study ([Dundas et al., 2016](#)).

The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) offers peer education program development training for universities hoping to start and maintain peer education programs unique to their campuses to enhance student learning and leadership ([NASPA, n.d.](#)). Peer educators in NASPA-affiliated programs are college students who undergo specific training to facilitate health programs for their peers on campus. A National Peer Educator Study by Lemon and Wawrzynski ([2023](#)) that included data from 609 peer educators across 450 universities reported

the use of peer education program topics with the most common being stress management (49.3%), mental health awareness (49.3%), and self-care (45.6%). Peer educators provide valuable resources that increase access to health education for students in the university setting with trends showing an increase in health peer education training ([Wawrzynski & Lemon, 2021](#)).

Research studies have found that peer education programs about mental health ([Reis et al., 2021](#)), concussion education for student-athletes ([Kneavel et al., 2021](#)), bystander intervention ([Morean et al., 2021](#)), sexual health ([King et al., 2021](#); [Wong et al., 2019](#)), and sexual assault prevention ([Jozkowski et al., 2015](#)) have been implemented on college campuses with success. Relatedly, peer coaches have been recognized as helpful sources of support that connect students with campus resources, foster connections, and provide tools for managing academic stress ([Corrigan et al., 2020](#)). In addition, a peer mentoring program was shown to improve health behaviors and cultural self-efficacy for college students ([Yan et al., 2014](#)). Likewise, facilitators of college peer education or support programs have reported benefits related to their personal wellbeing, self-efficacy, health knowledge, and professional development in leadership roles ([Crisp et al., 2020](#)). Thus, peer education programs yield the potential to positively impact the wellbeing and learning outcomes of both student attendees and facilitators.

Very few studies have examined NASPA-affiliated peer education programs for health and wellness on college campuses; the existing studies have focused on program prevalence, program facilitators, and behavior changes related to learned content ([Kneavel et al., 2021](#); [Morean et al., 2021](#); [Reis et al., 2021](#)). To our knowledge, there are no studies that have focused on the peer education program evaluations completed by student attendees directly after program presentations. These evaluations are fruitful sources of information, as they convey attendees' immediate perspectives regarding the presentation (e.g., presenter effectiveness, learning outcomes, overall enjoyment of the program); thus, they can be used to inform future program facilitation. Therefore, the primary aim of our paper is to share the results of evaluations for a novel mindfulness peer education program to understand the immediate impact of the program on the learning outcomes for college student attendees. The secondary aim is to outline the development of the mindfulness peer education presentation to provide a foundation for universities to implement similar opportunities as part of their peer education curricula.

METHODS

PEER EDUCATION CONTEXT

The mindfulness program was introduced to the curriculum at Bowling Green State University (BGSU), a large midwestern public university with an established National Association of Student Personnel Administrators-certified peer education curriculum. Peer educators were students at the university who chose to complete a 20-hour weekend-long training facilitated by the faculty and graduate advisors of the university's Wellness Connection to become certified peer educators on campus. Peer educators were expected to attend weekly meetings throughout their volunteer time with the program to stay updated on health and wellness initiatives, prepare to present peer education programs on campus, and update peer education program scripts and activities. When peer education presentations were requested, the peer educators would sign up to present based on their availability. Peer education presentations are available by request for college classes (e.g., faculty might request a presentation related to course topic or in place of canceling a lecture due to absence), campus student organizations, Greek life, learning communities, and university-wide initiatives (e.g., required training on alcohol use).

MINDFULNESS PEER EDUCATION PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

A novel peer education program was created for implementation within the BGSU peer education curriculum. The program included a script and all necessary materials so that any certified peer educator could facilitate a 60-minute presentation entitled "Enlighten the Mind: Are you Mindful or is your Mind Full?" This program was developed to introduce students to mindfulness through

sharing the definition, historical context, empirical research, and engagement activities related to mindfulness. Every participant received a paper note guide where they could record reflections for each activity.

Describing Mindfulness: The Mindful Jar

The first activity set the foundation for the program by referencing Kabat-Zinn's (2015) definition of mindfulness, acknowledging the Buddhist roots of mindfulness practice—how this practice can be broadly defined as “contemplative inquiry” in a secular context (Ergas, 2015)—and citing the benefits of mindfulness on biopsychosocial health (Smalley & Winston, 2010). Participants were encouraged to engage in group discussion about their preconceived understanding of mindfulness, previous experience with practice, and reactions to the information cited in the presentation. A jar filled with water and glitter (i.e., the Mindful Jar) visually represents how mindfulness can be used during strong emotions or intense stress (Kinder, 2019). The Mindful Jar represents the mind. When shaken, the glitter—stress—swirls and clouds the jar, making it impossible to clearly see through it. This represents the mind clouded by challenging experiences, when it is difficult to stay present and think clearly. When the jar is set down, the glitter slowly settles back to the bottom, representing the integration of mindfulness practice. It becomes easier to see through the jar as the glitter settles. Notably, the glitter is still in the jar, indicating that the stress or emotions are still present in the mind or the experience of the individual. Instead of fully consuming the mind, it is proposed that the stress experienced can be acknowledged and integrated through the practice of mindfulness; thus, one can observe the situation and take effective action. Further, the visual example of watching the glitter swirl throughout the jar and then settle can be named as a mindfulness exercise through encouraging the participants to observe the glitter with open awareness. Participants were invited to reflect on how the Mindful Jar can be a symbol of mindfulness in their notes.

