



Louisiana Higher Education Coalition

to Reduce Alcohol, Tobacco & Other Drug Use

2023 LaHEC Annual Professional Development Summit May 24 – 25, 2023 | Pennington Biomedical Research Center (6400 Perkins Rd., B.R. LA 70808)

Session Date & Time: Wednesday, May 24th | 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Title:

Higher Education's mental health eco-system & strategies for creating sustainable change

Abstract:

During this presentation, Dr. Okolo will provide remarks on the current state of mental health across the higher education landscape, including how federal, state and institutional level leaders are responding to the increased and pressing demands for student resources and supports on campus. Backed by current data, Dr. Okolo will provide her perspective on the 5 key considerations higher education leaders must make in addressing the college mental health crisis and to ensure colleges and universities across the nation remain student centered.

Learning Outcomes:

- Attendees will understand the current data landscape on student mental health, student success and the enrolment crisis nationwide.
- Attendees will explore strategies in establishing a 'culture of care' in expanding mental health resources on college campuses.
- Attendees will identify five key opportunities higher education stakeholders have in addressing student demands related to mental health.

Speaker Bio:

Dr. Zainab Okolo is a higher education policy and mental health expert, advocate and educator, focused on helping students overcome barriers so they can learn, earn and lead fulfilling lives.

Formerly a Strategist at Lumina Foundation, Dr. Okolo worked to significantly improve student success and increase credential attainment, by incorporating



Louisiana Higher Education Coalition

to Reduce Alcohol, Tobacco & Other Drug Use

holistic student services, including mental health. Her portfolio of work focused on the urgent needs of people of color, adult learners, student parents and other marginalized student populations striving succeed at learning beyond high school despite systemic barriers. In her previous roles, Dr. Okolo served as a policy/research associate on HCM Strategists' postsecondary team, where she worked on policy issues aimed at making higher education more accessible, affordable and relevant. She also held various student service posts and research at the University of Maryland, the American Council on Education and the Institute for Higher Education Policy.

As a clinically trained and licensed mental health professional, Dr. Okolo has supported individuals, families and institutions in adopting strategies to overcome various mental health challenges. As demonstrated by her experience and expertise, Dr. Okolo remains a strong advocate for increased and equitable access to high quality mental health services and resources for all students.

Dr. Okolo recently began a new role with The Jed Foundation as the new Senior Vice President of Policy, Advocacy and Government Relations.