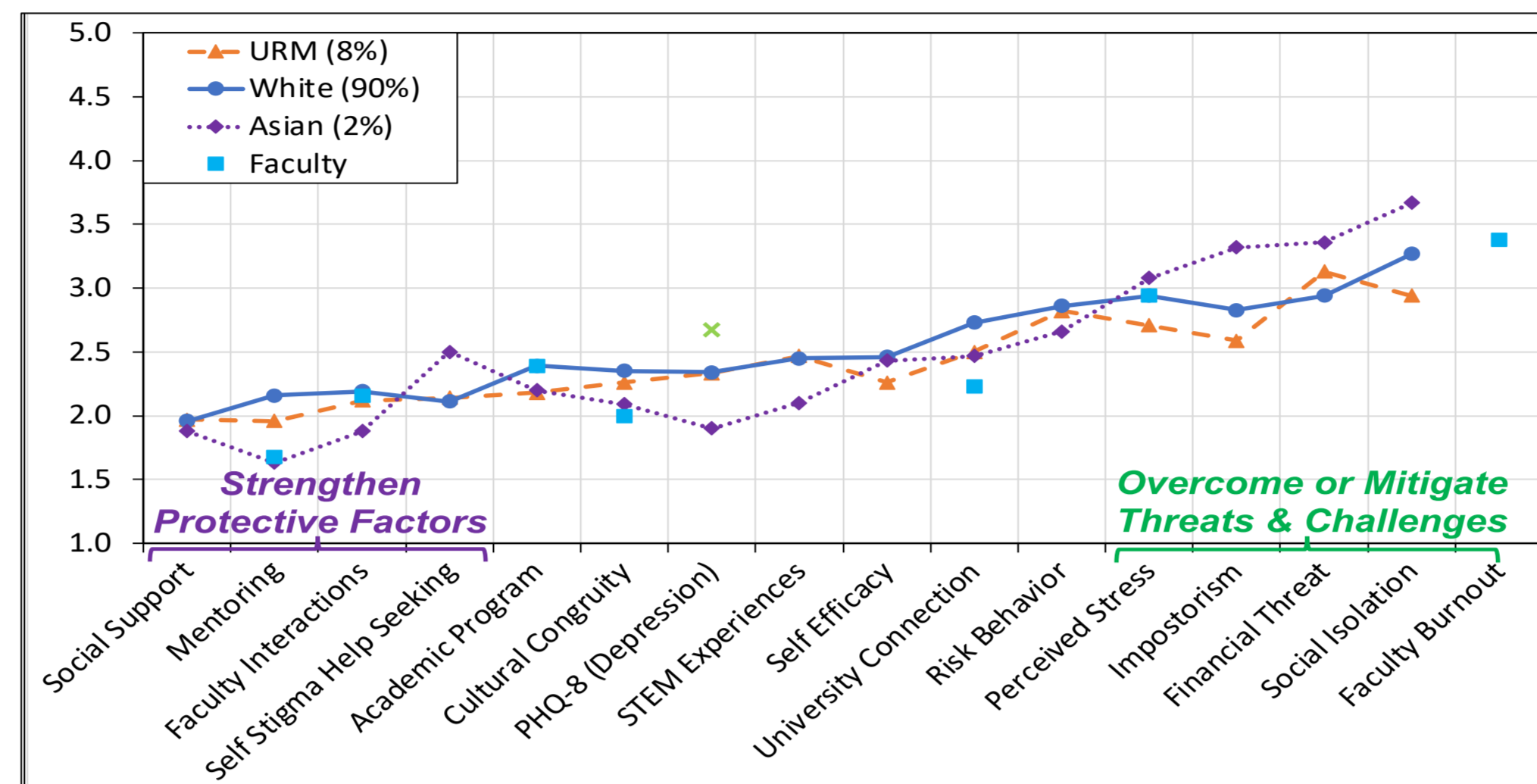
