Collab Chats- Episode 4 Transcript

0:00

[Tiger] Today, I'm your guest host Tiger Russell-Yeh and I'll be talking with Kyra Baker. Kyra works as a Community Inclusion Specialist and Research Assistant at the Collaborative. She's most recently been involved in planning an intervention for a study which utilizes Instagram to enhance campus engagement and peer support among college students with serious mental illnesses. She's also responsible for developing intervention training materials for an upcoming biking and public transportation intervention study. She's been involved in various knowledge translation activities, such as hosting this podcast and contributing to the development of intervention manuals and documents. Kyra's research interests include self-directed care, storytelling, mental health services, religion and exploring the relationship between the mental health system and identity, and the impact of community participation of people with serious mental illnesses on identity formation and self-concept. Over the past year, Kyra served as the center's supported education specialist in the campus-oriented distance supported education research study. Hey Kyra, how are you today?

[Kyra] I'm great Tiger, how are you?

[Tiger] I'm doing well. To start off, can you tell us about what supported education is?

01:43

[Kyra] Yeah, supported education is an evidence-based practice for assisting and supporting students with serious mental illnesses to achieve their personal educational goals. And the rationale for this service is based on research, which tells us that individuals with serious mental illnesses are much more likely to withdraw from college before completing their degree compared to the general student population. So, mental health specific factors are likely to play a role but normative factors are as well, such as problems paying tuition, poor academic preparation, like a lack of study skills, and a lack of confidence. Another normative factor is that academic success and retention have been associated with greater campus engagement like joining clubs, attending events, and being connected to others in and outside of the classroom. Research conducted by the Collaborative suggests that college students with mental illnesses are significantly less engaged on campus compared to the general student population and that was associated with lower graduation rates. So the feeling that others treat them differently or experiencing prejudice and discrimination because of mental health issues is one factor associated with lower campus engagement. So that's where our supported education intervention comes in. The supported ed programs vary greatly, but typically focus on academic preparation issues, mismanagement and crisis planning, and coping with the impact of mental health issues throughout one's academic career. So campus engagement isn't typically a central focus of most supported ed interventions, which is one of the factors that makes our intervention study unique. A central focus of the intervention is on enhancing campus engagement including supporting students who have mental illnesses in identifying their engagement interests, helping them search for opportunities on campus, and developing natural support systems. The second unique factor of this intervention is that it's designed to reach students at college campuses across the country by using distance communication technologies. So that you can reach students where in-person supported ed programs might not exist.

[Tiger] So from what I know, there's a core five areas of this campus engagement-oriented supported education. Could you tell me about these and what they are specifically?

04:06

[Kyra] Yeah! So, the five core areas were identified throughout the course of the intervention and are outlined in our soon-to-be-released campus engagement-oriented supported education manual. The first area, naturally is campus engagement. So, the supported education specialist, I'm just going to say SES, supports the student to identify and access campus services and resources like recreation, student life, and student organizations which can increase student satisfaction with their college experience. And the second core area is academic achievement. So, this area includes things like study skills, accommodations, homework completion, organization, time management, attendance, and working with other students. The third area which I found to be very common among most of the students I worked with is natural support systems. So this refers to the development of a social network of supportive people who don't have a formal or paid relationship with the student. So these would be social contacts which are naturally occurring like friends, family, coworkers, faculty, classmates, rather than those who role is to provide services to the student, like case workers or therapists or a supported education specialist.

05:20

[Tiger] Yeah, that's very important.

[Kyra] Yeah. And the fourth area is interpersonal relationships, so this focuses on confident and effective interactions with administrators, faculty, staff, fellow students, friends, family, coworkers, roommates, is a big one, and any other people whom the student interacts with in relation with their academic pursuits. And needs in this area might be related to self-advocacy and natural support systems, so there's a lot of overlap within all of the core areas. And the final area is self-advocacy, so the SES focuses on the student's ability to speak confidently and effectively on their own behalf to administrators, faculty and staff, and other people within in the university and broader community in order to gain access to needed resources and services. This area usually came up when students experienced discrimination and problems with faculty concerning accommodations.

[Tiger] Can you explain the relationship between the supported education specialist and the student?

