Mental health workshop series shines light on oft-overlooked problem

The series helped Physical Sciences anteaters learn about skills to manage mental health struggles.

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The series will resume in the coming academic year.

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UCI

Everything from family history to workplace demands has an impact on mental health – but mental health remains one of the least-supported areas of health in modern societies. To overcome this, the UCI School of Physical Sciences' Office of Access, Outreach and Inclusion (AOI) launched a new mental health workshop series in January 2024 dedicated to shining a light on different aspects of mental health.

The three workshops focused on identifying symptoms of mental health problems and ways of offering support to those struggling, how to support women of color in STEM fields, as well as how mental health relates to neurodiversity.

"For every workshop, I invited a licensed psychologist from the UCI counseling center to give a presentation about the topic," said Ash Hormaza, AOI program coordinator at UCI Physical Sciences. "The series evolved from the need for a school-wide, in-depth conversation about mental health and how it can impact students in STEM, especially those who come from marginalized communities."

Hormaza knew they'd tapped into a common need at the school when, after workshops, students expressed the need for more workshops covering additional mental health needs. "I felt very happy that they expressed a desire for more workshops, and that they felt safe to share which topics would support them," Hormaza said.

When the series resumes, Hormaza plans to allocate time for attendees to engage with one another at each session so they can share their individual experiences. "I think it's important to destigmatize mental health struggles and to openly talk about those realities to undo the illusion that we're alone in our struggles," said Hormaza. "I envision the series opening up to all STEM students so more can benefit from this kind of space."

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