Poster Presentation Summary:

Mental illnesses are extremely prevalent on college campuses, and the stigma that surrounds these illnesses cause many people to suffer alone. Suicide is the third leading cause of death on college campuses, which is astounding since suicide is a completely preventable act. After discussing with members of the community during the Honors Conference, I realized that many people did not understand the complexity of mental illnesses. 1 in 4 Americans struggle with mental illness everyday, so it is time to raise awareness about the reality of this issue. It is my hope that people will continue to educate themselves, so that we can work to raise awareness for mental illnesses.

Perhaps the biggest take home message I hoped to convey through my poster was the need to erase the stigma surrounding mental illnesses. No one deserves to feel ashamed or crazy for having a mental illness, but instead they deserve help and compassion. It is time to have an open conversation about mental health, so that others can understand that people are not defined by their mental illness. This stigma only prevents people from getting the help they deserve, which causes more and more individuals to suffer alone. An untreated mental illness can lead to destroyed relationships, self-harm and, in too many cases, death. Increasing education of the resources available to those with mental illnesses and the best ways for their friends and family to support them, will allow everyone to get the help they deserve. The stigma that surrounds mental illnesses causes too much damage so we, as a community, need to raise awareness of these illnesses, and fight for more support of this cause. Together, through these steps, we can become better advocates for those who are silenced by their illness and erase the stigma surrounding the issue.