06:20

[Kyra] Yeah, so I like to think of it as a formal relationship that's also casual and relatable. Every student is different in terms of meeting frequency and type of communication. I worked with one student, as an example, who only wanted to talk on the phone which worked for her because she was often running from place to place, in her car, whatever, and it made it more convenient for her. But with most students, we had a face-to-face meeting over Zoom over Skype or FaceTime a couple times a month with texting and email in between. For this intervention, it was all distance communication, so we'd always be meeting online. So, I worked with students all across the country, most of students,

[Tiger] Oh ok, yeah.

[Kyra] weren't in Philadelphia at all, and that was one of the things that made this intervention study unique.

[Tiger] Relating to that, how accessible are these specialists?

07:10

[Kyra] In terms of finding a supported education specialist, it's not something that is easily found at this point. I think that one of the goals of the study was to prove the effectiveness of this role and hopefully to make this a more accessible service for students and I think that that could exist in a variety of ways. I do know that, I believe it's Boston University, has a supported education program, however from the research I've done into existing supported education programs, I think there would be a financial barrier to a lot of students accessing this service.

[Tiger] Yeah, so it really requires some more funding from the university.

[Kyra] Right.

[Tiger] Ok.

[Kyra] Or whomever.

[Tiger] Yeah.

07:55

[Kyra] Yeah, so as far as like, being accessible to individual students as a supported education specialist, I think that the SES should aim to be as accessible as possible. For instance, I rarely met with students on a weekend day, but regularly met with a few students in the evenings, and I would occasionally receive a text message or some kind of communication over a weekend, which I would respond to. You really want to be accommodating to the students' schedules and needs, because the service won't be effective if you're like, oh its 5 o'clock on a Tuesday, I can't answer your text right now, you know.

[Tiger] Yeah.

[Kyra} So I tried to be accessible in multiple ways but always let students know if there would be a time where I was out of town or would be unreachable.

[Tiger] Ok so, when you begin this process of looking into how these students need help, what areas they need help in, how do you first approach addressing their individual needs?

08:46

[Kyra] Uh, well there's a sort of intake and assessment period, for me that was a little bit different because I came into this role after someone had already been working with the students, so I came into it with students who had already gone through that process. So every student will have a different set of needs and a different set of circumstances: I worked with traditional-aged college students, a couple of grad students, a couple of PhD students, so depending on where someone's stage of life is, their needs are going to be different.

[Tiger] So a huge part of your approach to supported education is the importance of campus engagement and, you know, this natural support group. So, for example, you work with a lot of undergraduate students and you wanna get them involved on campus, but I'm wondering how you do this for a lot of those students who might be less willing to do so, or socially anxious.

09:41

[Kyra] Yeah, I'm very glad you asked that question. I could talk about a couple of experiences with a couple of students that I worked with. I'm gonna talk about this student I'll call her Carrie, that is not her real name. When I first started working with her, I think it was our very first meeting, I, you know, asked her like, well what kind of stuff do you like to do, you know, what's interesting to you, and she became very upset and she said I don't do anything because I don't have any anyone to do things with.

10:12

[Tiger] Yeah.

[Kyra] So, anytime we talked about campus engagement, it would come back to, I don't have any friends, I don't have anything to do, and I'm afraid to do things on my own.

[Tiger] That's a difficult problem to approach,

[Kyra] It is, yeah, so,

[Tiger] as an SES.

10:27

[Kyra] For sure, I mean, she was resistant to, you know, even looking into leisure opportunities or things she was interested in because it was always so connected with her lack of natural supports and a lack of friendships. So, I then kind of like took some steps back and sort of presented this hypothetical situation to her, I like ok, just imagine if you have people, if you have like a group that's yours, what would like to do. And that sort of lifted this pressure and she listed all of these things that she wanted to do. She was interested in horticulture, she wanted to take Zumba classes, you know, she loved art and she just lit up when she was talking about the things she liked to do, and I chose to kind of give it a while before bringing the natural support aspect back in to it, so what we did was we focused on campus engagement, she was just starting her fall semester and I asked her, you know, what about some things you can get involved in, you know, and she was again very resistant because she didn't have people to go with, but then in one of our meetings, we looked at her school's website, and she found a couple of, you know, activities and opportunities that she was interested in, and our next meeting I think was set the end of her first or second week of her semester, and I was kind of blown away! She was like, I volunteered for these two events, I decided to volunteer for events that would give me a job, so she knew that having an activity to do would relieve her anxiety, if she had a task. So she started going to things independently and she would always say "I'm so nervous, I'm so uncomfortable, but I'm gonna do it." So, after a while of Carrie you know, independently going to campus events, I then again brought up, ok how about some friends, you know,

[Tiger] Yeah.

