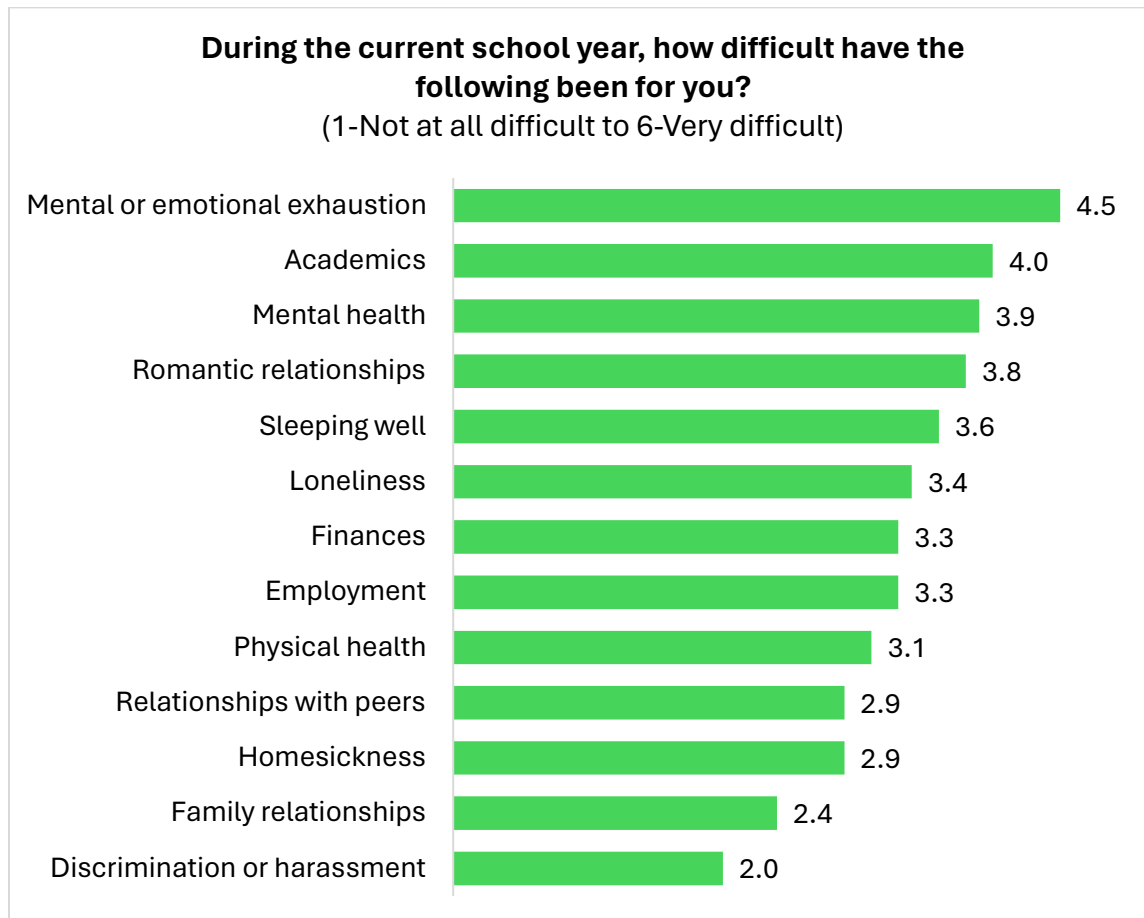


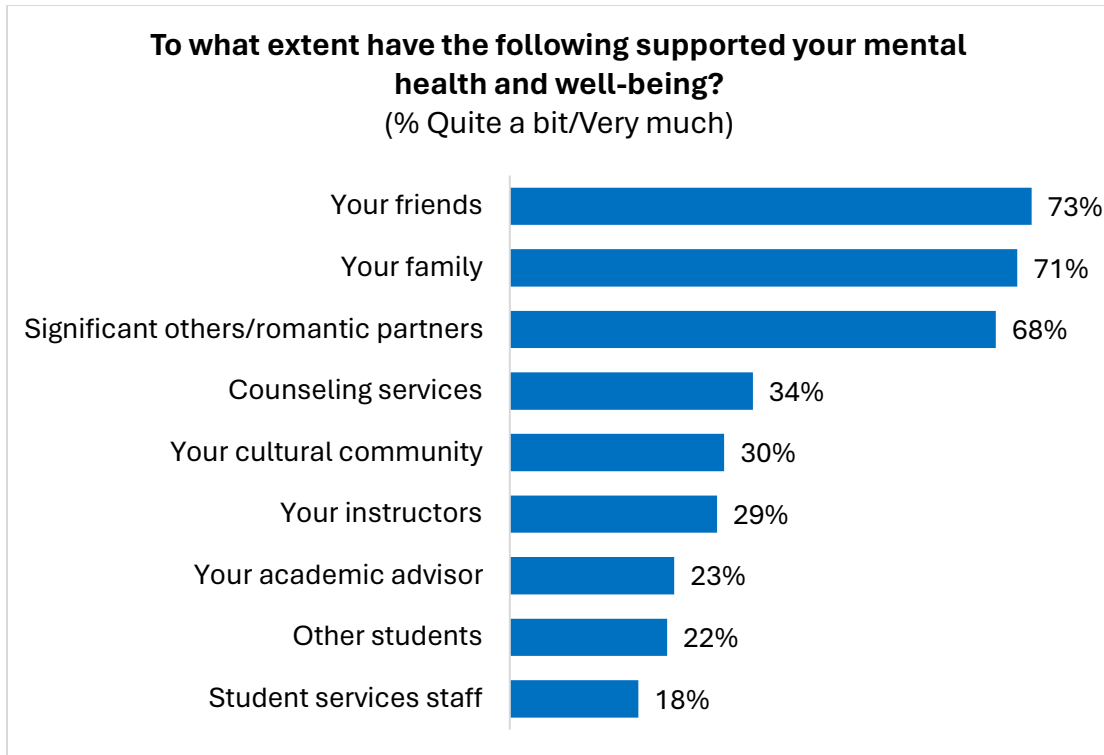
**National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
Mental Health & Well-Being Module
Spring 2024**

In Spring 2024, St. Olaf administered the Mental Health & Well-Being