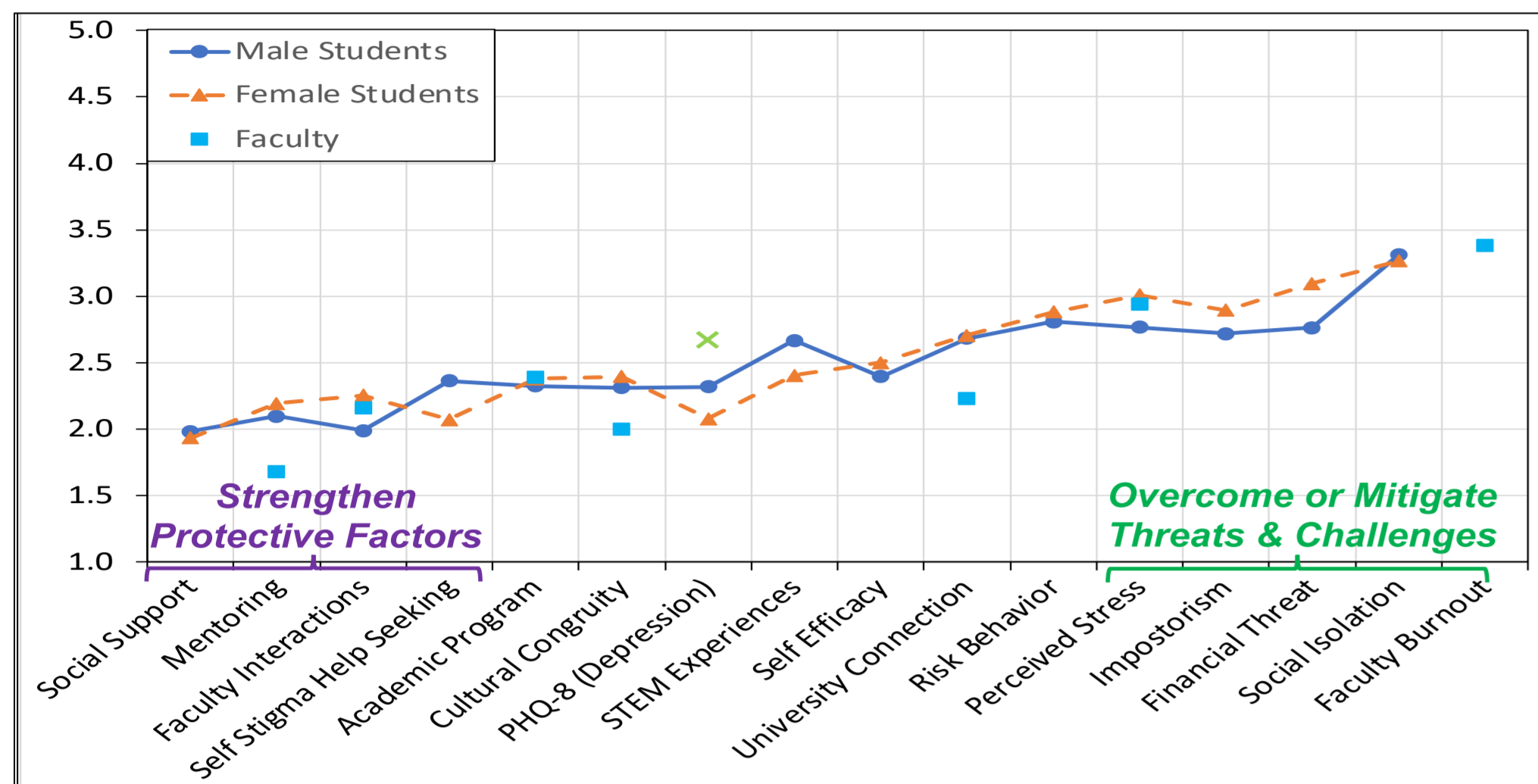