Alternate Nostril Breathing

For the second mindfulness activity, alternate nostril breathing (Patterson, 2020) was guided to promote present-moment awareness of the breath that can be used as a tool for coping with stress, calming the mind, and deep breathing. Alternate nostril breathing is a specific breathing technique that has been shown to significantly improve memory (Garg et al., 2016) and physiological indicators of stress response, such as heart rate variability and blood pressure, after a single session (Raghuraj & Telles, 2008). Participants were prompted to reflect on what this experience was like for them and to record how they felt after this practice in their notes.

Gratitude Practice

For the third mindfulness activity, students were prompted to focus on identifying what they felt grateful for. Research studies have demonstrated that gratitude and mindfulness are positively associated (Seear & Vella-Brodrick, 2013), and gratitude has been identified as a mechanism that supports the positive impact of mindfulness on wellbeing (Voci et al., 2019). Furthermore, an intervention that included gratitude journaling was integrated into a college class and yielded significant increases in college students' openness to experiencing gratitude (Mattila et al., 2020). Some prompts were shared that could assist participants with reflecting on different aspects of their life to notice gratitude (e.g., family, pets, hobbies, skills, personal qualities, nature, favorite memory). Participants were encouraged to write their gratitude item(s) in their notes and were provided an opportunity to share with the group.

Mindful Eating

Based on the raisin-eating activity in the evidence-based Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program (Grossman et al., 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 1990), mindful eating was offered as the fourth activity. Mindful eating habits are positively associated with better diet quality (Knol et al., 2022), balanced eating patterns to promote health (Cebioğlu et al., 2022; Shaw & Cassidy, 2022), and mental wellbeing (Choi & Lee, 2019). Participants were given a single raisin. Then they were

prompted to observe the properties of the raisin before slowly consuming it mindfully, being aware of the eating process with all of their senses (Monroe, 2015). At the conclusion of the activity, participants were encouraged to reflect on their experience and what mindful eating means to them in their notes.

Body Scan Meditation

The final activity was a guided body scan meditation. A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials found that there was a pooled significant increase (with a small effect size) in self-reported mindfulness scores compared to control groups after a single body scan (Gan et al., 2022). Additional studies have shown that single-session body scan meditations improve attention (Adhikari et al., 2018), psychological wellbeing (Sauer-Zavala et al., 2013), and self-reported stress (Call et al., 2014). A 15-minute guided body scan script adapted from Mirgain (2016) was read to the participants. The reflection prompt encouraged participants to share experiences with the group and/or write notes on any sensations in their bodies that they noticed after completing the body scan.

Peer Education Program Conclusion

The mindfulness program ended with a summary of the main takeaways including the historical and contemporary conceptualization of mindfulness, acknowledgment that mindfulness is a progressive journey unique to everyone, and prompting participants to reflect on their own experiences of mindfulness in daily life. Participants were referred to the final page of their note guide, which listed all references used in the program. Additionally, participants received a resource list with information about mindfulness apps, books, podcasts, websites, and local resources (e.g., courses for university credit, student organizations, and campus-wide mindfulness initiatives) for more practice and learning opportunities.

PARTICIPANTS

Seven presentations (range of participants 2–63) were given in person during the 2019–20 academic year in the contexts of different requests by faculty for presentations during their scheduled courses ($n = 3$), student organizations ($n = 2$), Greek life ($n = 1$), and a learning community ($n = 1$). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all peer education presentations at this university were offered as on-demand sessions that were recorded and available via YouTube for interested viewers. Thus, no program evaluations were collected from March 2020 through the remainder of the 2019–20 academic year. A total of 116 students (age range 18–23; $M = 20.60$, $SD = 1.32$) completed evaluations for the mindfulness program during its first year within the university's peer education curriculum. A majority of participants identified as White (69.8%), cisgender female (56.0%), heterosexual (70.7%), and undergraduate seniors (32.8%). See Table 1 for additional demographic information.

DEMOGRAPHICS (N = 116)	n	%
Gender		
Female, cisgender	65	56.0
Male, cisgender	34	23.9
Genderqueer	1	0.9
Did not report	16	13.8
Race/ethnicity		
White	81	69.8
Black	13	11.2
Multi-racial	3	2.6

(Contd.)

