
Executive Committee member(s):

Guests: John Silicano, Vice Provost; Jan Talbot, Health Educator Gannett Health Services

Upcoming meetings:
Wednesday April 9, 2008  3:30–5:00 p.m.    Hall of Fame Room, Scholkopf Annex

I. Welcome and Opening – Kent Hubbell, Dean of Students

   A. We are at a turning point where we can see the gains we’ve made in strengthening our campus’ network of support for students in distress and we want to keep moving forward in these efforts to create an even more caring community. We have received money from an alumna for the creation of additional mental health educational materials, which the Dean of Students Office of Student Support and Gannett Health Services will work on collaboratively.

II. Gatekeeper Preparedness: Strategies for Faculty and Staff – Tim Marchell, Director of Mental Health Initiatives (see powerpoint slides)

   A. We use the term “gatekeepers” to mean people who open the gates.

      1. Gatekeepers
         a. know the signs and symptoms of distress
         b. interpret the signs as a problem
         c. feel a sense of agency or responsibility to assist
         d. know what to do
         e. know the support and referral resources

      2. Focus is on “distress”, which is a continuum from adjustment difficulties and stress to severe mental illnesses or organic brain diseases.

      3. Currently the emphasis is on assisting students in distress, however the broader context includes education and training on recognizing and assisting any community member who is demonstrating distress.

      4. In the last two years, approximately fifteen faculty departments have received gatekeeper education. There are still seventy plus departments to reach. Residential Programs and facilities staff from Campus Life, College of Engineering student services staff, Cornell Outdoor Education staff and Olin/Kroch/Uris Library staff have received gatekeeper training. There are thousands of potential gatekeepers (staff members) who still need to be trained as “eyes and ears” of our community.

III. Challenges

   A. Questions posed to the council

      1. How do we bring this initiative to scale?
      2. How do we increase leadership statements about our shared responsibility (for the mental health of our community)?
3. How do we gain adequate access to our potential gatekeepers, faculty and staff?

IV. Discussion Themes and Comments

A. Concern regarding adequate resources at CAPS to handle increase in demand for services as more people are trained to notice signs of distress.

1. The phone triage system allows students to speak with a counselor the same day or within 24 hours of their initial call to CAPS. There are appointment slots available for emergency situations Monday through Friday during regular business hours. Appointments for students triaged into the “urgent” category are usually scheduled within 48 hours. Students requesting appointments for non-emergency, non-urgent, more routine mental health care may have to wait 2-3 weeks to see a therapist at CAPS or may be offered a sooner appointment at Family and Children’s Services off-campus.

2. Gatekeeper education and training teaches people to notice the signs of distress and how to talk directly with the student and/or refer to another appropriate student support resource (e.g. the academic advising office within the college). This community support approach is being employed with the belief that students in distress may be identified earlier on so that potential crises can be averted and the need for clinical intervention not always necessary.

3. The Community Consultation and Intervention resource out of CAPS in Gannett provides faculty and staff members support and guidance on how they can work with a student who either does not want to seek traditional mental health support or who has established trust with and is best supported by a “coached” faculty or staff member.

B. Roles of campus community members.

1. In the College of Human Ecology, staff members from two different offices (Student Development and Career Development) are cross-trained so that there is more than one person in the college who knows each student.

2. In staff gatekeeper trainings (e.g. library staff), a strong message is given that if someone is concerned about a student, they need to connect with another person (co-worker, supervisor, or Gannett) to think through the situation and come up with an action plan. It is important not to try to handle a concerning situation by one’s self.

3. College of Engineering student services staff requested practical training with role plays to help them feel equipped to handle the types of student-in-distress situations that they increasingly find themselves faced with.

4. “Let’s Talk” walk-in support and consultation is offered at 10 strategic locations across campus in order to be highly accessible to students who do not seek out traditional counseling but who at a risk for distress. Several locations are designed to attract graduate and professional students.

5. Not all situations require a clinical intervention (CAPS therapist). Being a caring community member means being able to engage, relatively easily, in a conversation with a friend, peer, colleague or co-worker about how they are really doing and knowing what the available resources are if a referral seems appropriate to assist the person in distress

6. Academic advising offices have increasingly needed to triage student distress levels to determine whether or not they have the resources to help the student work through the situation or they need to consult with or refer to other student services offices on campus in order to assist students get the appropriate support. Staff working in these (academic advising) offices need to clearly articulate that their office now has this role of triaging students in varying levels of distress, so that more time is allotted to providing this function.

C. When should the colleges or other student support offices handle distressed/distressing students themselves and when should these situations be referred to CAPS?

1. There are broad levels of severity such as directly expressed suicidal ideation vs. frustration with inability to organize and prioritize academic workload, which seem fairly easy to differentiate and address with appropriate resources. However, more often than not there are subtle signs or symptoms of distress that may be noticed where it is not immediately clear which resources might be most helpful to support the student. This is why it is imperative that campus community members receive education and training in not only the signs and symptoms of distress, but also in how to initiate a conversation in order to discern the level of distress, in how to consult with a resource to come up with an action plan and to be made aware of the myriad resources available to support students all along the continuum of distress.

D. Access to potential gatekeepers (for education and training)

1. Need for institutionalization of gatekeeper training
   a. Keep in mind that current systems are taxed, evolving and need to be revised
   b. Need to utilize existing networks and further develop effective models in additional places
• Example: the Vet College has Peer Support Network that is a partnership between HR, administration and students/faculty/staff

c. Leaders in each college are needed to make clear, strong statements to all department chairs regarding opening up access to faculty through department meetings.

d. New faculty chair and new supervisor trainings are potential access points.
  • Pam Strausser from Organizational Development/HR is working with John Silicano on specific modules for chair training and has offered a module time for gatekeeper education.

e. Student gatekeepers must be trained as well as faculty and staff.

f. Always having a small component of gatekeeper education in every workshop/presentation would help spread the basic tenets and create a sense of shared awareness among campus community members.

g. A packet of information and/or brief refresher presentation on Assisting Students in Distress at the first faculty meeting of the academic year was suggested.

E. Issue of sustainability

1. Employing a train the trainer model would involve more people from across campus and disperse the responsibility for educating the entire campus.

2. There is a structure already in place in HR which could allow for collaboration around getting staff members trained while utilizing facilitators other than Gannet or Dean of Students staff.
   a. Supervisor training has an emphasis on “noticing”, which is congruent with gatekeeper education.

3. The majority of Council members in the room responded affirmatively when asked if they would feel comfortable being trained to provide a gatekeeper education program for faculty or staff.

Minutes taken by