COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

September 27, 2004

MINUTES

Attending: Ken Clarke, Janet Corson-Rikert, David DeVries, Greg Eells, Sharon Dittman, Cynthia Farina, Kent Fuchs, Ellen Gainor, Ashley Higgins, Kent Hubbell, Erica Kagan, Don King, Phil Meilman, Susan Murphy, Kathy Okun, Sonia Rucker (for Ray Dalton), Lisa Ryan, Ritch Savin-Williams, John Siliciano, Linda Starr, Sharron Thrasher, Charlie Van Loan, Wai Kwong Wong

Executive Committee members: Le Norman Strong, Charlie Wolcott

Upcoming meetings:
- Tuesday, October 26 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. Gannett Health Center, Moore Library
- Friday, December 3 1:00-3:00 p.m. TBA

I. Welcome
   A. Introductions
      Janet Corson-Rikert opened the meeting with introductions of the members and announced the new members who will be part of the Council this year:
      1. Steve Carvell (Hotel)
      2. Alan Mathios (Human Ecology)
      3. Kathy Okun (President’s Office)
      4. John Siliciano (Vice Provost)
      5. Lisa Staiano-Coico (Human Ecology)
      6. Stan Taft (AAP)
      7. Sharron Thrasher (Campus Life)

   B. CMHW Website
      The Council has a website, on which meeting minutes and other relevant materials will be posted for the convenience of Council members and communication with the campus. Please feel free to direct others to this site: http://www.gannett.cornell.edu/campushealth/CMHW.html

         The current (and corrected) CMHW member list is posted on the website.

   C. Gift from Jennifer Roberts, College of Arts and Sciences, Class of 2004
      Jennifer was a Cornell Tradition Fellow and a Bartel's Scholar in 2003-04, engaged in an action research project focused on student stress at Cornell during which she conducted a series of student interviews and focus groups, as well as focus groups with faculty and administrators. In May, Jennifer received one of 10 Cornell Tradition Senior Recognition Awards. Through these awards, Cornell Tradition fellows are recognized for their community service and leadership efforts. The Senior Recognition Award establishes a $4,000 Cornell Tradition named fellowship for other students during the 2004-05 academic year and awards $500 as a charitable contribution to a non-profit agency of the student's choice. Jennifer has directed this contribution to support the work of the Council on Mental Health and Welfare. We will use this gift to support the Council's research task group, building on the work Jennifer did last year and expanding our understanding of the nature of the particular challenges we face here at Cornell.

II. Review of Spring, 2004 work of the Council (Janet Corson-Rikert)
   A. Charge to the Council
      Provost Biddy Martin and Vice President Susan Murphy formed the Council in the fall of 2003, inviting participation from faculty, students, and staff from all colleges, the graduate and professional schools, a range of student services offices, and numerous student organizations. The Council was charged with studying the campus environment and to offer advice on opportunities for reducing risks and
increasing support for members of the Cornell community facing mental health challenges.

B. Executive Committee on Campus Health
The scope of the Executive Committee on Campus Health, comprised of senior administrator at Cornell, was expanded to oversee and facilitate the work of the Council and address other campus health concerns.

C. Areas of inquiry and focus for the Council on Mental Health and Welfare in Spring semester, 2004
1. Development of a framework for intervention and prevention
2. Response from the Council to President Lehman’s Call to Engagement
3. Consideration of suicide prevention strategies, specifically the University of Illinois model
4. Formation of Working Groups
   a. Research Committee (collaborating with the Jed Foundation and The Educational Development Center to consider data needs and evaluation of selected strategies
   b. Policy Committee / Suicide prevention (see below)
5. Adoption of the Asian/Asian American Task Force (formed in Fall, 2002) as a working group of the Council

D. Plans for Fall, 2004
1. Review other programs/approaches, including but not limited to:
   a. United States Air Force (December 3 meeting)
   b. Jed Foundation
2. Discuss efforts currently underway at Cornell
   a. Today: discussion of issues raised by and recommendations of the Asian/Asian American Task Force
   b. October 26: discussion about the University Counseling and Advising Network (UCAN) and proposals for expansion
3. Define our research priorities with the guidance of the Research Committee
4. Continue exploration of institutional policy and protocol options related to suicide prevention with the guidance of the Institutional Policy/Suicide Prevention Committee

III. Report from Policy/Suicide Prevention Committee (Greg Eells)
A. Follow up on the Joffe (University of Illinois) suicide prevention model
The committee was asked follow-up on our discussions in spring 2004 of the University of Illinois suicide prevention model and to explore whether there are elements of that model that might be effective at Cornell.

