Valparaiso University

Program Name: One-of-Us Initiative
Grant Type: Garrett Lee Smith Campus
Grant Status: Active
Year Awarded: 2018
State: Indiana

The One-of-Us Initiative at Valparaiso University (ONUS VU) will create a more connected and safer campus community focused on decreasing risk by collectively promoting life. This program will serve our general student body, but will specifically target student veterans, LGBTQA and commuter students (populations at increased risk for suicide). University leaders and several VU campus departments and programs have volunteered their time and expertise to help develop sustainable partnerships and create a systemic structure for managing critical student incidents, mental health emergencies, and suicide. ONUS VU will bring together VU Counseling Services and other Student Affairs offices, Inclusion & Student Success Services (which includes Veterans Programs), Academic Affairs, Campus Ministry, and the Departments of Psychology, Social Work, and Education.

ONUS VU has four primary goals:

1. Enhance mental health services for all college students; including those at risk for suicide, depression, serious mental illness, and/or substance use disorders that can lead to school failure.
2. Increase the capacity to prevent mental and substance use disorders among college students.
3. Promote help-seeking behavior and reduce negative public attitudes among students, faculty, and staff at Valparaiso University.
4. Implement and continue evidence-based programs to improve the identification and treatment of at-risk college students so they can successfully complete their studies.

We will meet these goals through creating a network infrastructure between the campus and local communities and providing evidence-based trainings, awareness and stigma reduction programs, connectedness assessments and interventions, and increasing our capacity to screen for, assess, and treat suicide risk and mental and substance use disorders. We will add 12 new QPR (Question, Persuade, and Refer) trainers to our campus community and provide QPR gatekeeper trainings to at least 500 students, faculty, staff, and community members by the end of the grant. We also will provide information and outreach about mental health/substance use disorder services, and about suicide and suicide prevention, to our students and the local communities in coordination with Counseling Services and the Office of Alcohol & Drug Education, and via the following activities: an aggressive media and social media campaign, external speakers, and two annual courses on suicide.