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### ETSU BRAIN Trust: Creating a Culture of Resilience at ETSU

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## ETSU BRAIN Trust: Creating a Culture of Resilience at ETSU

# ETSU BRAIN Trust: Creating a Culture of Resilience at ETSU

“ETSU BRAIN Trust” representatives

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Dept Biostatistics & Epidemiology

April 16, 2019

Building Community : Engagement & Belonging for Student Success

Millennium Center

Johnson City, TN



# Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

ACES Primer (5:00) from [KPJR FILMS LLC](https://www.kpjr.com/)  
<https://vimeo.com/139998006>



# ACEs Can Have Lasting Effects On...



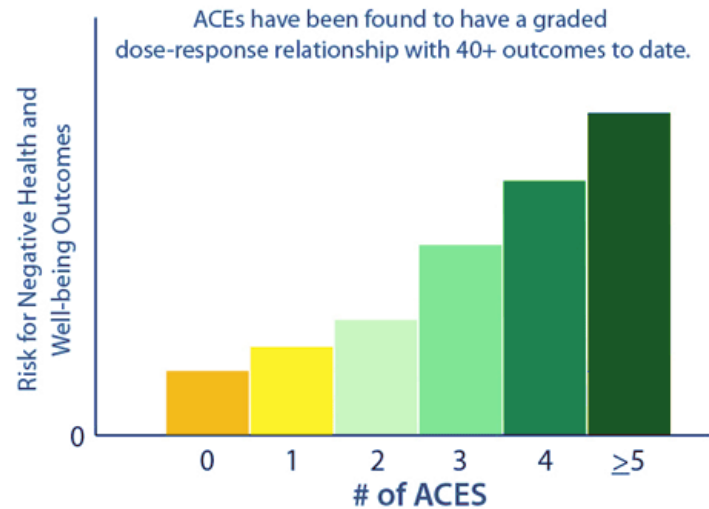
Health (obesity, diabetes, depression, suicide attempts, STDs, heart disease, cancer, stroke, COPD, broken bones)



Behaviors (smoking, alcoholism, drug use)



Life Potential (graduation rates, academic achievement, lost time from work)



\*This pattern holds for the 40+ outcomes, but the exact risk values vary depending on the outcome.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016



# ACEs in TN and at ETSU



- Tennesseans - more than 1 in 5 have 3+ ACEs\*



- ETSU students - more than 1 in 4 have 3+ ACEs\*\*

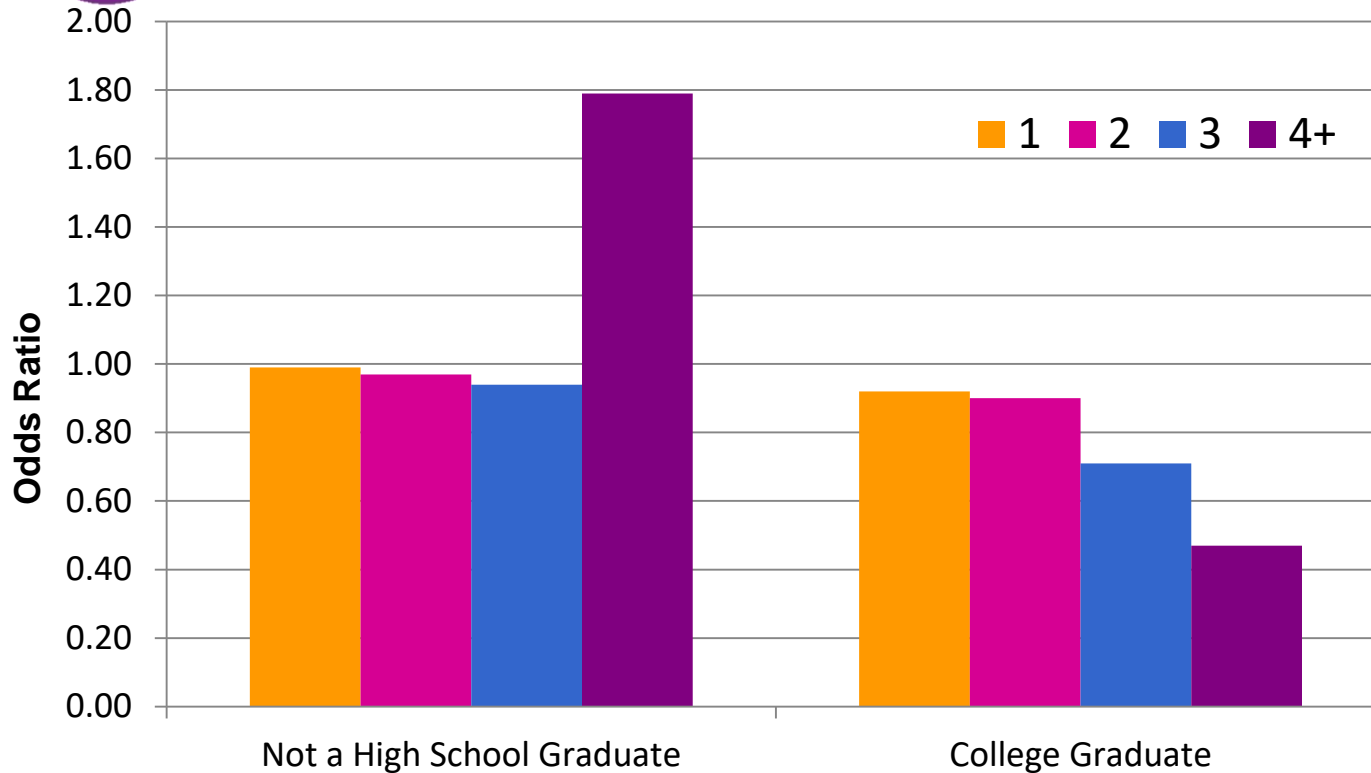
\*2014-2017 CDC BRFSS data provided by the TN Department of Health's Division of Policy, Planning and Assessment, Office of Health Statistic