Module of the NSSE to a random sample of half of the student body, and 376 students responded (27% response rate).

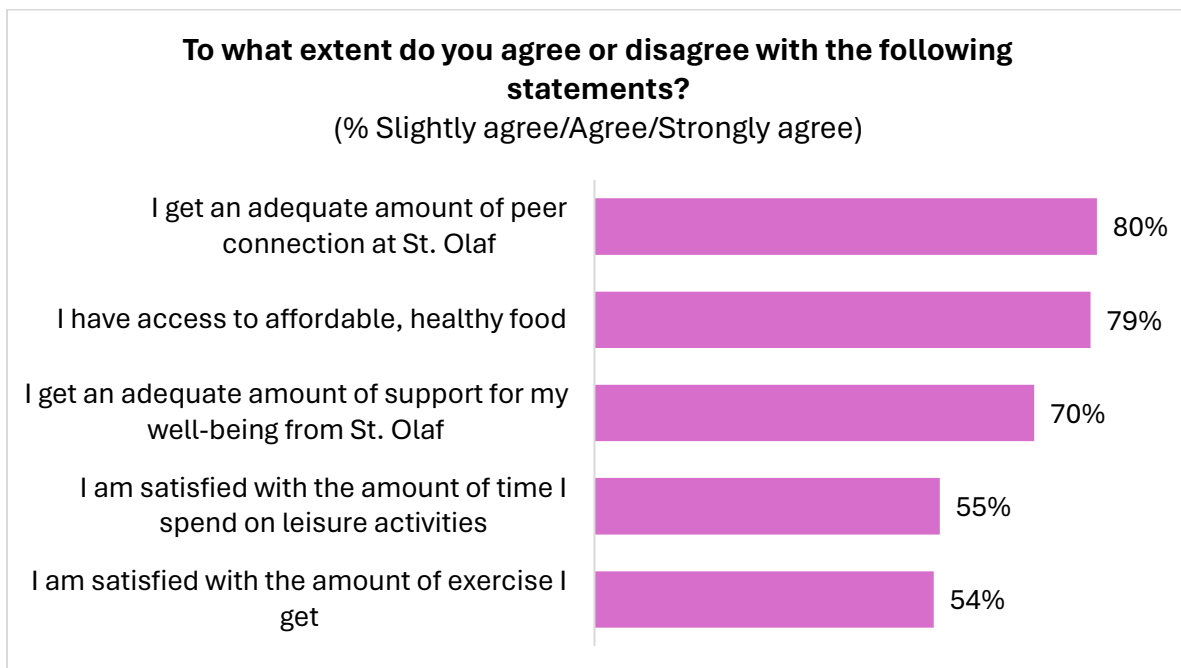
The following figures summarize student responses to the closed-ended questions on the survey.