Table 1 Participant Demographics.

DEMOGRAPHICS (N = 116)	n	%
Hispanic/Latino(a)	2	1.7
Middle Eastern/Arab	1	0.9
Did not report	15	12.9
Sexual orientation		
Heterosexual	82	70.7
Bisexual	9	7.8
Gay	3	2.6
Lesbian	2	1.7
Pansexual	2	1.7
Asexual	1	0.9
Questioning	1	0.9
Did not report	16	13.8
Year in school		
Freshman	10	8.6
Sophomore	18	15.5
Junior	29	25.0
Senior	38	32.8
Graduate student	5	4.3
Did not report	15	12.9
First-generation college student	23	19.9
International student	6	5.2

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The BGSU Institutional Review Board provided expedited approval for this study effective February 19, 2019 (IRB ID 1384950). Informed consent forms were provided to participants and reviewed in person before the program facilitation. Participants were offered a paper evaluation adapted from the BGSU Wellness Connection peer education presentation evaluation template to complete immediately after the presentation. These program evaluations (Table 2) were developed by the university's Wellness Connection following their method for assessing peer education programs facilitated on campus. Evaluation items 1–10 were self-reported on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The internal consistency for these 10 items in our study was good ($r = .93$). Item 11 (“This was the first time I heard of mindfulness.”) was answered Yes or No. Items 12 (“What was the best part of the presentation for you?”) and 13 (“Please provide any additional feedback here.”) were open-ended. Designed by the university's Wellness Connection, the learning objectives for the mindfulness peer education program were to encourage students to reflect on how aware they are to the present moment, to inform students about ways to practice mindfulness in their daily lives, and to show students the benefits of practicing mindfulness to help promote a more positive lifestyle.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics were calculated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Statistics (SPSS version 28.0.1.1). Missing data were handled by using mean substitution. Means, standard deviations, and ranges for evaluation items 1–10 are presented in Table 2. The average ratings for all 10 items were over 3.0 on the Likert scale, indicating “agree” with each statement. Participants

reported the highest agreement mean scores for the learning outcomes of “recognizing the benefits of mindfulness” (3.74 ± 0.23) and “defining mindfulness” (3.67 ± 0.27) as a result of the presentation. The lowest average scores were for the learning outcomes of “intention to change behavior” (3.29 ± 0.61) and “interested in learning more about mindfulness” (3.39 ± 0.59) as a result of the presentation. Twenty-four participants reported that this peer education program was their first exposure to mindfulness (15.7% of sample).

EVALUATION ITEMS		M	SD	RANGE
1.	I am able to define mindfulness.	3.67	0.27	2–4
2.	I understand and feel comfortable applying the concepts taught today.	3.53	0.37	2–4
3.	I am able to critically think about the topic of mindfulness.	3.50	0.37	1–4
4.	I recognize some of the benefits of practicing mindfulness.	3.74	0.23	2–4
5.	I gained knowledge of myself and others.	3.37	0.46	1–4
6.	I will change my behavior.	3.29	0.61	1–4
7.	I have a new method of handling stressful situations.	3.45	0.44	1–4
8.	I am interested in learning more about the topic of mindfulness.	3.39	0.59	1–4
9.	I would recommend this presentation to a friend.	3.51	0.41	1–4
10.	The presenters were effective.	3.66	0.33	1–4

Table 2 Mindfulness Peer Education Program Evaluation Outcomes.

Thematic analysis was used for open-ended feedback. Sixty-two of the participants (47.4% of sample) provided qualitative feedback about the program. All of the activities were mentioned as favorite aspects of the program: body scan ($n = 20$), Mindful Jar ($n = 10$), mindful raisin eating ($n = 9$), gratitude ($n = 7$), and alternate nostril breathing ($n = 6$). Additional positive feedback was centered around peer educator facilitation qualities ($n = 4$; e.g., “The presenter seemed to care a lot about the topic.”), learning more about mindfulness ($n = 3$; e.g., “I enjoyed finding out more about mindfulness.”), the variety of interactive activities ($n = 2$; e.g., “How there were activities that were interesting and got the audience involved.”), and the additional resources shared ($n = 1$; e.g., “Loved all the extra resources at the end of the packet.”). Two suggestions were offered to improve the program: one participant shared that the Mindful Jar activity could be explored “more in-depth,” and one participant reported that a PowerPoint presentation would be a helpful addition.