12:23

[Kyra] How about some people to hang out with? And it was again met with some resistance, but we sort of went through these different steps of what goes into being a friend, and how do you make friends, there isn't a guidebook for how to make friends,

[Crosstalk]

[Tiger] Start from the bottom, yeah.

[Kyra] Yeah.

[Tiger] And I actually think earlier you were talking about kinda this visualization and I think that's a really good place to start,

[Kyra] mhm

[Tiger] because, I really think once you do that it kinda brings you a step closer to reality and it's a bit easier to consume once you've kind of seen it through in your own mind.

12:24

[Kyra] Yeah, yeah, exactly. So with Carrie, we went back to this sort of, hypothetical situation and I was like, what do you think makes a good friend. What qualities are you looking for in someone, and then I also asked her, what do you think makes you a good friend to someone else. It's really really important to ask people how they believe they can support others. That's very very valuable. So after a while of sort of you know, hypothetically going into this friendship, she said that there was a person in her class who she talked to every single day and got along with great with, and I was like, oh! well, what about like, inviting this person out, and she was like, I'm very uncomfortable with that, like I don't know, you know

[Tiger] That can be scary,

[Kyra] It is, yeah.

[Tiger] you never know what people are gonna say, and you know,

[Kyra] Right.

[Tiger] especially in college people are busy, so you don't know if they're kinda being like, oh I can't go because I'm studying, or like,

[Kyra] yeah, or you might

[Tiger] or don't want to,

[Kyra] and I think a lot of people will assume like oh well, they already have friends and you know,

[Tiger] or they're busy.

13:53

[Kyra] yeah, yeah. But she then came up with this whole plan she found an event on campus that had an activity, I think it had something to do with plants, and she invited this classmate of hers after class one day, and was just like, hey would you like to go to this thing with me, and her classmate was like, yeah! And they went, and then when she was reporting back to me when she was telling me what happened, she was just like, yeah she said she'd go! And I was like ok! And she actually asked another person to go, which was difficult,

[Tiger] Yeah.

[Kyra] for her, which was exciting but she was like, oh wait, you know I didn't plan for this,

[Tiger] Yeah, it's another thing.

14:26

[Kyra] so they went to this one event and then she was like, and then we kept hanging out after! Like we went to get food and stuff! And the way she talked about her experience doing this was, she said she felt really proud of herself, and I think that was coming from like, this was her main barrier, natural supports was her main barrier to engagement and she wanted to have a support system so badly, so she would always reiterate, I am very uncomfortable with this but I am going to do this,

[Tiger] That's so great,

[Kyra] that was really admirable.

[Tiger] that's such a step in the right to direction to just, you know, confront your fear like that and just go for it.

15:00

[Kyra] Yeah, and there was another student I worked with too who I will call Tonya, not her real name, and she had a similar situation as Carrie, and she was actually a senior, she was about to graduate, and she said, when I brought up, you know, campus engagement and things she liked to do with her, and campus engagement covers a wide swath of things, it's so, I mean it can be as simple as going to the library to study, or going to the rec center to workout or going to events, you know, it's something other than staying in your dorm room. So, I asked Tonya about these things, and she said, well no I hate going to the library because when I go, I just see groups of people there and it reminds me that I'm a senior and I have not made any friends. So, that was, it was a similar trajectory as what I did with Carrie, because we sort of went back and was like, ok just think about things you're interested in because she would look into these things she was like, well I'm not going to do any of this, I'm too uncomfortable

[Tiger] Then what happens is you tend to isolate yourself, right.

[Kyra] Exactly, yeah.

