

Chancellor's Graduate & Professional Student Advisory Board (CGPSA) Mental Health Resources / Accessing Health-Care Subcommittee Report 2021-2022

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Background

Within the academic experience of graduate and professional students, mental health and wellness is a commonly forgotten consideration. For example, 27% of UC graduate and professional students experience a lack of satisfaction with their life (according to the University of California Graduate Student Well-Being Survey Report in 2017). In addition, 35% of students experience general depression symptoms (according to the same survey). This leads us as a subcommittee to one question, what can we do? Our previous efforts as a subcommittee focused on understanding the landscape of mental health and wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic, both as an unfulfilled need in the student body and as a supportive service offered by the university. With this constructed framework, our ongoing concerns regarding mental wellness outcomes hinges on the efficacy and inclusivity of current strategic plans on campus. Therefore, we are currently inspired to understand the acting plans at both administrative and student levels to improve mental health futures for graduate and professional students.

Objectives and Action Plan

The Mental Health Resources/ Accessing Health-Care subcommittee is in its third year as part of CGPSA. In this year, we were motivated to take insight from the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased need for mental health resources during this time. In 2021, the subcommittee expanded our interests to continue our partnership with certain organizations on campus plus additional entities to gauge graduate student need. Our main priorities were:

1. Continue our involvement with the Mental Health Task Force (MHT) assembled by Dr. Cory Vu
2. Expand our graduate student representation to Thriving in Grad School and other entities at graduate studies

Continue our involvement with the Mental Health Task Force (MHT) assembled by Dr. Cory Vu

The subcommittee has continued their work began in 2019 by being the graduate student representatives for the Mental Health Task Force spearheaded by Dr. Cory Vu. We continued to participate in the MHT quarterly meetings. MHT has received \$15 million allocated to mental health from UCOP. The focus is to advance health equity in the following areas: well-being, success, persistence, and graduation. The funding can expand existing services and resources and can highlight collaboration and requires an officer, committee/task force, and proposal to UCOP. Additionally, the funding will be allocated in the following 3 Tiers:

1. Tier 1 – Crisis Response – This tier will be a Health 34 Program headed by Deb Johnson with a crisis response model from the Fire Department that includes mobile services with nurses trained in mental health emergencies. It is unclear if responses

- will be initiated by Police Dispatch. In addition, this tier will expand CAN (Community. Advising Network) with the addition of 8 counselors and 3 psychiatrists. Of these new hires, 2 will be specifically implemented in CAN network which includes - Center for Chicana Academic Student Success; Education Opportunity Program; LGBTQIA Resource Center; Women's Resources and Research Center; etc.
2. Tier 2 - Early Intervention- This tier was created by subject matter experts on campus. Non-clinical Case Management (OSSJA) will be hiring 3 additional managers, 1 embedded with graduate students specifically who will serve the estimated 7-7.2 thousand grad students on campus. Currently, it is very hard to transfer care for low-income students from their original counties. Therefore, 1 manager is specifically linked to this job. In addition, a specific case manager for students with disabilities and medical students and their needs will be hired. The goal is to decrease ratio from 10,000:1 to 5,000:1. A total of 8 non-clinical case managers comprise this tier. Lastly, a trans advocate and Student Services Specialist, new position working as part of LGBTQIA Resource Center
 3. Tier 3 - Comprehensive Universal Prevention and Wellness Programs- A CARE Prevention Educator will be hired as a new position to support students who are victims of sexual violence. In addition, Faculty/Staff Gatekeeper training will be implemented in this tier from faculty expressing the need for trainings to support students about stress, etc. A Peer-to-Peer Student Ambassador Program will be initiated and is like the Aggie Public Health Ambassadors with COVID-19 program. This Peer-to-Peer program will work with Aggie Compass and graduate studies. This program will be the point of contact to help students with access to the appropriate resources. In addition, a Mental Health Awareness Campaign will be launched as a holistic program that covers multiple aspects of mental health (crisis, response, resources, etc.). Lastly, there are 14-15 grants in Equity in Mental Health Grants, from campus that are under review. These grants include weight stigma and classroom seating study, sexual violence, and sexual harassment climate survey; Aggie Orientation (Health Wellness), CA&ES Wellness course pilot, Athlete Guidance and Support Group Pilot.

Now that the funding has been made available the MHT role is to: monitor mental health access and services, monitor performance of the funding plan, implementing annual surveys and assessments, report campus outcomes to UCOP and UCD leadership, bring in groups that receive funding to see their work with the funding.

Key discussion points in these talks included no plans to use livehealthonline.net for students, no copay for students with UC SHIP though, Health Center transitioned some services to online counseling, new recruitments will have that be a part of their job. For Fall Quarter, case loads were overwhelmed signaling those students are distressed. Case loads have doubled in comparison to 2020 with severity of cases are generally more complicated. In addition, unhoused

students' program will have hired one full-time FTE that focuses only/primarily on unhoused students. This position will create a larger group/committee (~15 students) and advertises program on campus. This group will also go out into the community and brings them resources. A significant percentage of unhoused population want to remain in their vehicles etc. The MHT is looking to see what resources should be provided for them.

With 32,000 undergraduate students on campus, grad students can be easily overlooked. The MHT is looking to see what overlap graduate students have with undergraduate students and how are they different. The MHT wants to work on prevention piece where have someone reaches out to programs to inform faculty and graduate students about resources that are available. Our key inquiries to the MHT involving graduate students were the following: What is included in the annual survey allocation? Are the peer-to-peer programs only for undergraduate students? If not, will graduate students in the peer-to-peer program be paid for participating? Assessment is important to the subcommittee and metrics with the MHTF group to receive sufficient data is needed.

Expand our graduate student representation to Thriving in Grad School and other entities at graduate studies

In addition to the MHT, the subcommittee has created representation in Thriving in Grad School. Thriving in Graduate School to learn how to cultivate well-being in your personal, academic, and professional life. This year-long program includes a weekly newsletter and frequent in-person workshops and informal events. Graduate students can sign up at any time. Thriving in Graduate School is partially run by Sydney Sullivan who is a graduate student researcher spearheading the program. Our subcommittee has participated in a panel put on my Thriving in Graduate School and focus groups run by Sydney. With this panel participation, our subcommittee was able to pay our participating members for their time.

Summary of Recommendations

We recommend the continuation of the CGPSA mental health subcommittee to have graduate student representation with the MHT. Additional recommendations would lie with communicating with Dr. Cory Vu to set the precedent for the additional involvement of this subcommittee. In addition, the subcommittee recommends to partner with Thriving in Graduate School as a focused approach to actively survey the graduate student mental health well-being. It is recommended that the subcommittee next year instill a framework with this set entity in graduate studies. In addition, it is recommended the subcommittee partner with the GSA to have further graduate representation for Mental-Health Advocacy.