

Wellbeing at Bennington

President Laura Walker <president@bennington.edu>

Tue, Sep 5, 2023 at 4:12 PM

BENNINGTON COLLEGE

Dear Bennington Staff,

Over the summer, we have worked vigorously to augment student wellbeing resources for this fall, installing significant supports and creating a more robust mental health and wellness program for students.

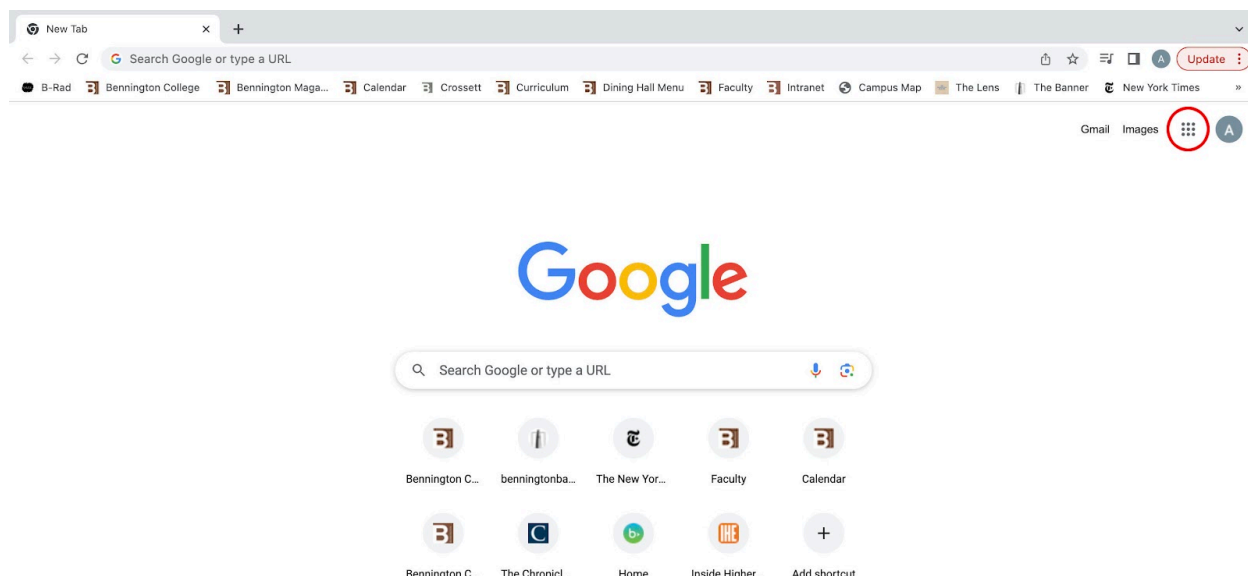
While most of the progress relates to increased services and accommodations for students themselves, noted below, we'd like to share a new resource available to staff.

Training and Discussion Groups

Staff members, especially those who work directly with students, are sometimes the first to notice signs of a student's distress. While entering a mental health role could be problematic for staff members not trained in that capacity, we recognize having simple conversations as a community-wide responsibility to look out for one another.

Through **Kognito Online Training**, an easy 50-minute info session which can be completed at any time, you will learn to have a short conversation that could save a life. Objectives include identifying students' signs of stress, learning to talk about these signs, practicing sharing your concerns, and learning how to motivate students to seek help. Faculty will also have access to the training, and students will receive a peer-to-peer version.

To access Kognito, click the "waffle" icon in the top right of your Google search homepage (circled in red below) and scroll to the Kognito icon. By following the prompts, you can launch the program. Note that if you are logged in, you can bypass entering your ID number. The number, for those who need it, is on your Bennington ID.



Staff will also be encouraged to join **discussion groups** with members of the Counseling and Psychological Services team that will be offered later this term. All faculty and students will be offered an opportunity to attend discussions as well.

New Staff for Mental Health Support

Counseling and Psychological Services has added three new staff, including Kingsley Czermerys (they/them), Therapist, and Jude Horan (they/them), Assistant Director. Both Jude and Kingsley are trained in a suicide-prevention program called [ASIST](#). A two-day intensive training will be held for student-facing staff.

Increased Mental Health Access

Additional supports for students include increased mental health access. **Three fee-free individual therapy sessions and fee-free group and drop-in sessions are available.** Two new fellows, one in Student Life and one in Counseling and Psychological Services, will augment support for students.

Other Steps

Student Life is leading the development of a **new way for students, faculty, and staff to easily share their concerns about signs of student stress.** More information will be available in the fall.

Also, training and workshops for new students have been added to Orientation and First-Year Forum, and a mental health session for families will once again be a part of Fall Weekend.

Finally, we welcome you to check out [LearningWell](#), an online magazine for information on mental health and **wellbeing as it relates specifically to the higher education environment.**

While we are proud of this list of new programs and resources, their availability alone will not help. We need your participation and feedback to make a difference. Please share your thoughts, reactions, and ideas for additional actions with Ali Tartaglia, Assistant Dean and Director of Wellness. Together, we can become a safer and more supportive community made up of caring individuals.

Laura Walker
President

Maurice Hall
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Li-Chen Chin
Vice President and Dean of Student Life