16:02

[Tiger] that's actually a pattern I see a lot of people go through in college and I go through it myself all the time in school where, you have so much work, you have so much stuff you're doing that you can go like two days without seeing or communicating with anyone,

[Kyra] Yeah.

[Tiger] you don't even realize, and you have these kind of like weird lingering feelings of like loneliness,

[Kyra] Yeah.

[Tiger] building up, you don't know what's going on,

[Kyra] Yeah.

[Tiger] yeah, it's very common with a lot of people you know, even those who have great support systems.

[Kyra] Mhm.

[Tiger] Now I personally think I have a very good support system but I forget to utilize that and reach out to people when,

[Kyra] Yeah.

[Tiger] I have all these crazy stuff and work going on, and that can really just build up,

[Kyra] Right yeah, the sort of like isolating, and

[Tiger] Yeah.

16:41

[Kyra] and it can be hard to sort of like remind yourself of, well who in my life can I reach out to at this time or also you know, college is so stressful and so busy and if you're a person who deals with perfectionism or just wants to your work all the time it can be, it can be hard to maintain your relationships. There are barriers,

[Tiger] It's difficult, there are barriers, you know, sometimes you're exhausted, you stayed up all night or,

[Kyra] Yeah.

[Tiger] it's hard to fit in the schedule.

[Kyra] Definitely. So there's yeah, there's another student that I worked with very regularly, called fake name again, Jasmine,

[Tiger] Yeah.

17:17

[Kyra] and we worked a bit on natural supports with her, but what ended up being the focus was academic achievement, it would fall into that core area, that domain of academic achievement and I would say that every other core area overlapped with this academic achievement area. In Jasmine's case she had a couple of hospitalizations at the very beginning of the semester. So before targeting campus engagement or natural supports, we kinda just came up with a plan that she connected with the Office of Disability Services she connected with the student writing center, she got tutoring, she came up with a plan to catch up with her coursework, she got her accommodations in place, so that was set and,

[Tiger] Yeah.

[Kyra] and that was really important for that to be set,

[Tiger] yeah, that sounds brutal, I mean in the middle of a college semester, to be hospitalized,

[Kyra] Yeah.

[Tiger] two days can make a huge difference,

[Kyra] Yeah.

[Tiger] for some students.

[Kyra] True.

[Tiger] throw them off completely with their work schedule.

18:14

[Kyra] right yeah, and, you know, throughout the academic year, Jasmine really struggled with study skills, organization and time management, and you know, we would work together, she had natural supports, she would be like, yeah I'll study with my roommate, I'll do this, I'll do this, but then it would keep ending up that she was like, it didn't work out, I didn't do any of my work, I didn't study. So I thought, ok, let's take some steps back again. For a supported education specialist, if something's not working, it's like ok, pull back, and try something else. So, what we did was we talked about her study habits and her environment – we talked about what time of day she feels most alert, which was the afternoon, we talked about if she studies better in her dorm room or in the library. She said, oh yeah, I've been studying in my dorm room all the time but I'm not studying because I'm in my room, but.

[Tiger] Oh yeah, I can never study in my room.

[Kyra] Yeah.

[Tiger] The environment matters so much.

19:13

[Kyra] It does, yeah. So, then she said, like, I can study in the living room, or I can go to the library. And then it was like, ok well what other self-care activities have you engaged in before studying and she was like, oh I always forget to eat. So, it was,

[Tiger] Oh, that's a big one,

[Kyra] we sort of like came up with this plan that was based on preparing her environment and making sure that these other needs were met in order for her to get into this space of studying and that turned out to be really effective with her.

[Tiger] I do something similar, like for me, before I start studying, if I know I'm like, you know, four to six hours of studying for an exam or something like, I cannot do it unless I sit down and play video games for like 30 minutes.

[Kyra] Really?

[Tiger] yeah, I just cannot, that's what I have to do.

[Kyra] That's the start.

[Tiger] I do that, get in the zone, and then I can start.

20:00

[Kyra] That's awesome.

[Tiger] Yeah. That's just my thing, everyone's different. For some people, it's just making sure that you eat a meal, or,

[Kyra] Mhm.