DISCUSSION

Mindfulness is a powerful practice that has been shown to improve college students’ mental and physical wellbeing. Peer education programs are cost-effective and beneficial to both attendees and facilitators, and they may be a useful way to bring mindfulness practices to college campuses in a variety of contexts. We outlined the creation of a mindfulness peer education program implemented at a large midwestern public university with a National Association of Student Personnel Administrators–certified peer education curriculum, and we reviewed attendee evaluations from the program’s first year on campus. Results indicated a generally positive response to the program, as all learning outcomes were rated above 3.0 on a 4.0 Likert scale. This outcome indicated that, on average, students agreed with the evaluation items that they could think critically about mindfulness, learned new skills for stress management, reflected on their experience, were interested in continued learning, would recommend this presentation, and viewed the facilitators as effective. An important aspect to note is that the facilitators were different pairs of certified peer educators for each presentation due to the structure of the peer education program at this university; the attendees’ rating of presenter effectiveness was therefore indicative of the effectiveness of this university’s peer education training as multiple peer educators were presenting the same material across campus effectively. Most of the participants indicated that they had heard about mindfulness before the presentation, which is not surprising

as the popularity of mindfulness practice has been increasing in the United States since the 1990s (Simonsson et al., 2020). Rizer et al. (2016) found that college students who reported greater perceived benefits of mindfulness were more likely to engage in mindfulness practice. Thus, sharing the research related to mindfulness practice for college students, as was done in this mindfulness peer education presentation, may be important when informing students about using this health-enhancing practice in their daily life.

To our knowledge, no previous study has investigated the learning outcomes from a NASPA-affiliated peer education program in a university setting. The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, the national certifying board for health peer education programs, recommends that evaluation of peer education processes, outcomes, and university-wide impacts be documented to support the current necessity and work of peer educators and to inspire future initiatives (Czachowski, 2023). Peer education programs are useful approaches for sharing health information because attendees are sometimes more comfortable connecting with peers (rather than unknown health professionals) due to the shared identities and roles of being current college students (Wong et al., 2019). Therefore, as peer education programs continue to be offered on college campuses as approachable ways to provide students with health information, the learning outcomes of program attendees must be assessed and documented, as we did here, to learn more about the true implications of using peer education.

Our study has implications for further research that can improve the methodology. Future studies could use assessment tools that are more reliable to better examine the impacts of peer education presentations on attendee learning outcomes. We used the evaluation form that was already in place for peer education programs at this particular university; however, future studies could work with peer education programs to implement assessment tools that have good psychometric properties. Similarly, the open structure for written evaluation about favorite program aspect and additional program feedback can pose a barrier to more complete data collection. Very few attendees took the time to write a response here. Open-response questions increase the time and effort of responders, which may lead to higher non-response rates (Schmidt et al., 2020). Future evaluations could alternatively use, for example, a multiple-choice format for favorite activity rather than an open response format. Additionally, larger sample sizes may include a broader range of participant demographics in order to better examine cultural relevance of mindfulness peer education programs beyond the demographics included in our sample.

Another research approach could involve conducting a follow-up study to determine whether the attendees continued to use any of the mindfulness activities, developed a mindfulness practice, or sought out additional resources to measure the extent of this peer education presentation on student behavior and learning. This follow-up study could be done via a short survey or brief interviews to better understand the longer-term impacts of the mindfulness peer education presentation. Lastly, only seven mindfulness peer education presentations were included in this analysis. During the first year of this program's implementation on campus, COVID-19 interrupted in-person presentations and data collection. Peer education at this university was transformed to include recorded presentations available to view anytime on YouTube. As Bowling et al. (2021) found, virtual peer education programs come with both benefits (e.g., greater accessibility, self-paced learning, increased sense of comfort discussing difficult topics online versus in person) and challenges (e.g., event planning, distribution of health products, opportunities for social connection) for peer educators and student attendees. Thus, adaptations to the mindfulness presentation itself would be interesting to document for improving accessibility, reaching more students, and identifying what facilitation approaches work and why (e.g. online versions since living in COVID-19 world, inclusion of visual prompts like PowerPoint presentations as suggested by one of the participants in our study).

The mindfulness peer education activities outlined here are versatile, adaptable to the practitioner, and have yielded positive impacts on biopsychosocial outcomes in previous studies. These activities aimed to promote embodied experiences of mindfulness techniques, introspection, reflective thinking, and connection through sharing and listening to participants' experiences in the group. Moreover, the activities demonstrated how mindfulness can be brought to typical daily actions

(e.g., eating and breathing) so that college students could easily integrate mindfulness practice into their busy schedules. Mindfulness that is intentionally incorporated into daily activities has been shown to improve dispositional mindfulness as well as positive and negative affect in a sample of college students (Hanley et al., 2015). These researchers proposed that informal mindfulness practices through daily activities may be a more accessible way to offer mindfulness practice to students.

