



Helping Students Face the Challenges of Life & Learning

The Counseling Center provides mental health and educational services to promote student well-being and academic success. We are part of a broad safety net to help students cope with life's challenges so they can get the most out of their UW education.

Compassion.
It's the Washington Way.

Our Story

When students struggle in school, it's rarely due to poor academic abilities; it's usually because life somehow got in the way. The Counseling Center provides mental health and educational services to promote student well-being and academic success. We help students cope with the challenges of life so they can get the most out of their UW education.

The Counseling Center, located on the fourth floor of Schmitz Hall, provides individual, couple, and group counseling for enrolled UW students. These services are provided at no charge to the student. Counseling is confidential except in very rare cases where a student's safety or the safety of the campus community is at immediate risk. Students come to the Counseling Center for a wide variety of concerns. Anxiety, depression, and relationship issues are consistently the most prevalent. However, we also see students coping with loss, academic pressure, developmental concerns (identity, career), and the aftermath of trauma.

The Counseling Center staff provide outreach and educational services to campus. Topics range from career and life planning to grief, stress management, and healthy coping skills. We provide consultation for the campus community as well as crisis intervention and response. We serve on the Student Life Consultation and Assessment Team (CAT) and the Violence Prevention and Assessment Team (VPAT). These collaborative efforts are specifically designed to identify and intervene with students of concern and to enhance campus safety.

Our Commitment

Care – Care is the essence of our work. We provide a welcoming and safe environment for students to explore themselves and their experience, learn effective coping strategies, and develop satisfying relationships. We respond when the community needs support and provide education to students, faculty, and staff regarding grief, coping, and college student mental health.

Diversity – We are committed to providing counseling and outreach services to students from a wide range of diverse backgrounds. We work to remove barriers to higher education and strive for inclusion of diversity and multiculturalism individually and collectively to enhance the learning experience for every student. We advocate for a welcoming and accepting campus community that enhances the well-being of each community member.

Access – We provide a wide range of psychological services including individual and group counseling, outreach, consultation, and walk-in care, all of which are provided at no charge to students. We play an active role in retaining students who might otherwise not be able to stay enrolled. We promote access to higher education by providing access to baseline care and support through a myriad of short-term concerns, and referrals for longer-term issues.

Engagement – We collaborate with departments on campus to meet the range of student needs. We work with faculty, staff, parents, and students to promote full engagement, self-advocacy, and the development of self-care skills needed in an ever-changing environment.

Student Learning – Students learn about themselves through counseling and participation in outreach programs. They grapple with fundamental questions like "Who am I?" and "What do I want to do with my life?" and "How do I want to be in the world?" They learn to manage their moods, ease their anxiety, advocate for themselves, take care of themselves, express themselves with authenticity, and manage the stress of achieving in a challenging academic environment. They learn interpersonal and intrapersonal skills that will serve them for a lifetime.

Quick Facts

Unless otherwise indicated, all numbers are for academic year 2009-10.

Most of our services are free to enrolled students. We are committed to providing access to all students.

1,475 students were seen for **6,800** individual, couple, or group appointments.

We provide brief counseling; the average number of sessions per client is **4.6** per year.

90% of clients are seen for **10 or fewer** sessions.

3,951 students were reached through **166** presentations, panels, and other educational and outreach activities.

A diverse group of students use the Counseling Center:

- 41%** identify as a racial or ethnic minority
- 31%** say religion is important or very important (20+ different religious affiliations)
- 22%** are first-generation college students
- 6%** are international students

Students come to the Counseling Center with a wide variety of presenting concerns:

- 33%** say finances are always or often stressful
- 20%** report that computer/internet use is a problem
- 8%** report binge drinking 3+ times in the past two weeks
- 27%** have been on medication for an emotional condition
- 24%** have seriously considered suicide
- 10%** report at least one suicide attempt

Counseling services are partially supported by the Services & Activities Fee.

We have a **Counselor on Duty** to respond to urgent matters M, W, Th, F 9am – 4:30pm and Tuesdays 9:30am – 4:30pm.

Efficiencies

In the last two years, the Counseling Center has implemented several processes to increase efficiency, including the incorporation of a Clinical Team Model, which streamlines intakes and access to care providers. A “third entry point,” has been added, which reserves a few same-day appointments for non-crisis intakes. Finally, the Center obtained a Student Technology Fee grant to implement direct data-entry by students using our service. This will enhance front-desk efficiency and improve accuracy and security of confidential student data.

Challenges & Opportunities

There is a steadily growing national focus on college student mental health. Expectations for care and support are high.

The number of students with mental health concerns and the severity of those concerns continue to increase. A 2010 survey of over 200,000 students indicated that the emotional health of college freshmen has declined to the lowest level since the annual survey was started 25 years ago. Women students, in particular, report concern about their emotional health.

The UW Counseling Center has seen sharp increases in demand for services. In Autumn 2010, we experienced a 30% increase in requests for intakes.

Reductions in funding have resulted in reduced capacity to schedule students in a timely manner; the wait for an intake routinely extends to two weeks during peak periods of the academic quarter. Once we get students in for an intake, we sometimes need to ask them to wait 2-3 weeks before regularly meeting with a counselor. To meet the needs of students waiting to see a counselor, we developed “Wellness 101” – a 3-part workshop series designed to help students learn to manage their stress and anxiety. This program has earned rave reviews from students who participate but most students still feel the need for individualized support.

The Center’s operational budget equals **one percent** of the total budget. We can buy paper and pens but have virtually no funding for equipment (computer hardware or software), educational materials, program development or implementation, or professional development for counseling staff.

The Counseling Center works closely with Residential Life, providing intensive training for RAs, on-site consultation and support regarding students of concern, and educational opportunities for students living in the residence halls.

Ideally, we would be able to provide comprehensive “Gatekeeper Training” for all faculty and staff on campus, helping them recognize signs that a student may be at risk. This kind of training is standard for universities nationwide and is a critical aspect of a campus safety net. Increased visibility through our collaborative efforts (CAT, VPAT, outreach, and consultation) has increased faculty referrals of students for counseling. However, lack of resources has prevented us from providing comprehensive educational programming for faculty and staff.



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