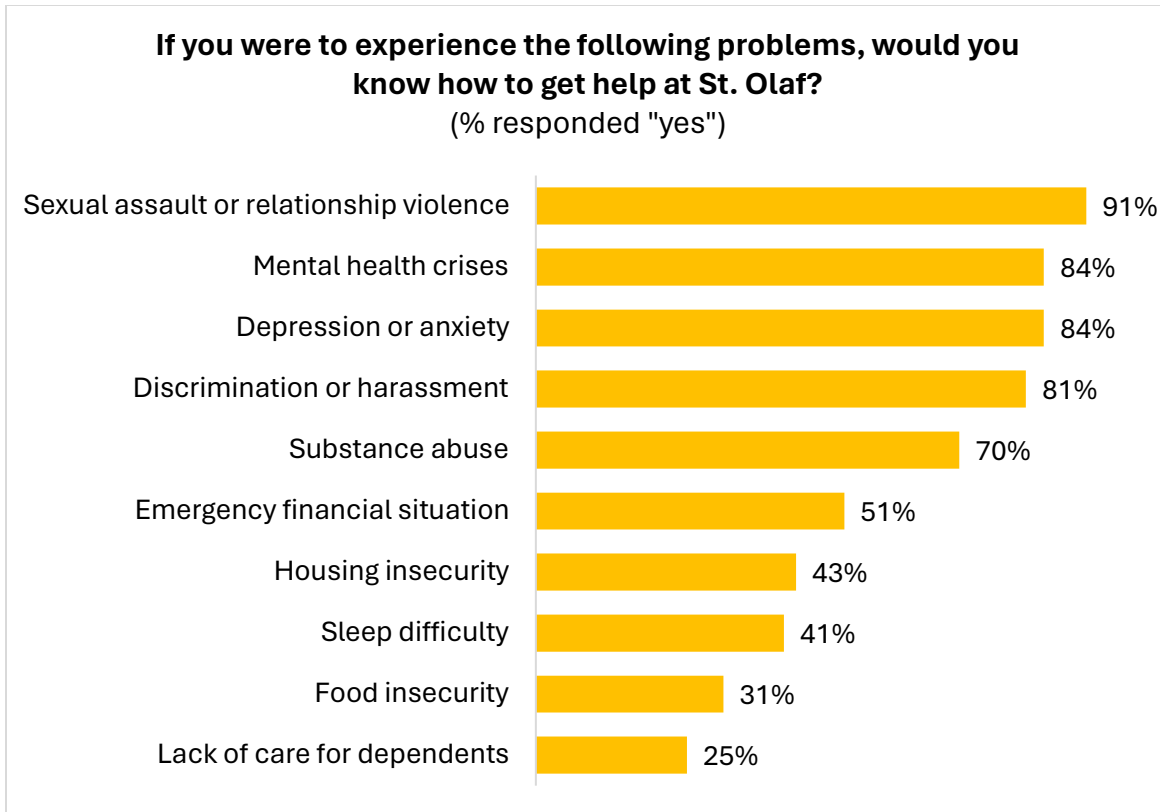
This graph displays average ratings on a 1 to 6 scale, with higher numbers indicating that students were more likely to struggle with that particular area.