[Tiger] or hanging out with some friends before, but,

[Kyra] Yeah. I like to have absolute silence and a distraction-free environment,

[Tiger] Oh, that as well,

[Kyra] some people like being in a busy coffee shop or library you know, so,

20:17

[Tiger] where I study, it's this place called The Stacks, it's part of the graduate library and it literally looks like a jail cell, and so many people don't like it, they like to go to the regular undergraduate library but you know, there's always people talking and like eating and stuff, or like hearing people chewing,

[Kyra] Mhm.

[Tiger] behind you, I can't deal with that, so I have to go in this like, it's like a little white box,

[Kyra] Yeah.

[Tiger] with a desk, just completely silent, distraction-free,

[Kyra] yeah. It sounds like my kind of thing too. I also wanted to talk about like, connecting students with existing resources, that's a big part of the SES role, so if a student identified a need or an interest it was always first like, ok what exists on your campus?

[Tiger] Yeah.

20:58

[Kyra] So, you know, there would be different resources. One student got connected with a STEM group for women, you know, another student became involved LGBTQ group. A lot of times students don't know what's available to them, as well as offices of disability services, a lot of students don't realize that you know, accommodations are available to them and so developing relationships with the office of disability services was a pretty big thing.

[Tiger] Yeah. Fortunately as resources go, you know, each year we're seeing more and more funding put in to these and more popping up, whether it's you know, student-run or counseling centers.

[Kyra] Yeah.

[Tiger] Yeah, so I mean that's been great.

[Kyra] Yeah, I'm really interested in those student-run programs. I think that peer, sort of, programs go right into natural supports.

[Tiger] Yeah, yeah absolutely and after you take the steps to figure out how you're going to meet this student's needs, how do you follow through and make sure that they're following the plan you've laid out together?

21:56

[Kyra] I love this question and I will tell you why. So, any plan that has been laid out is not laid out by me. One of the most important parts of supported education is that it's really directed by the student. So, myself as the specialist, I might offer some prompting and guide them through this plan, but it really is chosen and directed by the student. So, there's that period of getting to know someone like developing a rapport and everything, and we would develop goal sheets and I would go through that with students but it was really a partnership and I would say that if someone was in charge of laying out a plan, it was always the student. So it was really self-directed in that way. Also, some people might not follow through as much as others,

[Tiger] Yeah.

[Kyra] some students were much more engaged and much more, I think, connected with their own plan, than other students.

[Tiger] And depending on that, that's how much you're gonna be, you know, more or less engaged, right,

[Kyra] Right.

[Tiger] like,

[Kyra] Yeah.

23:00

[Tiger] I think, yeah, I read about one example where you were calling one student like every morning or

[Kyra] Oh, yeah, wake up calls, yeah,

[Tiger] Yeah, calling one student every morning to wake up.

[Kyra] Yeah, that was Jasmine. She had a natural support giving her wake up calls, she had trouble waking up for class, and I think her friend went on vacation or something and she was just like, I can't wake up, I'll sleep through my alarms, and I was like, alright I'll just give you a call at this time, and I would just call her be like, hey, and she was like "ok" and we'd get off the phone.

[Tiger] (inaudible) That's impressive.

[Kyra] It was, she said, you know, near the end of the intervention she said that that made a huge difference for her, so it's interesting to know that like something that seems so simple is actually a huge support for someone.

[Tiger] So going back to the accessibility of these services, I was wondering if students that you know, may not have a serious mental illness, you know, students who might just be having difficulties with

their classes or their relationships, you know just anything in life, are they able to seek help, these services?

23:59

[Kyra] I think that's a really great question. For our intervention study, we focused on offering this service to students who had a diagnosis of a serious mental illness so that was either major depression, a bipolar disorder, or a schizophrenia spectrum disorder. And that's also what the Collaborative receives funding for. That's the population that we work with. I would love to see this service available to anyone and everyone, there's a lot of issues in terms of diagnostics, you know, someone might be experiencing mental distress or mental health problems and not have received an official diagnosis, so I think it would be really really great to have this service available to anyone who's experiencing anything, whether they've received a diagnosis or not.

