Minutes: April 28, 2014

Attending: Casey Carr, Amanda Carreiro, Ken Clarke, Janet Corson-Rikert, Kappy Fahey, Carol Grumbach, Kevin Hallock, Christine Holmes, Monica Jones, Barnaby Knoll, Janna Lamey, Michel Louge, Linda Najani, Tim Marchell, Susan Murphy, Kirsten Post Eynav, Susan Riley, Keba Rogers, Sarah Rubenstein-Gillis, Lisa Ryan, Blane Stone, Janis Talbot, Catherine Thrasher-Carroll, Don Viands, Janis Whitlock, Kathy Zoner

Guests: Amy Kohut, Fancie Jaffee, Barbara Knuth, Amy Somchanhmavong, Marian Eames-Sheavly, Werner Zorman

Welcome and Introductions: Susan Murphy

The Council will focus today on ways to “Promote Connectedness and Resilience to Enhance a Healthy Educational Environment” to support mental health and wellbeing. Catherine Thrasher-Carroll, chair of the Mental Health Programmers Committee, will introduce the topic, and then moderate a panel discussion to highlight specific curricula, programs and services aimed at helping students to thrive.

Overview: Connectedness and Resilience (Catherine Thrasher-Carroll)

(See PowerPoint presentation)

- Cornell’s Mental Health Framework addresses the continuum of mental health from flourishing to illness. Today we will look at one component of the framework that addresses both ends of this continuum by fostering a healthy campus environment and preventing suicidal behavior: social connectedness and resilience.
- The Centers for Disease Control identifies social connectedness as a vital component for any violence prevention or suicide prevention plan.
- Nurturing health and wellbeing is also part of Cornell’s current strategic plan for educational excellence. One objective aims to reduce isolation and alienation, develop new ways to foster closer times between faculty and students, and create a stronger sense of community from within and outside classroom experiences. The core values of collaboration, collegiality, and caring community underlie these efforts.

- The Resilience Framework was developed by the MH Programmers Committee as a model to guide campus resilience initiatives. It identifies some of the best ways to help students flourish: through our interactions with others, self-reflection, service to others, and self-efficacy/mastery. Through experiences in these areas students can develop the skills they will need to confront adversity and the personal qualities needed to strengthen their resilience.
Three new resilience resources developed by the MH Programmers group are now available to the community:

1. Gannett’s web site (www.gannett.cornell.edu/resilience) now includes the “Building Resilience” section that defines key concepts in the framework and serves as a “tool kit” for those working to expand opportunities for students. The page offers resources such as sample activities, videos, books, and other resources. Community members are encouraged to share their classroom activities, lesson plans, evaluation materials, etc. on the web page (contact Catherine at ct265@cornell.edu).

2. Two new “Quick Guides” were developed to help faculty/staff members and students learn more about resilience and activities that can build personal skills needed to thrive. These can be viewed and printed at the web site.

Ways to Embed Experiences into the Campus Culture to Promote Connectedness and Resilience.

- Marcia Eams-Sheavly, Senior Extension Associate in Department of Horticulture, teaches several courses on leadership (Hort 2010) and career options. She helped found the recent Rooted Project, offers global service learning projects, and works to model resilience for her students. In each of these settings, there are specific things she tries to do that other faculty might consider:
  - Get to know each student’s name and something about them.
  - Make wellness a priority in your class.
  - Be aggressive with referrals to campus resources.
  - Emphasize learning, rather than grades.
  - Offer timely feedback.
  - Provide rubrics and guidelines for students to enhance their reflective writing skills.
  - Give students concrete examples of how to put concepts into action. (I.e. increase your awareness of the campus environment by looking up at other people’s faces as you walk to classes, notice things around you, and focus on the sights and smells.)

- Werner Zorman, Associate Director of Engineering Leadership Programs, spoke briefly about his experience offering an 8-week mindfulness meditation course that is open to students, faculty or staff to enroll. He uses the book “Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World” by Mark Williams and Danny Penman, as a guide and has had about 12-15 people participate each semester. Participants report reaping many benefits from daily meditation including less stress, more calm, and more awareness in the moment. Recently, he held a training session to prepare several other staff members to lead this course in hopes of expanding opportunities on campus.

- Cindy Van Es, Senior Lecturer in the Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management, offers the “Men of Color Skills Seminar.” This one-credit course focuses on skill development to help students manage their stress, develop persistence/grit, and act to attain their purpose every day.