1. Mandatory evaluation
The committee recommends that we pilot a program to mandate evaluations of students who have been hospitalized following a suicide attempt or serious threat. We are proceeding with a collaboration between CAPS and Community Development and Graduate and Professional Student Housing to formalize a process to support these mandatory evaluations. At present, Cornell does not have an “enforcement mechanism” that would support this approach for all students. The committee will explore this as a next step.

2. Campus wide alert team
The committee is developing a recommendation for a confidential committee, like those existing on a variety of other campuses including the University of Illinois, with representation from a variety of key campus offices that would meet on a weekly or bi-weekly basis to try to avert student crises before they happen. They would consider strategies for intervening with students with complex problems that put them at high risk of a crisis and/or behaviors that have a negative impact on others. This recommendation will be presented at the October meeting of the Council.

3. Caring community statement
The University of Illinois model has at its core a “caring community statement” that provides a common understanding of university values around which a number of their strategies have been developed. The committee believes that such a statement, with a profile modeled after Cornell’s “Open Doors, Open Hearts, Open Minds” statement would be very valuable to the Cornell community and the work of this Council. The committee will continue its work on this through the fall semester.

B. University Counseling and Advising Network (UCAN)
The committee has discussed ideas for expanding the University Counseling and Advising Network (UCAN). At the next meeting of the Council, the committee will discuss UCAN and its recommendations.
IV. Discussion of the report from the Cornell Asian/Asian American Task Force (3ATF)

Report presented by Wai Kwong Wong, 3ATF co-chair, CMHW member, CAPS psychologist.
See Appendix following minutes for full report.

A. Formation of the 3ATF
Vice President for Student and Academic Services Susan Murphy and Provost Biddy Martin established the Cornell Asian and Asian American Campus Climate Task Force on November 26, 2002. The task force was charged with developing recommendations for a campus-wide approach to addressing campus climate, services, and program issues as they relate to the Asian and Asian American (AAA) community at Cornell.

B. Goals of 3ATF
1. Increase in AAA student satisfaction
2. Reduction in number of AAA student suicides
3. Appropriate services and programs
4. Reduction in number of bias-related incidents
5. Improvement in overall campus climate and services

C. Recommendations of 3ATF
1. Staff position dedicated to AAA student programs and support
2. Student community/cultural center
3. Provide support services (e.g., CAPS) in more natural community contexts
4. Expand UCAN outreach functions and services
5. Utilize online resources for student support
6. Faculty and staff training
7. Strengthen recruitment and retention of ethnically similar staff
8. Consider instituting diversity course requirement
9. Examine pertinent policies and procedures to reduce environmental stressors and to improve services

D. Discussion
1. Information/concerns about AAA students
   a. Completed suicides at Cornell in the past 10 years by students of Asian descent have been primarily by male graduate students in the hard sciences and engineering (though there have been some exceptions). We do not have data on suicide attempts; but anecdotally, the Crisis Managers and CAPS have not noted a higher rate of attempts by AAA students than their peers.
   b. Disparities between male and female AAA have not been observed in the research by the 3ATF, except in the suicide numbers; and the experiences of international Asian undergraduate students (many of whom went to high school in the US) seem to be more similar to Asian American undergraduate students than Asian graduate students.
   c. Charlie Van Loan observed that 13% of the undergraduate students in Engineering are international students. In general, they are not financial aid eligible and are paying full tuition: it seems appropriate to direct resources to support them. He also observed that the financial arrangements some international students have to pay for their education (e.g., students from Singapore who get four years of support) can put tremendous pressure on students to get through their undergraduate coursework in three years in order to make use of a fourth year to get further training or complete a masters degree.
   d. The invisibility of AAA students as individuals/communities with particular needs is a significant concern and may vary from college to college, department to department.