[Tiger] I think that would be great, but of course that would just take a lot more funding, I'm sure, you know, there's not enough SES.

[Kyra] I mean, maybe there's a way for students to create a sort of peer-supported education program, you know, like that would be so cool,

[Tiger] Yeah,

[Kyra] I think,

[Tiger] Yeah, well,

[Kyra] what do you think?

25:05

[Tiger] that is, we actually have those where I go, I go to University of Michigan and I'm actually one of the student leaders of such a peer support organization.

[Kyra] That's awesome, can you tell us about that?

[Tiger] So it's called Wolverine Support Network,

[Kyra] Mhm.

[Tiger] and it's a student run mental health org at U of M, and it's based around the peer support model. So we launched around 2015 it was before my time there, and it's basically there are these weekly group meetings, where you have this kind of like therapeutic group dialogue, and it's led through one to two leaders,

[Kyra] Mhm.

25:42

[Tiger] the concept of the peer support model is receiving support through your peers, like other students, other people your age because there's actually been a ton of research that shows when people are in distress or people are dealing with things, they're way more likely to go to their peers first,

before anyone else, so, it's kinda the idea of, so why don't we give these peers the tools to help their friends,

[Kyra] Yeah.

[Tiger] their classmates, whoever, and it's a system that works very very well because it's a lot of comforting than some of the other resources that are typically available in high school, college or even graduate school.

[Kyra] Right, and it's not hierarchical because everyone's a peer.

[Tiger] There's no hierarchy, it's just a super comfortable setting where the meetings are held too, so at Michigan we have weekly groups,

[Kyra] Mhm.

[Tiger] so, we meet once a week, it works completely according to the individual schedule

[Kyra] Mhm

[Tiger] and we have, like, 30 plus groups,

26:39

[Kyra] Wow.

[Tiger] every semester, so yeah, there's a lot of variety, it really works with any schedule so it's highly accessible which is great. We've really just taken off the last couple years and we actually branched out to a few other schools, using our same model which is, you know, these weekly groups and then something else which we haven't gotten into yet, we also have these biweekly community events that we call kick-back Fridays and these are really where like other students at U of M who might not be part of Wolverine Support Network or might not be in a group can just join in and like hang out and it's that peer support model again where like everyone's just there to like be friendly, make friends, support each other, yeah it's really just great system

[Kyra] and it's open to everyone?

[Tiger] Yeah, yeah,

[Kyra] That is,

[Tiger] I mean that's the big part of it, is

[Kyra] so great.

27:21

[Tiger] It's a mental health organization, so we're all about removing stigmas and supporting those with serious mental illnesses and we have a lot of people who have those but also we're just open to anyone. I mean we really run through the concept that like, everyone kinda needs peer support and everyone should want it, at least, because it's such a great thing.

[Kyra] I have a question for you, because it sounds like you've, you know, have so much experience in your role as a leader with WSN. So we're located at Temple University, if Temple were to start this kind of group, what suggestions would you have?

[Tiger] For students?

[Kyra] Yeah, for a student-run group,

[Tiger] Yeah.

[Kyra] if Temple were to start something that mirrors WSN.

[Tiger] I think anyone, if your college doesn't have a resource like this, you should absolutely implement it,

[Kyra] Mhm.

28:06

[Tiger] maybe reach out to someone you can go to, I think it's, vsupportnetwork.org or supportnetwork.org and reach out to someone through there about you know starting an affiliate at your school and then you know if that's working out, go to someone in administration and see how much backing you can get to get it started up.

[Kyra] I know that it's peer-run, but do you have any administrators or faculty involved or anyone sort of higher up that's advocating for this group to exist and be maintained.

28:38

[Tiger] Yeah, yeah so that's a great question. You know, I was talking before about being a peer but having these tools to help people and as leaders we actually receive education at our weekly meetings and we have a therapist from the Counseling and Psychological Services who comes every week and,

[Kyra] Mhm.

[Tiger] you know, guide us through lessons on how to facilitate this kind of therapeutic dialogue and,

[Kyra] Ok,

[Tiger] you know, how to work with people who may have mental illnesses.

[Kyra] so the therapist provides the peers with training,

[Tiger] yeah, yeah,

[Kyra] to offer it… wow.

