



Mental Health Enhancement Plans

January 30, 2020

The Board of Governors has been committed to promoting student wellness and success by addressing critical issues that impact students' academic performance. In early 2015, there were increasing concerns about student behavior and campus safety. The concerns among the State University System (SUS) institutions aligned with national data, which showed a continued increase in students reporting anxiety and depression. According to the American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment data, there has been an 82% increase in student reports of feeling overwhelmed with anxiety in the past twelve months from spring 2014 to spring 2019.¹ Also, students have reported a 72% increase in depression, which affected their ability to function in the twelve months prior to completing the assessment.²

The Board of Governors has been very engaged on the issue of student mental health over the last several years. In March 2015, Board staff presented an Information Brief to the Academic and Student Affairs (ASA) Committee on the critical issues related to campus safety and security. A component of this brief was that the SUS presidents recognized a need to increase the number of well-trained, professional counselors to address the growing demand from students with mental and behavioral health issues. Later that year, the Board of Governors included a request to support an increase in the number of counselors, as well as additional law enforcement staff, in its legislative budget request.

In September 2016, Board staff provided a more in-depth analysis of the increasing need for well-trained, professional counseling services to address the number of students on our campuses with mental health issues and the increase in the severity of mental health issues. The Board included a request to fund additional counselors in its 2017-18 legislative budget request and continued to remain engaged on this issue.

In January 2017, the ASA Committee reviewed data from the universities that showed students who utilize the services offered by the counseling centers greatly benefit from improved mental and behavioral health, and they are more likely to do well academically and graduate. In March 2017, Board staff presented the ASA Committee data that showed ongoing increases in demand for counseling center services.

¹ American College Health Association National College Health Assessment, Spring 2014 and 2019 Reference Group Executive Summaries

² American College Health Association National College Health Assessment, Spring 2014 and 2019 Reference Group Executive Summaries

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Despite efforts to secure additional funding for students and counseling centers, the legislative budget requests were not funded. In June 2017, Chairman Kuntz asked the university presidents to develop and submit plans that outlined how they were going to meet the mental health needs of the students. Every institution submitted a Mental Health Enhancement Plan in November 2017, which delineated goals for services, staff, and training in order to meet the mental health needs of students on their respective campuses. The institutions proposed hiring a total of 56 new staff by the end of 2017-18 and 49 more mental health staff by the end of 2020-21, for a total of 105 new staff. The new positions included psychologists, counselors, case managers, and health and wellness coaches. Institutions reallocated other funds, both recurring and non-recurring, along with the student health fee to support these positions.

The Drugs, Alcohol, and Mental Health Task Force received an update on the progress of the institutions' efforts to implement these plans in November 2018. Institutions reported hiring 61 additional staff during 2017-18, exceeding the original projection for 56 additional staff. In addition, institutions reported actively recruiting for additional positions and implementing new programs, including online self-help modules and pilot programs that included coaching services and a biofeedback station.

In August 2019, the Drugs, Alcohol, and Mental Health Task Force submitted a final report to the full board, which included the recommendation that institutions provide a final update of the Mental Health Enhancement Plans to the Board in January 2020. As of November 2019, institutions reported adding a total of 85 additional staff to increase campus counseling services, expanding student mental and behavioral health coverage across the System. Based on the most recent reports, 22 additional hires should be in place by November 2021. Table 1 below shows the projected staffing numbers from the original plans compared to the number of additional staff that have been hired and those that are in progress. Currently, institutions have hired 81% of new staff projections for 2020-21, with the remaining 19% in progress.

The Mental Health Enhancement Plans were put into place to address the concerns about student behaviors and mental health. To adequately address the growing demand for counseling services, additional professional staff have been hired, and other hires are currently in progress. Institutions have also expanded services such as additional counseling service hours, satellite counseling stations, online self-help therapy programs, mental health literacy training for faculty and staff, clinical training, and various specialized programs based on the needs of the students.

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Table 1: Additional Counseling Services Staffing

Institution	Projected Staff Hires in 2017 Mental Health Plans by 2020-21	Progress as of November 2019		
		Hired	In Progress	Total New Hires & Hires in Progress
FAMU	2	1	1	2
FAU	18	10.73	12	22.73
FGCU	6	4	0	4
FIU	4	7	2	9
FL Poly	0	1	0	1
FSU	23	17	6	23
NCF/USF SM	3	2	0	2
UCF	4	5.5	0	5.5
UF	12	12	0	12
UNF	9	5	0	5
USF	17	18	1	19
UWF³	7	2	0	2
TOTAL	105	85.23	22	107.23

Source: Florida Board of Governors staff analysis of data provided by SUS institutions, November 2019.

³ Between November 2017 and November 2019, there have been some significant restructuring and leadership changes at UWF. During the transitions, UWF hired a total of five counselors. However, only two of them are new positions. Three others were replacements for staff who had retired, relocated, or otherwise resigned. At this time there are no hires in progress.