\*\*Stinson & Quinn, 2016





## Tennesseans with Higher ACE Scores Attain Less Education 2016



Source: Tennessee Department of Health, 2016





Center on the Developing Child  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

<https://youtu.be/rVwFkcOZHJw?list=PL0DB506DEF92B6347>

Three Core Concepts in Early Development

# 3 Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development

NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD

Center on the Developing Child  HARVARD UNIVERSITY



# Executive Function Skills Compromised by Toxic Stress

– a critical educational and workforce development issue  
for Tennessee –



## ■ Impulse Control

- Filter distractions
- Resist temptation
- Maintain focus
- Persist
- Think before acting

## ■ Working Memory

- Hold onto info while working on something else
- Follow multi-steps

## ■ Mental Flexibility

- Easily switch gears
- Multitask
- Alter strategies
- Innovate



## ***Building Strong Brains***

***Tennessee*** works to change the culture of Tennessee so the state's overarching philosophy, policies, programs and practices for children, youth and young adults utilize the latest brain science to prevent and mitigate the impact of adverse childhood experiences.



# Building Strong Brains Tennessee Goals 2015-current



- 1 Increase the potential that every child born in Tennessee has the opportunity to lead a healthy, productive life.
- 2 Raise public knowledge about ACEs.
  - 835 individuals from wide variety of professional disciplines and sectors
  - Have reached over 35,000 individuals statewide
  - Four symposia-brain science, communication science, policy innovation
- 3 Impact public policy in Tennessee to support prevention of ACEs and to reduce community conditions that contribute to them.
- 4 Support innovative local and state projects that offer fresh thinking and precise measurement of impact in addressing ACEs and toxic stress in children.
  - Innovation grants- FY16, FY17, FY18**
  - ETSU/Boys and Girls Clubs
  - ETSU System of Care
  - ETSU Biostats/Epidemiology
  - ETSU Department of Pediatrics
- 5 Embrace open, responsive governance through the Three Branches Institute (3BI) and statewide planning groups.

Funding: \$2.45M in recurring funds for FY19

# Building Resilience through ACEs Informed Networking (BRAIN) Trust

- In May 2018, 11 of ETSU faculty convened to establish the ETSU “BRAIN Trust”. These BRAIN Trustees have been meeting regularly to develop a multi-pronged action plan aimed at mitigating ACEs within the institutional context, in the service of both ETSU student performance and faculty and staff performance.

## Action steps

- Provide ACEs-informed orientations, trainings, and workshops for faculty, staff, and administrators.
- Establish ACEs-informed general education curricula to produce ACEs-informed graduates.
- Seeking sustained investment and understanding through changes in policy, procedures, and philosophies

# Potential Impact on 2016-2026 ETSU Six Strategic Objectives

- Strategic Growth Agenda: an ACE-informed campus will not only induce students to stay enrolled, but will draw students from throughout the region when word gets out that ETSU is a safe place to grow and learn.
- Diversity and Inclusion: an ACEs-informed campus will recognize and promote student, faculty, and staff rights to be treated with dignity and respect.