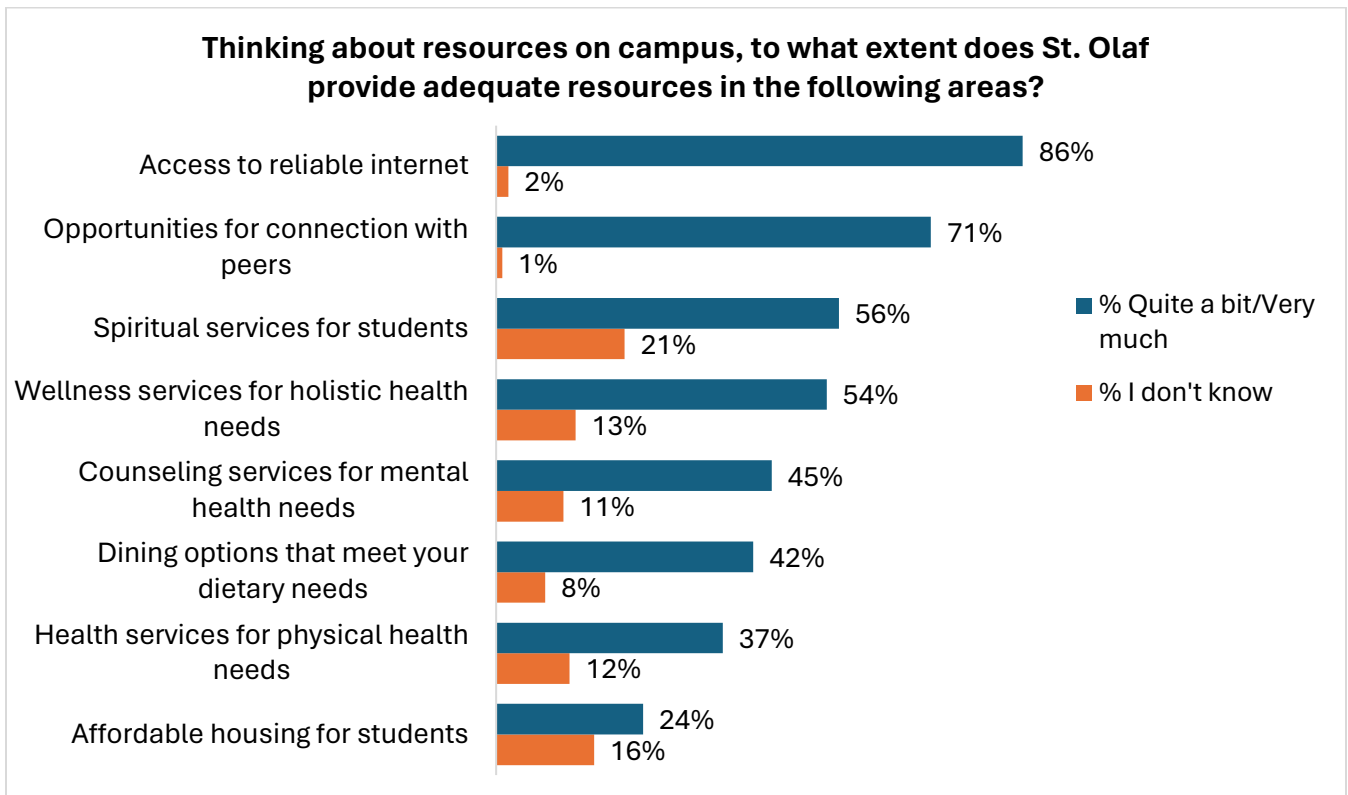
Other response options included “Some”, “Very little”, “Not at all”, and “Not applicable.” “Not applicable” responses were excluded when calculating percentages.



