

Partnership to support students with mental health disabilities

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Queen's and St. Lawrence College have received \$1 million over three years from the provincial *Mental Health Innovation Fund* to develop standards that will help students with mental health disabilities access academic accommodations faster and more easily.

"This is a great example of how universities and colleges can work together to support all students," says Queen's Principal Daniel Woolf. "This initiative will result in the development of guidelines to help the post-secondary education sector better support students with mental-health-related disabilities, province-wide, in getting the accommodations they need."

The number of students with mental health disabilities registered with Disability Services Offices in Ontario's post-secondary sector has increased by 60 per cent in the last five years.

"This project will help the whole PSE sector respond better to a growing population of students with mental health disabilities," says Glenn Vollebregt, President and CEO, St. Lawrence College. "Mental health disorders tend to be episodic and symptoms may fluctuate. The standards will provide a consistent framework for health-care providers to explain disabilities and their potential impact on academic performance."

The project also includes the creation of a website, training for staff, faculty and student leaders on accommodation practices that can be shared province-wide, a resource handbook for students and conferences for front-line service professionals across the sector.

This initiative is being co-led by Mike Condra, Assistant Professor in Queen's Department of Psychology and Director of Health, Counselling and Disability Services and Wanda Williams, Director of Students Services, St. Lawrence College.

Queen's is also receiving \$426,000 from the provincial government to develop a new peer mentoring program focused on supporting students with mental health concerns that can also be implemented at post-secondary institutions across Ontario.

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