CONCLUSION

The National Peer Educator Study did not include mindfulness in the 26 total programs that participating universities reported as part of their peer education curriculum (Lemon & Wawrzynski, 2023). Based on the documented benefits of mindfulness for college student health and personal development, mindfulness may be a topic that universities could easily add to their peer education programs. Our study might serve as a foundation for universities to create mindfulness presentations for their peer education curricula. Likewise, this evaluation study can motivate future research about peer education programs to glean better insight about the impacts of these opportunities on college campuses.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Dr. Faith DeNardo, Jordyn Dwyer, and the peer educators at the Wellness Connection for their support in adding the mindfulness presentation to the Bowling Green State University peer education curriculum.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS

Kelsey Madison Dietrich  orcid.org/0000-0002-3462-9814

Department of Psychology, East Carolina University, United States

M. Gabriela Bidart  orcid.org/0000-0003-4313-2196

Department of Biology, Bowling Green State University, United States

REFERENCES

- Adhikari, K., Kothari, F., & Khadka, A.** (2018). The effect of short-term training of Vipassana's body-scan on select cognitive functions. *Psychological Studies*, 63(3), 228–235. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12646-018-0461-y>
- American College Health Association.** (2024). *American College Health Association–National College Health Assessment III: Reference group executive summary, Fall 2023*. https://www.acha.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/NCHA-IIIb_FALL_2023_REFERENCE_GROUP_EXECUTIVE_SUMMARY.pdf
- Bamber, M. D., & Morpeth, E.** (2019). Effects of mindfulness meditation on college student anxiety: A meta-analysis. *Mindfulness*, 10(2), 203–214. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-018-0965-5>
- Bamber, M. D., & Schneider, J. K.** (2016). Mindfulness-based meditation to decrease stress and anxiety in college students: A narrative synthesis of the research. *Educational Research Review*, 18, 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2015.12.004>
- Bamber, M. D., & Schneider, J. K.** (2022). College students' perceptions of mindfulness-based interventions: A narrative review of the qualitative research. *Current Psychology*, 41(2), 667–680. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-019-00592-4>
- Beiter, R., Nash, R., McCrady, M., Rhoades, D., Linscomb, M., Clarahan, M., & Sammut, S.** (2015). The prevalence and correlates of depression, anxiety, and stress in a sample of college students. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 173, 90–96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2014.10.054>

- Bowling, J., Glenn, M.-L., Davis, C., Dinkins, H., Mabe, G. B., & Williams, C.** (2021). "This can be a powerful tool": Peer sexuality education during the COVID-19 pandemic. *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, 17(2), 202–218. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15546128.2021.2002224>
- Britt, S. L., Ammerman, D. A., Barrett, S. F., & Jones, S.** (2017). Student loans, financial stress, and college student retention. *Journal of Student Financial Aid*, 47(1), Article 3. <https://doi.org/10.55504/0884-9153.1605>
- Call, D., Miron, L., & Orcutt, H.** (2014). Effectiveness of brief mindfulness techniques in reducing symptoms of anxiety and stress. *Mindfulness*, 5(6), 658–668. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-013-0218-6>
- Cebioğlu, I. K., Dumlu Bilgin, G., Kavara, H. K., Gül Koyuncu, A., Sarioğlu, A., Aydin, S., & Keküllüoğlu, M.** (2022). Food addiction among university students: The effect of mindful eating. *Appetite*, 177, 106133. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2022.106133>
- Cherry, M. L., & Wilcox, M. M.** (2020). Decreasing perceived and academic stress through emotion regulation and nonjudging with trauma-exposed college students. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 27(2), 101–110. <https://doi.org/10.1037/str0000138>
- Chinnery, S.-A., Appleton, C., & Marlowe, J. M.** (2019). Cultivating students' reflective capacity through group-based mindfulness instruction. *Social Work with Groups*, 42(4), 291–307. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01609513.2019.1571760>
- Choi, S., & Lee, H.** (2019). Associations of mindful eating with dietary intake pattern, occupational stress, and mental well-being among clinical nurses. *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care*, 56(2), 355–362. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ppc.12441>
- Corrigan, P. W., Sheehan, L., Walley, G., Qin, S., Nieweglowski, K., & Maurer, K.** (2020). Strengths and challenges of peer coaches for supported education in colleges and universities. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 43(3), 175–178. <https://doi.org/10.1037/prj0000390>
- Crisp, D. A., Rickwood, D., Martin, B., & Byrom, N.** (2020). Implementing a peer support program for improving university student wellbeing: The experience of program facilitators. *Australian Journal of Education*, 64(2), 113–126. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0004944120910498>
- Crowther, L. L., Robertson, N., & Anderson, E. S.** (2020). Mindfulness for undergraduate health and social care professional students: Findings from a qualitative scoping review using the 3P model. *Medical Education*, 54(9), 796–810. <https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.14150>
- Czachowski, A.** (2023, April 28). The importance of assessment and evaluation for peer education programs. *NASPA: Students Affairs Administrators in Higher Education*. <https://naspa.org/blog/the-importance-of-assessment-and-evaluation-for-peer-education-programs>
- Dalton, E. D., & Hammen, C. L.** (2018). Independent and relative effects of stress, depressive symptoms, and affect on college students' daily health behaviors. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 41(6), 863–874. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10865-018-9945-4>
- Dawson, A. F., Brown, W. W., Anderson, J., Datta, B., Donald, J. N., Hong, K., Allan, S., Mole, T. B., Jones, P. B., & Galante, J.** (2020). Mindfulness-based interventions for university students: A systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 12(2), 384–410. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aphw.12188>
- de Bruin, E. I., Meppelink, R., & Bögels, S. M.** (2015). Mindfulness in higher education: Awareness and attention in university students increase during and after participation in a mindfulness curriculum course. *Mindfulness*, 6(5), 1137–1142. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-014-0364-5>
- de Vibe, M., Solhaug, I., Rosenvinge, J. H., Tyssen, R., Hanley, A., & Garland, E.** (2018). Six-year positive effects of a mindfulness-based intervention on mindfulness, coping and well-being in medical and psychology students: Results from a randomized controlled trial. *PLOS ONE*, 13(4), Article e0196053. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0196053>
- Dietrich, K. M., & Bidart, M. G.** (2022). Effects of a mindfulness course on vital signs and five facet mindfulness questionnaire scores of college students. *Journal of American College Health*, 72(3), 905–913. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2022.2060709>
- Dundas, I., Thorsheim, T., Hjeltne, A., & Binder, P. E.** (2016). Mindfulness based stress reduction for academic evaluation anxiety: A naturalistic longitudinal study. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, 30(2), 114–131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/87568225.2016.1140988>
- Dvořáková, K., Greenberg, M. T., & Roeser, R. W.** (2019). On the role of mindfulness and compassion skills in students' coping, well-being, and development across the transition to college: A conceptual analysis. *Stress and Health*, 35(2), 146–156. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smi.2850>
- Dvořáková, K., Kishida, M., Elavsky, S., & Greenberg, M.** (2022). First-year college students' well-being: 3-month follow-up of mindfulness intervention and potential mechanisms of change. *Mindfulness*, 13(5), 1246–1257. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-022-01872-0>