Other response options included “Slightly disagree”, “Disagree”, and “Strongly disagree.”



Other response options included "No" and "Help for this is not available at St. Olaf."



Other response options included "Some", "Very little", and "Not at all."

Students were also asked two open-ended questions at the end of the survey: 1) What is one way St. Olaf has supported your mental health and well-being? and 2) What is one way St. Olaf could better support your mental health and well-being? The most common themes that emerged are listed below, with some example quotes¹ for each. (Note that some comments fell into more than one category, so percentages sum to greater than 100%).

179 respondents shared ways that St. Olaf has supported their mental health and well-being:

- **40% mentioned the support of the campus community**, including students, faculty, and staff.
 - “St. Olaf has supported my well-being by overall fostering a community, since it is a place that I feel connections are to be made anywhere I go. The people here truly do make me feel seen, known, and remembered.”
 - “Many of the St olaf groups I'm in (music/sports) make a point of bringing up mental health support and create atmospheres where I feel welcomed.”
 - “I have also found it very easy to form very close relationships with most professors: they tend to be caring and be more than willing to help with both course-related and outside-of-class matters. I find their support and goodwill to be a thing that both sustains me and helps me in times of mental and spiritual need.”
 - “My friends and peers have always been there for me, even when I felt a bit tired or overwhelmed. They consistently check in on me, showing genuine care and support. The staff here have also been incredibly helpful whenever I've felt anxious or unsure about how to deal with problems. They've patiently guided me through tough times and offered practical solutions. Their support has made me feel more confident in facing challenges and finding my way forward.”
 - “One way I have felt supported here at St. Olaf is by the faculty. I felt that many faculty here genuinely care about their students and have gone above and beyond to support us when they can sense we are struggling.”
- **37% called out the Counseling and/or Wellness Centers specifically**
 - “My counselor at the counseling center is probably the reason I am still a student here. She has helped me an indescribable amount and seeing her every 2-3 weeks is the highlight of my month. I feel that I have connected with her so much and more than some of my own friends on campus.”
 - “I really feel supported with the Counselor Center and especially with my specific counselor, they are someone trustworthy that I can talk to about my problems/issues with college but also all the fun stuff that happens here.

¹ Quotes are copied verbatim, without corrections to spelling or other typos

Having a big system like the Counselor Center also allows me to get me and referral to outside help in my town so it's been really good to have that kind of support here at St. Olaf.”

- “I have participated in one of the mental health first aid training courses organized by the wellness center and it was a good starting point to get to know more about mental health especially as I come from a family where mental health is never a topic of conversation.”
- “I have appreciated the events that introduce students to activities that can help regulate their mental health (crocheting, drawing, etc). I think the wellness center events are extremely beneficial to help students understand the different services it provides as well as being a time to hopefully destress a bit.”
- **25% mentioned other resources on campus**
 - “The general atmosphere on campus is helpful for my anxiety disorder. Services like the library, IT, writing desk, DAC, etc. I find to be very friendly and engaging. Since seeking out assistance is particularly difficult with my anxiety, this has really helped me throughout my time at St. Olaf.”
 - “St. Olaf has provided opportunities for support through services like tutoring, the connect for success program in which my mentor became a close friend, and a buddy program through my major where I learned about how to get through a difficult semester.”
 - “By offering a variety of different resources and programs, St. Olaf does a good job at promoting and making it known that there is help for students on campus.”
 - “There are also very hard-working Public safety staff who do a lot for the well-being of campus.”
- **7% responded that St. Olaf had not supported their mental health and well-being.**

164 respondents suggested ways to improve support for mental health and well-being:

- **53% suggested improvements to services.** Two-thirds of these specifically mentioned improvements in counseling services, such as hiring more counselors (specifically licensed counselors, rather than interns), reducing wait times, and increasing appointment availability/ease of scheduling. Other improvements mentioned included more centralized services (the current location is not as easily accessible down the hill at New Hall), access to more healthcare providers and services on campus, and easier transportation to appointments or urgent care.
 - “St. Olaf could better support my mental health and wellbeing through making appointments with the counseling center easier. Perhaps making appointment booking through an app that connects with google calendar.”