2. Needs for research/evaluation
   a. We discussed the importance of further discerning discrete needs of various subsets of the community as we proceed in developing responses to increase the likelihood that our efforts are effective.
   b. Identifying support for ongoing research to understand more about the challenges we face and the evaluation of efforts to address them is an immediate challenge.
   c. Phil Meilman, CAPS therapist working closely with the research work group and the Jed Foundation collaboration, is going to Beijing in November to participate in the first ever conference on suicide prevention for Chinese universities and colleges. Phil will be one of the presenters at this conference, and will also be working with others to understand more about the particular cultural influences for Chinese students that might inform our efforts. (He will be working closely with Michael Phillips, MD who is the

3. Faculty/staff recruitment and retention issues
   a. National data shows that faculty retention rates have a strong correlation with student retention and graduation rates.
   b. Faculty recruitment (and how to count) is an ongoing discussion among faculty.
   c. Nationwide, there are very few AAA senior level administrators on college and university campuses.
   d. There is a very low representation among student services, as well. Need to get more people interested in this field and “in the pipeline.”

4. Recommendations from the 3ATF: Discussion
   a. It will be important to prioritize goals and strategies to be most effective. For example, is it more urgent to address the mental health issues or the campus climate issues? It may be important to push on all fronts at once, but that makes it a more daunting challenge in terms of implementation.
   b. We can do more to utilize natural gateways and community contexts through which to reach some AAA students:
      ▪ International Students and Scholars Office
      ▪ AAA religious communities through CURW
      ▪ AAA student organizations
      ▪ Student residences and community centers: Community Development; Graduate and Professional Student Housing
      ▪ Asian Studies
      ▪ Asian American Studies
      ▪ Off-site provision of service/consultation by CAPS
   c. It’s important to find ways to help students identify with their own communities, but also connect more broadly with the student body.
   d. Expanding mental health services through CAPS and UCAN is very important. Preventing and responding to mental health crises (including suicide) require a campus-wide effort because many students who attempt/commit suicide never make contact with CAPS.
   e. Creating a student services position for someone whose primary focus will be on the needs of AAA students and who will participate in the implementation of prioritized strategies had significant support from Council members.
   f. In addition, we discussed the importance of training of staff and faculty members (including those who work with formal and informal networks of AAA students), and reframing our thinking as we hire for positions in student services to give greater priority to the background and training that will strengthen our outreach and mental health efforts.
   g. Additional strategies:
      ▪ Wai Wong and Phil Meilman have been working on a letter (to be signed by several AAA staff and faculty) that will be sent to AAA student naming concerns about the mental health and well-being of AAA students and identifying resources that are available to them on campus.
      ▪ Lee Lee (retired professor and advocate for the health and well-being of students, particularly AAA students) has suggested that a similar letter be sent to the parents of Asian international students, normalizing the challenges students face and the use of support services at Cornell.

5. Recommendations from the 3ATF: Next Steps
   Susan Murphy addressed questions about what will happen next with the 3ATF report and recommendations
   a. Once the report is finalized, 3ATF members plan to present it widely for study and discussion.
   b. Because the task force has been working hard at this for two years, Susan emphasized the importance of proceeding in a timely way.
   c. That said, it does seem important to take some amount of time for senior university administrators to ask a bigger question before making decisions about whether and what resources we need to add or redirect resources: What, in the 21st century, should be the structure for addressing the needs of minority and underrepresented minority students? We have been building on a model that was established in 1964 and has evolved more out of convenience than out of an evolving strategic plan. Should we not consider the world this generation of students is going to be in and decide, with that in mind, the best ways to garner our resources to address their needs?
d. The CMHW can begin work on a number of these recommendations; but the first two need to be discussed by senior administration. The Executive Committee will discuss the best approach to proceeding.