- Dvořáková, K., Kishida, M., Li, J., Elavsky, S., Broderick, P. C., Agrusti, M. R., & Greenberg, M. T.** (2017). Promoting healthy transition to college through mindfulness training with first-year college students: Pilot randomized controlled trial. *Journal of American College Health*, 65(4), 259–267. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2017.1278605>
- Ergas, O.** (2015). The deeper teachings of mindfulness-based ‘interventions’ as a reconstruction of ‘education’: The deeper teachings of mindfulness. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 49(2), 203–220. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.12137>
- Freligh, C. B., & Debb, S. M.** (2019). Nonreactivity and resilience to stress: Gauging the mindfulness of African American college students. *Mindfulness*, 10(11), 2302–2311. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-019-01203-w>
- Gan, R., Zhang, L., & Chen, S.** (2022). The effects of body scan meditation: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 14(3), 1062–1080. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aphw.12366>
- Garg, R., Malhotra, V., Tripathi, Y., & Agarawal, R.** (2016). Effect of left, right and alternate nostril breathing on verbal and spatial memory. *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research*, 10(2), 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.7860/JCDR/2016/12361.7197>
- Greeson, J. M., Juberg, M. K., Maytan, M., James, K., & Rogers, H.** (2014). A randomized controlled trial of Koru: A mindfulness program for college students and other emerging adults. *Journal of American College Health*, 62(4), 222–233. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2014.887571>
- Grossman, P., Niemann, L., Schmidt, S., & Walach, H.** (2010). Mindfulness-based stress reduction and health benefits: A meta-analysis. *Focus on Alternative and Complementary Therapies*, 8(4), 35–43. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2042-7166.2003.tb04008.x>
- Halladay, J. E., Dawdy, J. L., McNamara, I. F., Chen, A. J., Vitoroulis, I., McInnes, N., & Munn, C.** (2019). Mindfulness for the mental health and well-being of post-secondary students: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Mindfulness*, 10(3), 397–414. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-018-0979-z>
- Hanley, A. W., Warner, A. R., Delhi, V. M., Canto, A. I., & Garland, E. L.** (2015). Washing dishes to wash the dishes: Brief instruction in an informal mindfulness practice. *Mindfulness*, 6(5), 1095–1103. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-014-0360-9>
- Huerta, M. V., Carberry, A. R., Pipe, T., & McKenna, A. F.** (2021). Inner engineering: Evaluating the utility of mindfulness training to cultivate intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies among first-year engineering students. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 110(3), 636–670. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jee.20407>
- Jozkowski, K. N., Henry, D. S., & Sturm, A. A.** (2015). College students’ perceptions of the importance of sexual assault prevention education: Suggestions for targeting recruitment for peer-based education. *Health Education Journal*, 74(1), 46–59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0017896913516298>
- Kabat-Zinn, J.** (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Dell Publishing.
- Kabat-Zinn, J.** (2015). Mindfulness. *Mindfulness*, 6(6), 1481–1483. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-015-0456-x>
- Karaman, M. A., Lerma, E., Vela, J. C., & Watson, J. C.** (2019). Predictors of academic stress among college students. *Journal of College Counseling*, 22, 41–55. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jocc.12113>
- Kiken, L. G., Garland, E. L., Bluth, K., Palsson, O. S., & Gaylord, S. A.** (2016). From a state to a trait: Trajectories of state mindfulness in meditation during intervention predict changes in trait mindfulness. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 81, 41–46. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2014.12.044>
- Kinder, W.** (2019). *Calm: Mindfulness for kids*. DK Children.
- King, C. N., Arthur, R. M., Bennett, J. R., James, W. L., & Matthews, K. C.** (2021). Evaluation of a peer-led comprehensive sexual health program for college teens. *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, 16(4), 533–553. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15546128.2021.1959472>
- Kingery, J. N., Bodenlos, J. S., & Lathrop, J. A.** (2020). Facets of dispositional mindfulness versus sources of social support predicting college students’ psychological adjustment. *Journal of American College Health*, 68(4), 403–410. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2019.1574801>
- Knapstad, M., Sivertsen, B., Knudsen, A. K., Smith, O. R. F., Aarø, L. E., Lønning, K. J., & Skogen, J. C.** (2021). Trends in self-reported psychological distress among college and university students from 2010 to 2018. *Psychological Medicine*, 51(3), 470–478. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291719003350>
- Kneavel, M., Ernst, W., & McCarthy, K.** (2021). Moderating effects of gender among collegiate student-athletes receiving a novel peer concussion education program. *Health Education & Behavior*, 48(6), 907–917. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1090198120977128>