- “The counseling center is understaffed, and it takes way too long to get an appointment and then have to wait three weeks in between each appointment. A lot of the supportive options on campus are student run, and that is putting a lot on the students.”
- “The interns working in the counseling center often do not have the training needed to meet the needs of students. Especially in terms of difficult family situations, the counseling center has not provided me with the support I need.”
- “As someone with a physical disability, I was also very frustrated with having to find a way to get to the bottom of the hill and back for counseling. It was very discouraging and felt very poorly planned for anyone with mobility issues.”
- “There was one time I had to go to the urgent care but had to delay it because the buses weren't running and public safety wouldn't drive me [...] Students should be able to access a doctor without having to go to the ER (pubsafe does drive to the ER). To fix this, there should be an MD/NP on campus or a way to get to medical services that doesn't involve the northfield lines bus route/oles GO, since they don't run all the time.”
- “The Health Center could be more comprehensive (including blood draws & testing, STI testing (if not already).”
- **12% want more information/outreach on services and resources available.**
Some also mentioned normalizing and providing more information about how to seek help in the first place.
 - “St Olaf could better support my health and well being by making these services slightly more known and clear to use. For some of them, I knew they existed, but not the actual process to use them.”
 - “It can be tough to take the first step and seek help. That has been very hard for me. I wish there was something I could do or have access to resources that can push me towards receiving help”
 - “I think that the wellness center could have even more advertisements for its resources and maybe host a SOAR-specific event next fall for incoming freshmen.”
- **12% discussed improvements to food options.** This included not only more variety or healthier options in general, but also specifically for students with food allergies or dietary restrictions.
 - “Improved healthy options for vegetarians in the caf. A more extensive and rotating salad bar, more tofu dishes, etc. It's very disappointing to have so few healthy options and it takes a toll on my health (and bank account, as I have to supplement with food from the co-op in town).”

- “More options with food for dietary restrictions. As a vegetarian, it is difficult to find options that have adequate nutritional values.”
- “Sometimes the rotation of the food in Stav is really inaccessible to me [as someone with food allergies], and that affects my overall physical, emotional, mental, and academic wellbeing.”
- **9% want more social support**, including opportunities for students to build community and interact with peers, as well as activities on and off campus.
 - “The school does not do a good enough job of supporting student interests or peer socialization. There are very few “third places” on campus, where students are able to comfortably hang out. The few options that are available are misused or in the process of being sterilized (such as a the pause). I believe there needs to be more *free* gathering places on campus.”
 - “More access to off campus activities. I know they exist but I never know when they're happening.”
- **8% suggested more breaks**, either more/longer breaks throughout the academic year generally, or days designated as mental health breaks specifically.
 - “One way St. Olaf could better support my mental health for myself and others is by having mental health days. If there is a way we could have at least a couple days to just focus and do activities for our mental health would be very appreciated by many students.”
 - “I feel that St. Olaf places a lot of pressure on it's students. Speaking for myself and some other students that I know I know many of my peers here are struggling with burnout. I feel like compared to my peers who go to other schools we get far fewer and shorter breaks”
- **7% want more support around academic stress**, such as greater flexibility from professors and more realistic expectations about workload.
 - “I think professors and leaders reminding students that they don't have to take on so much in order to be successful. We as a campus culture value over-business - if you aren't stressed out our busy, then you're not doing enough. I think we really need to have messaging that talks about the skills of saying "no" (when you're too overwhelmed) and for professors and leaders on campus to help change the Ole-culture of constantly being overwhelmed.”
 - “I think st olaf preaches about mental well being but a lot of professors don't actually take it into account. I would like to see some actual follow through with professors regarding mental well being and leniency”