- The Intergroup Dialogue Project is another academic course (Educ. 2610) that promotes connectedness and resilience. It is offered through the Intercultural Center and the OADI Office. Sessions offer a safe place to explore differences, discuss experiences and cultivate new understandings.
• Janna Lamey, Assistant Dean of Student Life in the Graduate Student Office, emphasized collaboration as a key goal in developing programs. Many Council members have helped lead sessions of the “Perspectives” and “Transitions” lecture series for graduate students. Topics have included stress management, meditation, effective communication, mentorship, time management, exercise, and the value of positive thinking. The Graduate School also provides writing and personal support for students preparing a thesis through interactive sessions held in the Big Red Barn: Boot Camp Retreat and Thesis and Dissertation Write-Ins. Last year the Barn held over 247 programs that brought graduate students from across campus together.

• Amy Kohut, Cornell Outdoor Education’s Director of the Team and Leadership Center, and Francis Jaffe’14, COE Instructor shared how outdoor programs offer experiences that shift people’s perspective. This change can occur during Cornell Orientation’s Outdoor Odyssey trips, PE classes, or team and leadership programs held at the Challenge Course. PE credit is offered for students taking courses and the Greek Leadership Academy. These offerings connect students in new ways, build friendships, show effective ways to support others, and develop group leadership skills.

• Amy Somchanhmavong, Associate Director of the Public Service Center, highlighted the central mission of the center is to connect and engage Cornell students, faculty, and alumni with community organizations. To fulfill this mission, the PSC has chosen service-learning as the educational philosophy to guide its programs. A service-learning approach enhances and reinforces academic learning with practical experiences, strengthens civic values and moral character, and responds to community needs. Service-learning fosters service to others, community development and empowerment, and reciprocal learning through participants' social and educational interactions.

This fall a guidebook was printed by the Student Assembly listing registered student groups on campus that have a service-learning focus. This list includes over 30 groups where students can get involved with projects within the Ithaca community or beyond.

The Center will hold the Service-Learning Showcase this month to celebrate outstanding community-engaged work and to provide space for dialogue, knowledge-sharing and collaboration. Some of the events include poster sessions, a Break for Hip Hop, Bhangra, and a concert by Last Call. Events exemplify the relationship built with our Ithaca community and the role students play as agents of change.

• Casey Carr, Assistant Dean of Students and Adviser to Cornell Minds Matter, talked about the 100 programs offered each semester to the campus community that address resilience and mental health and wellbeing. Some events are held weekly, such as Zumba, Yoga, Mindfulness and a wide array of social activities. Others allow student students to convene to talk about issues of concern through the Dining with Diverse Minds series of discussions, Feel Good Friday luncheons. CMM’s weekly meetings further understanding through lectures, interactive discussions and a semester-long resilience course.

• Sara Rubenstein-Gillis, House Fellow for Rose House and Community Consultation and Intervention Counselor with CAPS at Gannett, spoke about the intergenerational mix of participants at House events. Weekly dinners held at the House, the Café Series and small gatherings with faculty in their residences, all offer an informal ways to connect people. This
also gave students a more approachable way to meet a member of CAPS and establish a community connection.

- Amanda Carreiro, Becker House Assistant Dean, added that along with Sara there are 30 House Fellows supporting the Becker community and 150 House fellows through the West Campus House System. In addition to their activities and events, resilience education is embedded in orientation programs with guest speaker Janis Whitlock, required reading assignments, previews of various Ted Talks, and discussions about the role of holding a positive mindset and working from one’s strengths when challenges arise. In the fall, staff and students were given a gratitude journal and encouraged to take part in a 21-day challenge to record the things they are most grateful for each day. This activity not only brought people together, but enabled them to experience the beneficial effects of expressing gratitude.

**Discussion and Questions**

- **What are ways to assess (qualitatively, quantitatively) the effectiveness of these resilience efforts?**
  - Marian Eames-Sheavly said that she uses a rubric to evaluate student work that includes reflective writing and sharing with others.
  - Amy Somchanhmavong added that student anecdotes on how their volunteer work helped them also can be used to show growth.
  - The Core Assessment Committee is looking into how to demonstrate what learning is taking place.
  - COE asks students to set goals for themselves and then debrief after the class to get feedback and learn from others how to improve. Some of the particular things they evaluate are: level of participation, communication skills, community building strengths, how students manage stress in their lives, etc.
  - E-portfolios also could be used to capture students’ experiences and reflections on courses and activities, both curricular and non-curricular.
  - Lake Forest University uses the Brief Coping Scale and Scale of Subjective Well-Being to assess wellness.

*The next meeting will be held April 28, 2014*

*Minutes submitted by Janis Talbot, Health Educator, Gannett Health Services*