- Knol, L. L., Crowe-White, K. M., Appel, S. J., & Daquin, J. C.** (2022). Direct yet opposite effects of stress-related and mindful eating on diet quality. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 54(9), 872–877. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2022.04.006>
- Koppenborg, K. A., Garnefski, N., Kraaij, V., & Ly, V.** (2022). Academic stress, mindfulness-related skills and mental health in international university students. *Journal of American College Health*, Advanced online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2022.2057193>
- Kumar, S.** (2021). Mindfulness in a Moroccan university: Exploring students' transformational journey through an academic course in mindfulness. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 19(3), 241–260. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344620986218>
- Lemon, J. D., & Wawrzynski, M. R.** (2023). *National peer educator study: NPES national report 2022-23*. Health, Safety, and Well-being Initiatives of NASPA. <https://www.naspa.org/files/dmfile/NPES-National-Report-2022-23.pdf>
- Ma, L., Zhang, Y., & Cui, Z.** (2019). Mindfulness-based interventions for prevention of depressive symptoms in university students: A meta-analytic review. *Mindfulness*, 10(11), 2209–2224. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-019-01192-w>
- MacDonald, H. Z.** (2021). Associations of five facets of mindfulness with self-regulation in college students. *Psychological Reports*, 124(3), 1202–1219. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033294120937438>
- Mahfouz, J., Levitan, J., Schussler, D., Broderick, T., Dvorakova, K., Argusti, M., & Greenberg, M.** (2018). Ensuring college student success through mindfulness-based classes: Just Breathe. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 36, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csaj.2018.0000>
- Mattila, A., Deiliulis, E. D., Martin, R. M., & Grogan, J.** (2020). Mindfulness in the occupational therapy classroom: Infusing grit, gratitude practice, and a growth mindset into OT education. *Journal of Occupational Therapy Education*, 4(4). <https://doi.org/10.26681/jote.2020.040410>
- Medlicott, E., Phillips, A., Crane, C., Hinze, V., Taylor, L., Tickell, A., Montero-Marin, J., & Kuyken, W.** (2021). The mental health and wellbeing of university students: Acceptability, effectiveness, and mechanisms of a mindfulness-based course. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(11), 6023. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18116023>
- Miller, C. J., Elder, K., & Scavone, A.** (2017). The feasibility of bringing brief mindfulness-based training to the university classroom. *Mindfulness*, 8(4), 1047–1054. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-017-0680-7>
- Mirgain, S.** (2016, September 1). *A body scan script*. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation. <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTHLIBRARY/docs/Script-Body-Scan.pdf>
- Monroe, J. T.** (2015). Mindful eating: Principles and practice. *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*, 9(3), 217–220. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1559827615569682>
- Morean, M. E., Darling, N., Smit, J., DeFeis, J., Wergeles, M., Kurzer-Yashin, D., & Custer, K.** (2021). Preventing and responding to sexual misconduct: Preliminary efficacy of a peer-led bystander training program for preventing sexual misconduct and reducing heavy drinking among collegiate athletes. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(7), 3453–3479. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518777555>
- NASPA.** (n.d.) *Peer education initiatives*. <https://www.naspa.org/project/peer-education-initiatives>
- Patterson, J.** (2020). *The power of breathwork: Simple practices to promote wellness*. Quarto Publishing Group.
- Raghuraj, P., & Telles, S.** (2008). Immediate effect of specific nostril manipulating yoga breathing practices on autonomic and respiratory variables. *Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback*, 33(2), 65–75. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10484-008-9055-0>
- Reis, A., Mortimer, T., Rutherford, E., Sperandei, S., & Saheb, R.** (2021). Students as leaders in supporting campus well-being: Peer-to-peer health promotion in higher education. *Health Promotion of Journal of Australia*, 33, 106–116. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.495>
- Rizer, C. A., Fagan, M. H., Kilmon, C., & Rath, L.** (2016). The role of perceived stress and health beliefs on college students' intentions to practice mindfulness meditation. *American Journal of Health Education*, 47, 24–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19325037.2015.1111176>
- Sauer-Zavala, S. E., Walsh, E. C., Eisenlohr-Moul, T. A., & Lykins, E. L. B.** (2013). Comparing mindfulness-based intervention strategies: Differential effects of sitting meditation, body scan, and mindful yoga. *Mindfulness*, 4(4), 383–388. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-012-0139-9>
- Schmidt, K., Gummer, T., & Roßmann, J.** (2020). Effects of respondent and survey characteristics on the response quality of an open-ended attitude question in web surveys. *Methods, Data, Analyses*, 14(1), 3–34. <https://doi.org/10.12758/mda.2019.05>
- Seear, K. H., & Vella-Brodrick, D. A.** (2013). Efficacy of positive psychology interventions to increase well-being: Examining the role of dispositional mindfulness. *Social Indicators Research*, 114(3), 1125–1141. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-012-0193-7>