# Potential Impact

- Empowering Employees: ACEs awareness will improve the efficacy of communication between faculty, staff, and administration and thus will contribute to employee well-being and professional development.
- Excellence in Teaching: an ACEs-informed faculty will better understand the extensiveness of adverse child experiences in their students and approach interactions with students with sensitive responsiveness.

# Potential Impact

- Promoting Scholarship: the prevention and mitigation of ACEs has become a funding priority for many federal and private entities in addition to Tennessee's own initiative
- Community Engagement and Service: ACEs-informed graduates will create a stronger, more reliable workforce who are better able to engage with and serve their communities.

# BRAIN Trust Development and Activities

- March 2018 Psychology and Psychiatry
- April 2018 added College of Public Health, Pediatrics, and Counseling and Human Services
- May 2018 Biology joined
- June 2018 Nursing joined
- August 2018 Pharmacy joined
- We've had guests in 2019 from the Library and Speech and Audiology
- President came in July and charged us with writing a proposal to the Board of Trustees
- White paper developed and document summarizing ACEs and TI work
- September 2018 Board of Trustees presentation
- Proposal for **The Strong BRAIN Institute** developed in January
- Presentation and focus group for Council of Academic Chairs in January
- BSB proposal submitted March (unfunded)



# ACEs-informed Culture

- Understanding that an individual's life experiences have shaped them
- Approaching people from a perspective of understanding underlying contributing factors for life issues that may be a result of or response to past or current adversity
- Treating everyone with respect as equal, valued human beings
- Acknowledging adversity, and encourage open discussion to the extent the person wishes to be open

# 6 Principles of SAMSHA's Trauma Informed Care

- Safety
- Trust and Transparency
- Collaboration and Mutuality
- Peer Support
- Empowerment, Voice, and Choice
- Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues

# Changing our Lens

- Increase awareness and understanding among faculty, staff and students of the prevalence and impact of ACEs on learning and student success
- Create an environment where students, staff, and colleagues feel safe, respected and supported
- **Underlying Question** is not “What’s wrong with you?” but “What happened to you?” or even better “What’s right with you?”
- **Difficult/problematic behaviors** may be adaptations to previous life events
- **Solutions** occur in supportive, positive relationships
  - ACEs are not an excuse, but are critical to consider
- **Improve student success** by embedding the principles of ACEs-informed educational practices



# Wearing an ACEs-informed Lens

- Student: Regularly missing class and assignments or turning assignments in late
- Staff: Often out of the office due to illness, regularly uses sick time or needs to be out of the office for various reasons
- Faculty: Defensive, hyper focused on what projects they are working on, over reactive to general conversation

# Retention Payoff

**Lincoln Alternative High School,  
Walla Walla, WA**

**Topper Academy  
Johnson City, TN**

2009-2010 798 suspensions

2010-2011 135 suspensions

2016-2017 200 credits earned

2017-2018 1150 credits earned

2009-2010 9 graduated

2010-2011 60 graduated

2016-2017 6 graduated

2017-2018 60 graduated

# ACEs-informed Interactions

## Small Gestures → Big Gains

- Be curious
- Listen to what the student has to say
- Use empathy
- Be patient
- Explain processes and choices
- Stay calm, avoid unwarranted attributions



# Potential ACEs Informed Practices

## **Written Communication**

- Syllabus development
- Email communication
- Consider the messages of signage

## **Training areas**

- Student curriculum
- New staff training
- Faculty
- Administration

# Potential ACEs Informed Practices

- **Transformation of policies/ procedures**
- **Recruitment and retention**
  - “Every interaction with a student is a chance for retention.” – President, McNeese State University



# What do you think?



- 1. What are your reactions and reflections regarding an ACEs informed strategy for student success?**
- 2. If universities were to consider an ACEs informed strategies student success what would it take to be successful and what might some of the barriers be to implementation?**

# BRAIN Trustees

- Wallace E. Dixon, Jr., Department of Psychology, College of Arts & Sciences
- Julia Bernard, Department of Counseling and Human Services, Clemmer College
- Joseph Bidwell, Department of Biological Sciences, College of Arts & Sciences
- Andrea Clements, Department of Psychology, College of Arts & Sciences
- Julia Dodd, Department of Psychology, College of Arts & Sciences
- Kimberly Hale, Center of Excellence for Early Childhood Learning and Development, Clemmer College
- Judy McCook, Office of Practice, College of Nursing
- Diana Morelen, Department of Psychology, College of Arts & Sciences
- Michele Moser, Center of Excellence for Children in State Custody, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Quillen College of Medicine
- Karen Schetzina, Department of Pediatrics, Quillen College of Medicine
- Megan Quinn, Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, College of Public Health