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Volume

Issue

Page

GO

Volume 9, Issue 1

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☐ VOLUME 18 (2018)

Issue 2 (Apr 2018)

Issue 1 (Jan 2018)

☐ VOLUME 17 (2017)

Issue 4 (Oct 2017)

Issue 3 (Jul 2017)

Issue 2 (Apr 2017)

Issue 1 (Jan 2017)

☐ VOLUME 16 (2016)

Issue 4 (Oct 2016)

Issue 3 (Jul 2016) , pp. 1213-1619

Issue 2 (Apr 2016) , pp. 539-1212

Issue 1 (Jan 2016) , pp. 1-538

☐ VOLUME 15 (2015)

[< Previous Article](#) [Next Article >](#)

Mental Health and Academic Success in College

[Daniel Eisenberg](#) / [Ezra Golberstein](#) / [Justin B Hunt](#)

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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](#)

About the article

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