Minutes taken by Sharon Dittman
APPENDIX

Report from the Cornell Asian/Asian American Task Force (3ATF)

Presented by Wai Kwong Wong, PhD to the Council on Mental Health and Welfare

September 27, 2004

A. Cornell demographics—Asian/Asian American students comprise:
1. 17% of student body
2. 55% of international students
3. > 60% of minority undergraduate enrollment
4. 45% increase between 1990 and 2002

B. Diversity of the Asian/Asian American student population at Cornell
1. “Asian/Asian American” is a term of convenience: combines international and American students; umbrella term “Asian” may not have much meaning for many
2. 26 different ethnic groups at Cornell (OMEA, 2002)
3. 24 different countries of origin (ISSO, 2002)
4. 43 distinct ethnic groups (2000 census)
5. Many other dimensions of difference, including SES and educational level, culture/acculturation, religion, years/generations in the US
6. Such differences probably also contribute to differences in sense of belonging on campus, expressions of distress, help-seeking behavior

C. Why the interest at this time in understanding more about AAA students at Cornell?
1. 50% of completed student suicides in past 10 years are in AAA students
2. Student dissatisfaction as reflected in surveys
3. Bias-related incidents
4. Underutilization of support services/CAPS (10% of students seen at CAPS in 2003–04 were 3A students, compared to 17% of student body)
5. Perceived lack of services/resources by AAA students
6. Under-representation among faculty and staff (6.5% of faculty; <2% of staff)
7. “Conceptual invisibility” connected to “model minority” stereotype which holds that 3A students have no special needs, though they experiences consequences of being a racial minority in a predominantly Caucasian community.

D. National perspective
1. Overall suicide rate per 100,000 population (Shiang, 1998)
   a. All races: 11.2
   b. Caucasian: 12.6
   c. Asian-American: 7.0
2. Big 10 Student Suicide Study (Silverman et al., 1997)
   a. College and university students (all ethnicities): 7.5
   b. Matched national sample: 15.0
3. 486 documented cases of anti-Asian hate crimes, including 4 murders in 1999 (NAPALC, 2000); up 57 from 429 in 1998

E. Goals of 3ATF
1. Increase in AAA student satisfaction
2. Reduction in number of AAA student suicides
3. Appropriate services and programs
4. Reduction in number of bias-related incidents
5. Improvement in overall campus climate and services

F. Assumptions and principles
1. AAA community comprises 1/6 of student population: any improvement in well-being of AAA’s will have significant impact on campus climate for all.
2. Real change is a shared responsibility shared by students, faculty and staff, across entire campus community.
3. Real change requires coordinated, comprehensive and sustained effort and commitment.
4. Stereotypes exist and are detrimental to the psychological, social and intellectual well-being of students, as well as contrary to principles and values of the university.

G. Needs assessment
1. Qualitative—meetings with 26 different groups
2. Quantitative
   a. Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) surveys
   b. National College Health Assessment
   c. Other sources
3. Benchmarking with other institutions
4. Literature review

