



Mental Health Workshop at the 2024 HALI Indaba Supported by the International ACAC Opportunity Grant

Every September, the HALI Access Network convenes its Members and Friends for an annual Indaba. This year, the Indaba was held from September 8th to 12th in Nyagatere District in Rwanda. The Indaba brought together 75 advocates of higher education access, including counselors from 39 access organizations across 16 African countries and 26 Friends of HALI from the US, Europe, and across Africa.

The Indaba explored the theme of Global Learners; Local Leaders discussing how stakeholders can support HALI students to thrive in their college communities and to leverage their global experiences to impact their local communities. A key point of discussion was the wellbeing of the students who often bear the weight of the expectations and responsibilities of their communities back home. In their journey as global learners, HALI students grapple with the conflicting expectations of what they should be doing for their families and the realities of their journey. During the college application process, HALI college counselors often play the role of psychosocial counselors and they too need to be mindful of their wellbeing.

In response to these issues, the Indaba engaged a mental health expert in Rwanda to facilitate a workshop to practise strategies that HALI counselors can apply to support themselves and their students. The workshop was facilitated by the Ubuntu Center for Peace, which teaches about wellness through movement and community-based mental health approaches. The International ACAC Opportunity Grant enabled us to offer this workshop. The grant was utilized to pay the facilitator, pay for conferencing facilities & meals for all participants and buy workshop materials.

The workshop was a good start of a conversation we've not previously invested in and will inform a series of well-being sessions aimed at empowering HALI counselors to build a tool box they can refer in their college counseling practise. We are grateful to the International ACAC for supporting us to offer this workshop which has created an awareness of the gaps in our member organizations when it comes to mental health and wellbeing. The network will continue to find resources and opportunities to build the capacity, on mental health topics, of our counselors and member organizations so that they can focus their resources on college access programming.

**With gratitude,
The HALI Access Network**