Title: RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF GREATER RESOURCES AND COORDINATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

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Resolution Number: 07. 15-16

WHEREAS Interim Provost Gerald Baldasty in an email to the student body on January 20, 2016 declared, “Behavioral health promotion and suicide prevention are among our top priorities” and explained that “mental health and substance abuse are among the most cited reasons college students don’t complete their degrees”¹; and

WHEREAS “mental health” in this resolution refers broadly to behavioral health, substance abuse and dependence, and psychological well-being; and

WHEREAS the University of Washington (UW) is a source of not only academic support for students, but also a source of support for their physical and psychological health and well-being; and

WHEREAS an increasing number of undergraduate and graduate students nationwide are experiencing mental health disorders, and UW students are experiencing higher rates of anxiety and depression²; and

WHEREAS the increasing nationwide demand for mental health services on university campuses is growing much faster than institutional enrollment³; and

WHEREAS increased mental health services on university campuses have been demonstrated to increase the proportion of students graduating; and

WHEREAS approximately one-half of college students nationwide reported “overwhelming anxiety in the last year” and one-third reported “difficulty functioning in the last 12 months due to depression,” according to a nationwide 2013 survey; and

WHEREAS the UW has lost 18 students to suicide between 2008 and the present, and graduate students are at greater risk of suicide; and

WHEREAS depression among adults in the United States is a growing concern, and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends that all adults be screened for depression; and

WHEREAS the Counseling Center saw 29% more students during the last three years, which was a faster rate of increase than the national average increase of 29% over five years; and

WHEREAS there has been a 79% increase in students with psychological disability or mental health disorders supported by the Disability Resources Service (DRS) over the last 5 years; and

WHEREAS the UW currently provides services for all students through Hall Health and the Counseling Center; the Hall Health website lists 14 staff dedicated to mental health, including 3 psychiatrists, 1 psychologist, and 5 therapists; and the Counseling Center website lists 13 clinical staff; and

WHEREAS the undergraduate and graduate student body at the UW Seattle campus is more than 43,000 students, and the ratio of clinical staff at both Hall Health and the Counseling Center to students is approximately 1 : 1,592; and

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6 Office of Vice President of Student Life.


8 Correspondence with UW Counseling Center staff.


10 Counseling Center | Counseling Center Staff. Retrieved from https://www.washington.edu/counseling/internship/counseling-center-professional-staff/
WHEREAS guidelines for counselor to student ratios on university campuses are approximately 1:1,500, but these guidelines have not been updated in several decades and do not reflect increasing rates of mental health disorders and demand for services on campuses as well as decreasing stigmatization; and

WHEREAS the current staffing levels limit the number of students that can be seen at both Hall Health and the Counseling Center\(^{11}\); and

WHEREAS the School of Medicine and School of Nursing have counselors for the exclusive use of their students and provide drop-in appointments that do not require advanced scheduling; and

WHEREAS 16 biomedical graduate education programs are either housed in or affiliated with UW Medicine, but only medical students in the School of Medicine can access these exclusive counseling services; and

WHEREAS SafeCampus, Disability Resources Service (DRS), Health and Wellness, and other services on campus coordinate mental health services for students through the Counseling Center and Hall Health; and

WHEREAS in addition to the aforementioned offices, professionals and educators at UW Medicine, Peer Health Educators, UW Police Department Victim Advocates, the Title IX/ADA Coordinator, and the UW Mindfulness Project are continually engaged in efforts to promote and enhance mental health in the UW community; and

WHEREAS the distinction between the mental health services provided by the Counseling Center and Hall Health is not clear from the websites of both; and

WHEREAS students have voiced difficulty or frustration accessing mental health services at the UW; and

WHEREAS the average wait time between a student’s first contact and intake appointment at the Counseling Center usually ranges from 10 days to two weeks, but can reach up to four weeks during the busiest times of the year\(^{12}\); and

WHEREAS the current waiting time at Hall Health is 7 weeks\(^{13}\); and

\(^{11}\) Correspondence with Hall Health staff.

\(^{12}\) Correspondence with Counseling Center staff.

\(^{13}\) Correspondence with Hall Health staff.
WHEREAS graduate students, in particular, can feel isolated from mental health services and
have greater difficulty accessing them while also being exposed to unique stressors, which most
undergraduate students do not experience; and

WHEREAS students on the UW Medicine South Lake Union (SLU) Campus have particular
difficulty accessing Hall Health or the Counseling Center; and

WHEREAS the Graduate and Professional Student Senate believes strongly that increased
mental health services will improve the success and wellbeing of both graduate and
undergraduate students and strengthen the UW community; now

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

THAT the UW allocate greater resources for mental health and counseling services for students;
and

THAT the UW administration provide a 2- to 5-year plan describing how it will hire more
clinical staff for both Hall Health and the Counseling Center to provide services for a greater
number of students, reduce the average wait time for appointments, and provide a greater number
of walk-in appointments both for students in crisis and not in crisis but seeking therapy; and

THAT the aforementioned 2- to 5-year plan describe how the UW administration will more
effectively coordinate mental health services, and better communicate these services to
undergraduate and graduate students; and

THAT representatives from each unit providing mental health services meet periodically to
discuss common interests and concerns to promote greater communication and collaboration
amongst mental health professionals (the frequency and setting of the aforementioned meetings
to be determined by the representatives); and

THAT Hall Health and the Counseling Center provide services for students on the UW Medicine
SLU campus location; and

THAT the UW initiate a strategic messaging campaign to better communicate and advertise
mental health services to administrators, staff, and faculty and encourage them to communicate
these services to students during student orientation and throughout the year; and
THAT the UW also focus the strategic messaging campaign on graduate and undergraduate students during, but not limited to, new student orientations and the three weeks preceding finals each quarter; and

THAT the UW create an easy-to-access and navigate webpage dedicated to mental health services that outlines all services available on campus and helps students identify and access appropriate services; and

THAT both Hall Health and the Counseling Center provide annual data to the UW community including the number of students seeking services, the number of students receiving therapy, the average number of therapy appointments students receive, and the average wait time for an appointment; and

THAT copies of this resolution be sent to UW President Ana Mari Cauce; UW Board of Regents; Vice President of Student Life Denzil Suite; Assistant Vice President for Student Life Ellen Taylor; Provost and Dean of the Graduate School David Eaton; Associate Dean for Postdoctoral and Student Affairs Kelly Edwards; Dean of Undergraduate Academic Affairs Ed Taylor; Counseling Center Director Natacha Fu Kune; Hall Health Executive Director Mark Jenkins; Hall Health Mental Health Unit Head Rachel Gerkin; Health and Wellness Director Shannon Bailie; GPSS President Alex Bolton, ASUW President Tyler Wu; ASUW-T President Sophie Nop; ASUW-B President Dominick Juarez; SafeCampus Manager David Girils; DRS Director Bree Callahan; Title IX/ADA Coordinator Kate Leonard; Peer Health Educators Director Allison Messenger; UW Mindfulness Project Director Alysha Greig.

Presented to the GPSS for approval on May 18, 2016

Approved on May 18, 2016

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14 This website could be similar to the “Health HUB” website explored by Hall Health several years ago.