H. Model minority?
1. Stereotype of Asians and Asian Americans
   a. Smart
   b. Good at math/science
   c. Hard-working
   d. Self-reliant
   e. Economically and educationally successful
2. In University context, might suggest that, compared to peers, a higher percentage of AAA students
   a. Go to college
   b. Do better in SAT math and GRE quantitative
   c. Study engineering, business, or biological sciences
   d. Graduate
3. Problems with stereotype in general
   a. More likely to have less than 9th grade education
   b. More likely to live in poverty
   c. Family vs. per capita income
   d. Ethnic differences
4. Problems with stereotype specific to AAA college student experience
   a. Lower GPAs— Toupin & Son (1991)
   b. Higher number on academic probation— Toupin & Son (1991)
   c. Higher number on medical leaves— Toupin & Son (1991)
   d. Less likely to graduate in 4 years— Toupin & Son (1991)
   e. Stereotype threat—Cheryan & Bodenhausen (2000)
   g. 1/3 felt they didn’t know whether or not their work was fairly graded (CU Center for Teaching and Learning, 1998)
   h. Pressures to conform to stereotypes and experiences of faculty racism (Ancis, Sedlacek & Mohr, 2000)
   i. Dissatisfaction with student services and subtle experiences of discrimination (Suzuki, 2002)
   j. Prevent students from acknowledging problems (Lee, 1996; Yang, 2002)
   k. Feelings of shame (Chu, 2002; Yang, 2002)
   l. Reluctance to seek assistance (CU Center for Teaching and Learning, 1998; Yang, 2002)
   m. Less attention from TA’s and faculty (CU Center for Teaching and Learning, 1998)
   n. Lower rates of utilization of counseling centers (Chen, 1999)
   o. Increased risk of depression and anxiety, especially among newly arrived or foreign-born (Chen, 1999; Chun, Eastman, Wang & Sue, 1998)
   p. Distress tend to be underestimated by others, especially if rater was white (Okazaki, 2002)
   q. Can contribute to belief that AAA students do not need academic support or other services
   r. Double marginalization
      * “Simultaneously exalted and ignored in the U.S. imagination” (Lee, 1996)
      * Official neglect of development of appropriate programs and services (Educational Testing Service, 1997)
I. Characteristics of AAA students at Cornell
   This information is based primarily on the experiences of undergraduates. Little information is available about AAA graduate students. Research data suggests that Asian undergrads and Asian American undergrads are more similar to one another than to other groups, so the information below pertains to both.
   1. More intensely focused on academics (spend more time attending classes, working, on computer)
   2. Less focused on non-academic activities (less socializing, exercising, sports, Greek involvement, studying abroad)
   3. Lower self-ratings (popularity, self-confidence, leadership ability, drive for achievement)
   4. Pragmatic expectations (view college as preparation for graduate/professional school; see success in financial terms)
   5. Desire for moral/ethical development
   6. Desired emphasis on understanding racism and diversity
   7. Endorse diversity course requirement
   8. Health-related:
      a. Less alcohol/drug use
      b. Less sleep or exercise
      c. More stress and sleep problems
      d. More likely to report sexually or physically abusive relationship
      e. More hopelessness
      f. Least likely to utilize Gannett services in general, CAPS in particular
      g. 35% of psychiatric hospitalizations
      h. 25% of medical leaves of absence
   9. Taken together, suggests a picture of a group of students with the tendency to put academics above self-care or personal growth activities, who might regard failure more seriously because college is seen as a necessary means toward a long-term goal.

J. AAA student experiences at Cornell
   1. Less satisfied overall
   2. More ambivalent coming into Cornell
      a. more likely to list Cornell as second, third, or lower choice than peers
      b. more likely to anticipate transferring
      c. more likely to indicate that parents’ wishes are “very important” in their decision to attend college, possibly suggestive of lower internal motivation to be at Cornell
   3. Dissatisfaction with faculty/staff interactions
   4. Less likely to seek advice (on courses, academic/career concerns or personal issues)
   5. International graduate students: problems with advisors
   6. 50% of Asian American seniors report little or no sense of community
   7. Very or fairly difficult to have ideas taken seriously by peers
   8. Anecdotal accounts of bias/discrimination
   9. Desire for “safe place”
   10. Concern about grades (perception that students at CU work harder but get lower grades than students at peer institutions)
       a. Asian international students: A/A- GPA’s overall and in major
       b. Asian American students: B+/B overall; B/B- in major
   11. International student concerns
       a. Visa issues (more serious since 9/11; because of monetary and time costs, many elect to remain here rather than visit home, deepening homesickness and isolation)
       b. Language problems
       c. Student-advisor relationship (confusion around expectations, learning styles, dynamics with authority figures)
       d. Intense pressures (academic, financial, social isolation)

K. Perceptions of AAA student stresses and pressures
   1. Higher academic stress
   2. Family pressures
   3. Peer pressures
   4. Interpersonal stresses
L. Challenges in working with AAA students
1. Reluctant to seek help
2. More difficult to establish relationship
3. Tendency to minimize difficulties
4. Emphasis on academic/career concerns
5. Reluctance to utilize traditional counseling services