[Tiger] the group leaders with training,

[Kyra] Ok.

29:07

[Tiger] and the great thing about that is we can, you know, we can spread that to all of our friends, into the Michigan community and that's really you know one of the end goals here also is to really destigmatize mental health, because,

[Kyra] Mhm.

[Tiger] there's all these organizations but there's still always gonna be a big issue on college campuses. I think at Michigan, WSN has such a big presence, if you really ask any student who goes to Michigan, there's a whole lot of them,

[Kyra] Mhm.

[Tiger] they know about Wolverine Support Network, or they know someone in it, and it's really just gaining a lot of respect, so

[Kyra] Yeah.

[Tiger] it's great.

29:37

[Kyra] That's awesome, I would love to see that happen on every college campus,

[Tiger] Yeah.

[Kyra] it's really great that you're involved in that and you know, can share your expertise and experience

[Tiger] Yeah, and oh, in addition to our therapist from CPS we also do have weekly guest speakers

[Kyra] Mhm.

[Tiger] we had someone who's from the LGBTQ community who helped us with community inclusion and how to make sure everyone feels comfortable who's in WSN really working on the diversity in the program and that's another great resource. We actually did a really fun one towards the end of the year that was like a meditation session so yeah,

30:12

[Kyra] That's awesome.

[Tiger] I've actually been using it a bit now, so I'm a big fan.

[Kyra] I've just started meditating a bit myself. I would have liked to be in that, in that training with that guest speaker.

[Tiger] I mean, what really makes WSN so unique in the support model is how convenient it is, you know, we have all these groups, each week there's always plenty of room to join a group, I mean a group will usually have like 10 to 12 students and 30 of those, that's 400, 500 something active members,

[Kyra] Wow

[Tiger] each semester.

[Kyra] That's amazing.

[Tiger] Yeah it's great, and you know we have plenty of rooms around campus to utilize for the meetings.

[Kyra] So I looked up WSN and you have a lot of online resources too, like,

[Tiger] Yeah.

[Kyra] I noticed that there's a blog with students studying abroad and,

[Tiger] Yeah, yeah.

[Kyra] and studying abroad while, you know, managing mental health issues and it just seems like a very authentic, accessible resource.

31:02

[Tiger] It's really authentic, it's great, I mean, I've been a leader for a semester, so I don't know everyone too well, but all the people I've met there so honestly care about this cause, care about mental health, and it's really it's such an empowering great community. That's another thing that's unique about WSN that I think a lot more student-run and college organizations should implement, is like, directly impacting students, you know, there's a lot of organizations that are doing awesome things, they're educating, they're destigmatizing mental health, but something I think we need to see more of are these peer support models that are,

[Kyra] Mhm.

[Tiger] you know, directly impacting students through stuff like therapeutic dialogue and these weekly meetings.

[Kyra] Yeah, maybe when you go back in the fall you can take some of these core areas of supported education and adapt it to a sort of like peer-supported supportive education,

[Tiger] Yeah.

[Kyra] model.

[Tiger] I feel like that would be a very interesting idea as well, and this is another thing that's kind of unique to Temple right now is campus engagement-oriented supportive education,

[Kyra] Mhm.

[Tiger] I think that'll be something that should definitely spread to other universities as well.

32:04

[Kyra] Yeah, it would be great to see the WSN and the peer support model I think that's so awesome and I would love to see more of that on campuses everywhere and I'm so glad that you shared your experiences.

[Tiger] Thanks so much for answering all of my questions, this was all very informative and yeah I really do hope so, I mean that's the end goal for us, to really just spread this support model around (crosstalk)

[Kyra] Yeah.

[Tiger] the country.

[Kyra] yeah. Yeah, I wish you all the best with your academic career and beyond, I'm so glad we had the opportunity to meet and I look forward to hearing any updates, you know, (crosstalk)

[Tiger] Yeah.

[Kyra] about WSN, or how peer support is spreading throughout campuses.

[Tiger] Yeah, thanks, it was great talking to you, and I'm excited to hear about what the Collaborative does in the future, and how supported ed evolves.

[Kyra] Awesome, thanks Tiger.