Minutes: April 15, 2013

Attending: Andrea Bahry, Emily Bastarache, Joe Bergen, Kristyn Bochniak, Casey Carr, Ken Clarke, Angelica Cullo, Kathy Edmondson, Greg Eells, Angela Falisi, Michele Fish, Carol Grumbach, Tanni Hall, Kevin Hallock, Kent Hubble, Monica Jones, Tim Marchell, Alan Mathios, Susan Murphy, Saadiya Mutawakil, Andy Noel, Brenden O’Brien, Rebecca Robbins, Sarah Rubenstein-Gillis, Janis Talbot, Catherine Thrasher-Carroll, Shawkat Toorawa, Don Viands, Lane Wendel, Janis Whitlock, Kathy Zoner, Don Rakow, Jazlin Gomez, Mirinda Martin, Yevgeniy Izrayelit

Welcome and Introductions: Susan Murphy

1. During the February 2012 council meeting, Janis Whitlock, Research Scientist in the Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research, spoke about the known science and practical wisdom that has evolved over the past few decades about resilience. She introduced a Resilience Model created by the Mental Health Programmers Workgroup that identifies key pathways (shown in orange) through which campus efforts would be most effective in developing students’ skills and strengths (shown in blue) necessary to build resilience.

2. Throughout the past year, several campus groups applied the Resilience Model to their ongoing offerings for students. Here is a review of their undertakings to expand opportunities for students to strengthen their resilience. (See attached power point for more information.)

Resilience Programming

1. Cornell Minds Matter is a student organization that formed 8 years ago when a few students interested in positive psychology began working together on a project. Their project evolved into a bi-line funded student organization that offers programming to help students take charge of their lives by learning new skills. The group uses the acronym of SOAP to identify the four skill areas around which they design weekly activities.

   S = Social connection with others
   O = Optimistic thinking style
   A = Appreciation
   P = Purpose and Passion – finding this through service to others

Student members of CMM shared following activities they sponsored each year:

- **Orientation program:** “Four Steps to Happiness at Cornell” is a 4-hour session reviewing SOAP, stress management strategies and an upperclassmen panel presentation.
• **Happiness 101: The Theory and Practice of Positive Psychology** is 6-week “course open to all students. While course sessions vary in size from week to week, an average of 25 students participates in all 6 sessions. The course uses small group discussion, guest speakers, storytelling, and a variety of hands-on activities to help students practice gratitude, mindfulness, and other tools they can use to build resilience and manage stress.

• **Feel Good Fridays:** every Friday a lunch-time topical discussion is led with a guest speaker with expertise in their field. Topics have included “Living with Mental Illness,” (Jordan Brunham-Suicide Survivor); “Sleeping your Way to Health;” and “How to Find Happiness: Material Possessions or Social Connections.”

• **Events** promoting social connections and mental health awareness are held throughout the year. This year’s included:
  - *Dining with Diverse Minds* dinner series with invited campus speakers such as Bryan Adams, Jordan Burnham, Robert Bash and A.T. Miller;
  - *Zumba classes* on Thursday afternoons;
  - *Yoga classes*;
  - *Procrastinate at the Straight*;
  - *Gratitude Day*;
  - *Writing through the Rough Spots and Life Writing Project*;
  - *Leave of Absence Group*;
  - Weekend social events people (i.e., visits to the Science Center, Taughannock Park, Dilmun Hill) provide students opportunities to explore the Cornell campus, Ithaca, and the surrounding areas while meeting new.

2. **“Staying Balanced and Strengthening Resilience”** is an interactive workshop provided by Gannett’s Mental Health Promotion staff that offers insights on how to strengthen personal resilience and manage stress effectively. This 50-minute session uses I-clicker technology to elicit group feedback and is available to student groups (e.g., resident advisors, peer mentors, E-boards of student organizations and all first-year students enrolled in the Engineering 1050 colloquium over the past three years). The workshop emphasizes self-care practices as the foundation of one’s resilience and reviews strategies to enhance thinking styles, time management and social connections. Interest in the workshop has grown over the past three years, with over 2,350 students (undergraduate and graduate) participating.

3. **Gratitude Journals** were introduced to Resident Advisors during the fall ’12 training program as a method used to reflect upon what was learned during the training; and how self-reflection in turn can strengthen individual resilience. At the end of each day, RAs recorded their reflections on how they could use key concepts learned during sessions into activities they could offer students on their floors. About 50% of the RAs reported that journaling helped them think through the topics covered and strengthen their role as an RA.

4. Nine **Greek Health and Wellness Chairs** were identified in three sororities and three fraternities in January, 1913 for this pilot project. The intent of this student-led-initiative is to create a position/structure in which the Chair could work (sometimes one-on-one) with Chapter members to promote their health and wellbeing. This effort was supported by the Public Health Fellows in Gannett’s Health Promotion office and included meetings every other week, training in communication skills, participation in the ‘Friend 2 Friend’ workshop, review of support resources and discussion on how to foster health and wellbeing within their community. One Chair talked about how student members often feel alone with their problems. This new position shows members that it is alright to have feelings and that others who can help are there for them. Chairs have appreciated the freedom to create positions within their Chapters that are tailored to
their particular needs and interests. With the success of this first semester, plans are being made to expand the program to other chapters next year.

5. SCoRE (Student Curriculum on Resilience Education) training was piloted last fall with First-year Meinig Scholars as a 5-week course. The SCoRE curriculum was developed to enhance the mental health of college students by drawing from research showing the positive impact of resilience on mental health. It was specifically developed for Colleges to address the needs of First-Year students making the transition to college. The course includes in-class-instruction, interactive course materials, personalized reports, and web-based resources. Feedback from participants is helping to guide Gannett’s next efforts one resilience education for students.

6. A Resilience Tool Kit is being developed by the Mental Health Programmers Group to serve as a central online resource to support those who want to offer opportunities for students to strengthen their resilience. The kit will include experiential activities, videos, links to various web sites, books/articles and other materials to enhance efforts.

Open Discussion:
- Human Ecology is introducing a new electronic portfolio for students as an off-branch of their leadership training efforts. The portfolio will be a new way for students to record experiences and opportunities that have helped them become change agents. In turn, the portfolio when used with resumes can highlight personal learning and growth.
- Student members of CMM were asked what impact their membership has had upon them. One member commented, “I realized the great things CMM has been doing that give me perspective and meaning in my life.” Others said, “I feel I benefit from helping others.” “The amount of support we get and freedom to do things doesn’t exist anywhere else on campus.”
- The Career Center also provides a strength-based training for students that relates well to resilience efforts on campus.
- Greek chairs were asked how others in their chapter are responding to them. One chair commented, “People have turned to me to discuss their concerns.” “These conversations have helped others feel less alone with their struggles”. Another chair commented on how she brings chapter members to activities that enhance resilience such as: yoga classes, weight training, relaxation time with puppies.
- A faculty member commented on the need to include more focus on alcohol within the Mental Health framework itself, as alcohol abuse continues to harm the mental health of our students.
- A staff member commented that “preparation” and “time management” are important ways to reduce stress. Just as athletes plan their training schedule as readiness for competitions/games, our students need to plan time to prepare for academic challenges.

*Minutes taken by Janis Talbot, Health Education, Gannett Health Services*