# Strategies for Supporting Graduate Student Well-Being: Insights from the Montana University System M-HOPES Grant

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## Student Mental Health Challenges Drive M-HOPES Design



Baseline survey means. Normalized scale 1 (good) to 5 (bad). Student N~300, ~70% female; Faculty N~90, ~65% male. Green X marks "threshold" for depression screening.

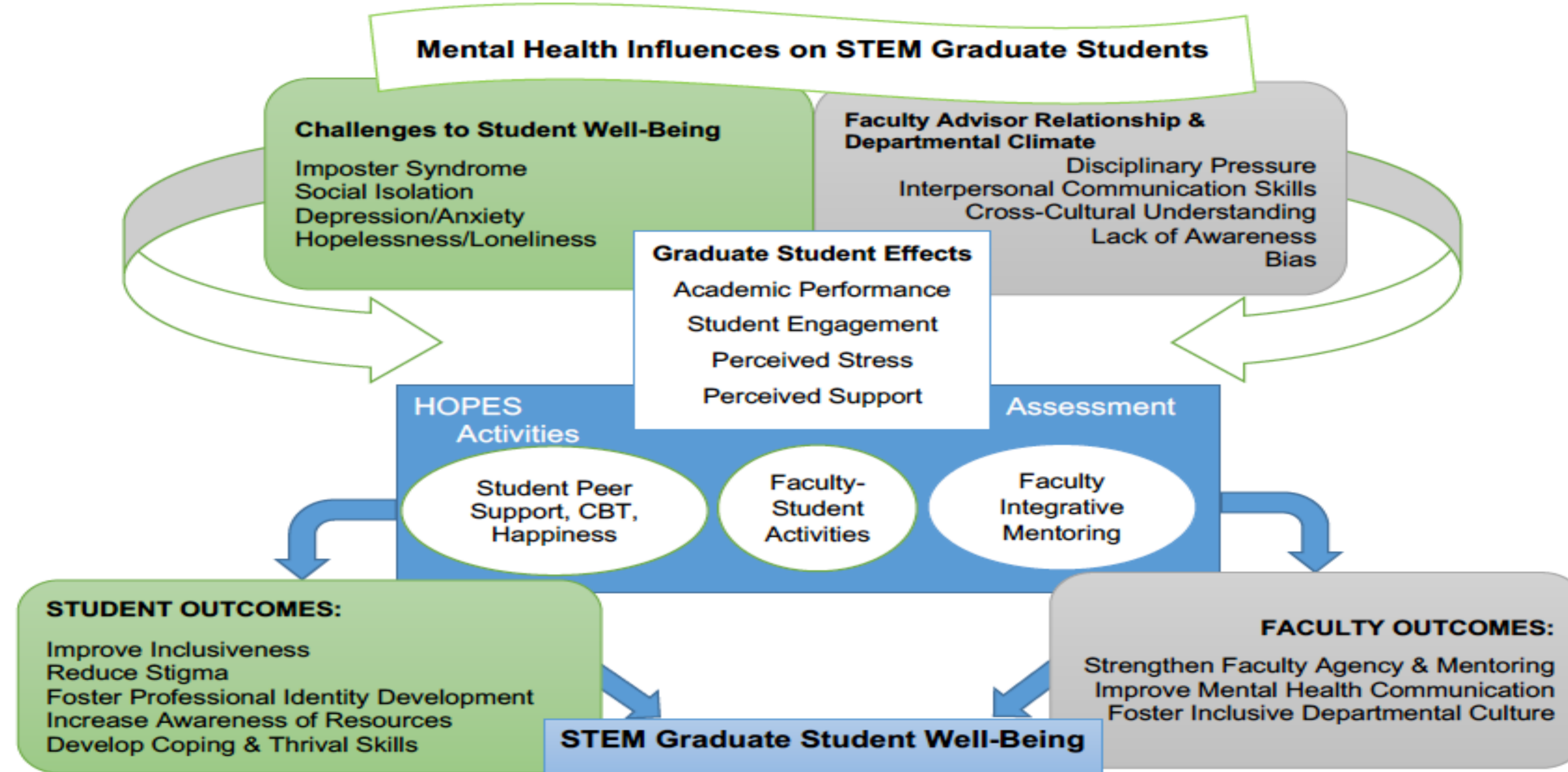
- ❖ In Year 1 (2021/22) issues were amplified by COVID-19, social turmoil, & career uncertainty.
  - In Year 2 survey, Social Isolation improved by 0.32 and Social Support improved by 0.21, perhaps due to end of COVID restrictions.
- ❖ Greater challenges for women, racial/ethnic minorities, veterans, students with disabilities, & international students.
- ❖ STEM students had significantly higher impostorism (+0.3;  $\alpha=.05$ ) than non-STEM students.
- ❖ Faculty recognize student stresses & need for well-being support; desire mentoring skills to engage diverse students well.
- ❖ Over 60% of faculty respondents had referred a student for mental health assistance.

