Mental health and academic success in college.
Mental Health and Academic Success in College

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Abstract

Mental health problems represent a potentially important but relatively unexplored
factor in explaining human capital accumulation during college. We conduct the first study, to our knowledge, of how mental health predicts academic success during college in a random longitudinal sample of students. We find that depression is a significant predictor of lower GPA and higher probability of dropping out, particularly among students who also have a positive screen for an anxiety disorder. In within-person estimates using our longitudinal sample, we find again that co-occurring depression and anxiety are associated with lower GPA, and we find that symptoms of eating disorders are also associated with lower GPA. This descriptive study suggests potentially large economic returns from programs to prevent and treat mental health problems among college students, and highlights the policy relevance of evaluating the impact of such programs on academic outcomes using randomized trials.

**Keywords:** mental health; education; human capital; college; higher education
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