M. Best practices
1. Make an effort to personalize contacts
   a. Establish ongoing relationships
   b. Have contacts in informal contexts
2. Need for network of services/contacts
   a. Assist students in making connections with a particular individual, not an office that might be perceived as impersonal)
   b. Make phone call with student if necessary
3. Frame service in academic or career context
   a. Less stigmatizing
   b. Often most primary in student’s mind
   c. Establishes credibility—lays groundwork for trust/relationship
   d. Provides gateway for discussion of personal issues
   e. Need to provide more training and staff for career services
4. UCAN
   a. Provides training, student-centered consultations, networking and direct service to students
   b. Established very good working relationships with various offices and programs
   c. High availability, especially for urgent or crisis cases or for students who otherwise would not utilize CAPS
   d. Ability to outreach to students directly in the community
   e. More flexible than CAPS
   f. Not “counseling or therapy, ” so students often more open to meeting
   g. Less constrained by confidentiality
   h. Case management/collaborative
   i. 50+% of students minority, international, economically disadvantaged: most of those are AAA students

N. Comparison of programs and services at other institutions
1. Cornell has a relative lack of resources for addressing AAA student needs and concerns, compared to peer institutions.
2. Universities/colleges with community or cultural centers, most overseen by an assistant dean or director with administrative support staff: Columbia, Dartmouth, Earlham College, Indiana University at Bloomington, Mt. Holyoke College, Pomona College, Princeton, Rutgers, Stony Brook, Swarthmore, UC Davis, University of Connecticut, University of Illinois at Chicago, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Iowa, UMass Amherst, University of Michigan, University of Washington, Yale
3. Cultural centers provide a safe space, gathering place, focal point of an often large and dispersed community. They disseminate information; promote integration of social and academic pursuits; provide an accessible venue for support services, advising and informal faculty/student interactions; and they have a positive impact on students’ perceptions of their university’s commitment to diversity.

O. Recommendations
1. Staff position dedicated to AAA student programs and support
   a. AAA community largest community of color on campus and fastest growing
   b. Only one w/o dedicated staff position and w/o dedicated space such as an office, center or living unit
   c. Needs of community too great to be add-ons to existing staff positions
   d. Position needs to be located in an office than spans campus and can serve as coordinating hub
   e. Assistant Dean position within Dean of Students Office of Student Support?
   f. Specific program recommendations that may be implemented: mentoring program; continuing work begun by 3ATF; explore increased utilization of online/internet resources; alumni development
2. Student community/cultural center
   a. 3000+ AAA students at Cornell
   b. Only group w/o space dedicated to their service needs
c. Longstanding interest by students – at least one prior proposal
d. Came up repeatedly in meetings with students as well as student members of 3ATF
e. Show Cornell’s commitment to AAA community
f. Center would be natural link with other student support and diversity programs
g. One possibility is 2nd floor of WSH as part of proposed renovations (AAA already are more likely to utilize student center; proximity to other student support and diversity-related programs)

3. Provide support services (e.g., CAPS) in more natural community contexts
   a. Off-site hours in student centers, colleges, residences, etc.
   b. Increase services/resources to Graduate School
   c. Increase services/resources at ISSO
   d. Increase private office space

4. Expand UCAN outreach functions and services
   a. Clinical outreach services have demonstrated support and success
   b. Build on UCAN model to develop a university-wide outreach system for pre-crisis and crisis intervention and case management
   c. Reach students who are at-risk but who do not access traditional support services
   d. Build on network linking academics with resources such as career counseling, medical and psychological services

5. Utilize online resources for student support
   a. AAA spend more time on computers and online than other groups and socialize more online
   b. Strengthen Dear Uncle Ezra, Cornell’s online advice, information and referral service (reaches out to “invisible” and isolated students)
   c. Provide education on services/resources, AAA issues and concerns

6. Faculty and staff training

7. Strengthen recruitment and retention of ethnically similar staff

8. Consider instituting diversity course requirement

9. Examine pertinent policies and procedures to reduce environmental stressors and to improve services
   a. Academic policies regarding changing majors/colleges
   b. Improving inter-office communications when dealing with student crises
   c. Faculty/staff early warning system (some colleges already do something like this)
   d. Conducting full formal reviews after each student death or suicide