St. Petersburg College (SPC), representing eight campuses across Pinellas County, FL, proposes Project HEAL (Healthy Emotions and Lives) to build a collaborative infrastructure targeting mental health and substance abuse awareness. Project HEAL will strengthen a community-wide provider network, implement a comprehensive suicide prevention plan, and increase awareness of and access to resources for nearly 30,000 credit seeking students. Currently, no mental-health centered crisis response protocols or on-campus mental health services exist for SPC students, and in particular for vulnerable populations including minority students, veterans, and LGBT. Although students have access to a 24/7 free telephonic Student Assistance Plan, less than 1.08% of students (233) utilized this service in 2017. Faculty and staff indicate little knowledge of how to help a student experience a mental health crisis. In addition, community partner services vary widely across SPC’s large campuses and lack coordinated efforts. To bridge these service gaps, Project HEAL will achieve the following goals and objectives by the end of the project period:

1. Establish a systematic infrastructure of SPC’s mental health referral and on-campus network, including the development of a Suicide Prevention Plan with Crisis Prevention Protocol and suicide tracking system, where 75% of College faculty and staff demonstrate knowledge of proper procedures and protocols;
2. Offer a tiered system of Gatekeeper training for faculty, staff, and students on suicide prevention, substance abuse, and mental health promotion, where 80% of those trained indicate an increased ability to recognize students at risk;
3. Promote access to mental health and substance abuse counseling with network partners, including on-campus screenings, where the number of students accessing help increases by 75% each year; and
4. Provide mental health and substance abuse resources, materials and events on campus and online to increase awareness and understanding of mental health issues, including promotion of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, where 75% of students, faculty, and staff indicate an awareness of community resources and where to turn for help.

Leading the program is a Project Taskforce of key College personnel experienced in mental health promotion and high-risk populations, students representing high-risk populations, and new and existing community mental health agency partners to ensure a robust network of providers and referral sources for students. These partners, along with former GLS grantees, will inform program planning, activities, and best practices in evidence-based care. Over a period of three years, Project HEAL will train approximately 845 faculty, staff, and students in a Gatekeeper model and SPC mental health resources to increase student utilization of community mental health resources and referrals. More than 3,000 students will be reached through on-campus awareness and screening events. Finally, over 2,370 students will seek help through the Student Assistance Plan and other community resources. SPC pursues these goals with the belief that supporting mental health is everyone’s charge, and that one death as a result of substance abuse, mental illness, or suicide is one too many.