Title: RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF INCREASING UW SUPPORT FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Sponsored by: Vanessa Kritzer (Public Affairs), Monica Cortes Viharo (Drama), Edward Schwieterman (Astronomy), Roy Burstein (Global Health), Daniel Grafton (Public Affairs), Michael Newton (Chemical Engineering), Jonathan Epstein (German), Thilini Kahandawarachchi (FIUTS/International Affairs), Christine Tran (Education), Biswajit Paul (Molecular Biology), Evan Firth (Oceanography), Jennifer Porter (Geography), Nazila Dabestani (Global Health), Jennifer Hubber (Epidemiology), Elliot Koontz (QERM), Jeremy McGibbon (Atmospheric Sciences), Soh Yeun Kim (English), Joseph Telegen (English), Esra Camci (Oral Health Sciences), Branden Audet (International Affairs)

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Resolution Number: 08. 14-15

WHEREAS suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students;¹ and

WHEREAS it is estimated, based on national data, that on UW’s campus there are over 700 suicide attempts and nearly 5,000 students seriously considering suicide annually;² and

WHEREAS in the last 6 years, UW has lost 16 students to suicide;³ and

WHEREAS less than one-third of the UW student body is composed of graduate students, but over half of those 16 suicides were graduate students, which means graduate students are disproportionately affected by this issue; and

WHEREAS in a recent study of UW students who did not complete their degree, over half cited “I was emotionally depressed or distressed” as a barrier, rendering it the most common reason for drop-out;⁴ and

WHEREAS suicide and behavioral health issues are stigmatized, but that stigma can be combated with education and public awareness; and

WHEREAS national studies have recommended that a campus of UW’s size have 43 FTE mental health counselors,⁵ but UW has only 26 FTE mental health counselors between the Counseling Center, Hall Health Mental Health Clinic, and all departments with embedded mental health counselors, representing a 40% deficit; and

³ University of Washington Student Death List
WHEREAS this lack of mental health counselors creates wait times of up to one month and limits mental health counselors from taking on proactive measures, such as screening and broad prevention efforts,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT SENATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON:

THAT the GPSS calls on the UW Administration to make suicide prevention a university-wide priority through communications, promotion of the SafeCampus number, trainings, and increased funding for behavioral health services; and

THAT the GPSS urges the UW Administration to examine the institution's role in its students' behavioral health and work towards making UW’s campuses healthier places for students; and

THAT the GPSS urges the UW Administration to create a 2-5 year plan to increase campus behavioral resources, including services at Health and Wellness and FTE mental health counselors, to an appropriate level; and

THAT the GPSS supports an increase in programming to provide resiliency/coping skills in some formal capacity to all incoming students; and

THAT the GPSS asks the UW Administration to provide resiliency training to all students and trainings in suicide prevention for Teaching Assistants, Research Assistants, faculty, and staff; and

THAT the GPSS supports efforts to educate Graduate Program Advisors about behavioral health challenges that graduate students face and to encourage them to make behavioral health support and suicide prevention a focus in their program planning and resources for students; and

THAT copies of this resolution be sent to UW Interim President Ana Mari Cauce; UW Interim Provost Jerry Baldasty; UW Board of Regents; GPSS President Alice Popejoy; ASUW President Christina Xiao; UW Faculty Senate; UW Graduate Program Advisors; UW Assistant Vice President of Student Life and Director of Counseling Center Ellen Taylor; Director of Hall Health Center Mark Jenkins; Hall Health Mental Health Therapist Rachel Gerken; Director of Health and Wellness Shannon Bailie; Manager of the Violence Prevention and Response Program David Girts; UW Vice Provost, Dean of the Graduate School David Eaton and Dean of Undergraduate Academic Affairs Ed Taylor.

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