- Shaw, R., & Cassidy, T.** (2022). Self-compassion, mindful eating, eating attitudes and wellbeing among emerging adults. *The Journal of Psychology*, 156, 33–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.2021.1992334>
- Simonsson, O., Martin, M., & Fisher, S.** (2020). Sociodemographic characteristics and health status of mindfulness users in the United States. *Mindfulness*, 11(12), 2725–2729. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-020-01486-4>
- Smalley, S. L., & Winston, D.** (2010). *Fully present: The art, science, and practice of mindfulness*. First Da Capo Press.
- Strait, J. E., Strait, G. G., McClain, M. B., Casillas, L., Streich, K., Harper, K., & Gomez, J.** (2020). Classroom mindfulness education effects on meditation frequency, stress, and self-regulation. *Teaching of Psychology*, 47(2), 162–168. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0098628320901386>
- Vilvens, H. L., Frame, D. L., & Owen, P. C.** (2021). Promoting the inclusion of mindfulness and contemplative practices in the college classroom. *Pedagogy in Health Promotion*, 7(2), 148–158. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2373379920925849>
- Voci, A., Veneziani, C. A., & Fuochi, G.** (2019). Relating mindfulness, heartfulness, and psychological well-being: The role of self-compassion and gratitude. *Mindfulness*, 10(2), 339–351. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-018-0978-0>
- Wawrzynski, M. R., & Lemon, J. D.** (2021). Trends in health and wellness peer educator training: A five-year analysis. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 58(2), 135–147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2020.1853554>
- Wong, T., Pharr, J. R., Bungmum, T., Coughenour, C., & Lough, N. L.** (2019). Effects of sexual health education on college campuses: A systematic review. *Health Promotion Practice*, 20(5), 652–666. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524839918794632>
- Yan, Z., Finn, K., Cardinal, B. J., & Bent, L.** (2014). Promoting health behaviors using peer education: A demonstration project between international and American college students. *American Journal of Health Education*, 45(5), 288–296. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19325037.2014.932727>

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Dietrich, K. M., & Bidart, M. G. (2026). A University-Level Mindfulness Peer Education Program: Development and Evaluation Outcomes. *Journal of Peer Learning*, 17(1): 1, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.21061/jopl.130>

Submitted: 25 January 2025

Accepted: 16 September 2025

Published: 23 March 2026

COPYRIGHT:

© 2026 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

Journal of Peer Learning is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by VT Publishing.