## M-HOPES Activities & Timeline

Activities	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Experiences for STEM Grad Students			C	P	P	H	C	P	P				
Experiences for STEM Faculty Mentors			I	M	E	I	M	E					
Experiences for STEM Students + Mentors													
Scale-Up & Expansion													
Assessment													
STUDENT EXPERIENCES	MONTANA STATE UNIV.; UNIV. IDAHO; UNIV. N. DAKOTA; & UNIV. DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA								FACULTY EXPERIENCES				
	C = Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Skills (4 sessions) P = Narrative Peer Support Groups (6 sessions) H = Happiness Workshop (from MT Happiness Project)								I = Indigenous/multicultural Mentoring Workshops M = Mental Health Awareness (3 Sessions) E = Equity/Climate (1 Session)				
Legend	Baseline & Design	Pilot	Assess	Refine	Second Series	Scale Up & Expand	Transition to Sustainability						

- ❖ Participation is a major challenge.
  - Students and faculty have too little "free time."
  - "Stigma" may also be a factor.
  - Only about half of registrants attend.
  - Only about a third complete a multi-session activity.
- ❖ Participants in M-HOPES pilot activities had small improvements in STEM Experiences & Mentoring scales.
- ❖ Huge appreciation for visible attention to wellness.

## M-HOPES Model



## In Their Own Words: Students, Student Participants, Faculty, Faculty Participants

That feeling that you are alone going to school and working, sometimes it can feel like people don't really understand

Cultivate opportunities for socializing and networking amongst the faculty, staff, students, and people working in the field.

Professors need to be more conscious of student wellbeing.

Graduate students are highly skilled trainees and should be paid a living wage and provided with healthcare.

In my experience, individuals are hungry for mentorship

My department is taking big steps to increase diversity and a welcoming/inclusive environment. Keep it up.

I feel that if mentors would actually take the time to work with their students and get to know them on a personal level, there would be far more collaboration and engagement where students actually felt valued.

The group STEM counseling provided in Spring 2022 was immensely helpful.

My biggest stressors were financial and gender- and age-related. I am an older, single [parent] trying to live on a below-poverty wage with no health insurance while raising 3 kids alone in a system that was originally designed for young, white males. It always felt like I had to outperform my counterparts in order to prove myself. ...I was barely able to keep going.

Even if we felt like we were commiserating it would lead to a solution. Those were really great. I actually found it really helpful.

Just that knowledge and knowing that we're all in this boat together. Those feelings of that together ness just feeling that you're not the only person who's out there struggling just trying to make it through the day.

No one has the bandwidth right now for more trainings/activities

I've done trainings on mentoring indigenous students, but more general graduate student mentoring training would be useful.

Happiness Wkshp: "Most helpful" was the coping strategies, and the acknowledgement of the focus on the negative, and ways to deal with that fear."

The multicultural focus was really helpful - anything that is community building and interpersonal relationship building, strategies that are more person to person instead of related to your discipline.

My expectations were non-existent and within the first 5 min I realized this was likely to become the most useful workshop in my academic career—it absolutely was.

I wish mentoring counted towards tenure and promotion. I spend hours each week mentoring students, but don't feel like it contributes to my ability to get merit or tenure.

### Acknowledgements

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