resolution Recommending the Inclusion of Statements Encouraging Student Wellness on College Syllabi

WHEREAS, the University of Vermont (UVM) has publicly stated its dedication to physical and mental health and wellbeing¹,

WHEREAS, UVM has seen a 43% increase of undergraduate students being diagnosed or treated for mental health conditions², (attachment 1)

WHEREAS, in February 2018, the UVM Risk-Opportunity Portfolio identified Increased Student Health Needs as a new top priority risk to be addressed³, (attachment 2)

WHEREAS, Harry Chen, the Executive Director of the UVM Center for Health and Wellbeing (CHWB) and senior public health officer, and Dani Comey, the Director of the University of

¹ https://www.uvm.edu/health

² This is above the national average of 30%

³ https://www.uvm.edu/trustees/board_mtg/meetings/2018_feb/Feb_2018_Board_Book.pdf
Vermont Center for Academic Success, have recently expressed their continued support of efforts in continuing to provide mental health support,⁴ (attachment 3)

WHEREAS, within that article, they are quoted as saying “we are committed to continuing to engage in conversations to address current student health concerns,” as well as continuing to “work and develop ways that can better meet student needs,” ⁵ (attachment 3)

WHEREAS, it can often be difficult for students to recognize and speak up about their health, especially their mental health, given the social norms and stigmas which currently exist against them,⁶

WHEREAS, the CHWB at UVM, in talking about illnesses and absence from class, says that they “encourage open and honest dialogue between students and instructors throughout the semester and in particular when students are unable to attend class,” (attachment 4)

WHEREAS, all faculty members are considered by UVM as mandatory reporters, and are required to “Refer reporting individuals to additional campus resources,” including the Counseling and Psychiatry Services and the Student Health Services,⁷

WHEREAS, schools such as Carnegie Mellon University, The University of Utah, The University of Florida, and Virginia Commonwealth University all recommend and support the addition of statements of student wellness within their college syllabi checklists,⁸

LET IT BE KNOWN, that, in order to destigmatize and advance the conversation of mental health, physical health, and student wellbeing on our campus, the University of Vermont Student Government Association encourages that university faculty recognize and include statements of


⁵ Ibid, 4.


⁷ https://www.uvm.edu/aaeo/mandatory_reporters_and_esas

⁸ https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/design/teach/syllabus/checklist/studentwellness.html,
https://www.finearts.utah.edu/images/Syllabus Checklist_7.pdf,
https://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/pdfs/academics/cals-syllabus-statements2013.pdf,
https://provost.vcu.edu/academic-affairs/operations/syllabus-statements/#stress
student wellness on their syllabi for their courses,

LET IT BE KNOWN, that, by further including information on available resources at UVM which are designed to help students succeed, such as about the Counseling and Psychiatry Services, the Student Health Services, and Living Well, in conjunction with statements made on ACCESS, that this will further the student’s understanding of what resources are available to access for seeking help and treatment,

LET IT BE KNOWN, that we advise university bodies such as the UVM Faculty Senate and its Student Affairs Committee, the Center for Health and Wellbeing, and the Office of the Provost and Senior Vice President’s Student Affairs Office, to all discuss, educate, and explore the methods in which faculty can best include these statements on their syllabi,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the University of Vermont Student Government Association, in order to facilitate the introduction of these statements, and to enable the student body to succeed academically, will provide the necessary materials, help, and support in order for the aforementioned bodies to create these inclusive statements,9 (attachment 5)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that, though not required, faculty and instructors who wish to further engage, facilitate, and encourage open and honest dialogue with their students when it comes to health and wellbeing can include themselves as a resource for their students.10 11


10 We also recognise that issues like generation gaps, larger class sizes, a lack of training and recognition, and a lack of better understanding, all affect the way in which faculty and students can engage.

11 A special thank you to Chair Van Arsdale, Senator Malling, and Senator Parker, as well as the SGA Senate Body last Tuesday, 27/11/18, for all providing great feedback and help in writing this legislation.
**MENTAL HEALTH**

**NATIONAL CONTEXT**

- 5.6% increase in institutional enrollment
- 29.6% increase in counseling center utilization

% of undergraduate students being diagnosed or treated by a professional for mental health condition:

- 43% UVM
- 30% National

Source: Center for Health and Wellbeing

---

**Attachment 2**

**CY 2017 UVM Risk-Opportunity Portfolio-Register Heat Map**

- High
- Medium
- Low

**Risks**

- Undergraduate enrollment
- Student safety
- Emergency management
- Program viability
- Research compliance
- Information security
- Deferred maintenance
- Information technology (ITT) maintenance
- Increased healthcare costs
- UVM policy compliance
- Financial internal controls
- Student safety in existing programs
- Natural hazards
- Student safety in proposed programs
- Compliance with U.S. export controls
- Loss of research funding
- Mass casualty modeling

**Opportunities**

- STEM complex & regional facilities
- Undergraduate completion & retention
- Undergraduate completion & retention
- Informative security
- Deferred maintenance
- Information technology (ITT) maintenance
- Increased healthcare costs
- UVM policy compliance
- Financial internal controls
- Student safety in existing programs
- Natural hazards
- Student safety in proposed programs
- Compliance with U.S. export controls
- Loss of research funding
- Mass casualty modeling

**Legend**

- Acronym ADM - Americans with Disabilities Act
- IT - information technology

Source: Risk and Opportunity Portfolio-Register Heat Map as of 01.17.2018

---
UVM mental health professionals: we care about you

Letter to the Editor

We who work to support UVM students' health and well-being continually seek ways to improve the services we provide that support students' mental health needs.

Like colleges across the country, UVM is experiencing an increase in student need for mental health and disability-related support.

Our Center for Health and Wellbeing and Student Accessibility Services often serve as points of entry for students seeking assistance and are working hard to provide this support.

UVM, like many other universities, prioritizes urgent interventions, stabilization and short-term care.

We recognize our responsibility to provide a plan of care for those needing long-term mental health services.

However, we are not structured to, nor do we assume we would be able to meet the mental health needs of all students.

At times, this means that students are referred for off-campus care when their needs require more support than our system allows.

This is UVM’s approach for both our mental health and medical services for students who need specialty care or additional support.

We also recognize that health and well-being means more than treatment sessions with a mental health professional.

UVM is a recognized leader in offering a range of resources that we know benefit the growing number of students who take advantage of them.

These include yoga, meditation, mindfulness, group support and educational and skill building programs that are available to students.

As we approach Thanksgiving break and then move quickly into the final exam period, we encourage all students to engage in healthy behaviors that are known to reduce stress and anxiety, prevent illness and promote overall well-being.

Know that at a systems level and in collaboration with students, faculty and senior leaders, we are committed to continuing to engage in conversations to address current student health concerns.

We will continue to work and develop ways that can better meet student needs.

Harry Chen, Executive Director, UVM Center for Health and Well-Being, Chief Public Health Officer
Dani Comey, Director, UVM Center for Academic Success
Class Absence Due to Illness

The Center for Health & Wellbeing will not provide written medical excuses for class absences due to acute illness.

We understand that illness and injury may impact a student’s ability to attend class or to complete assignments. Students in this situation are responsible for notifying their instructors, preferably before missing a class/assignment. Conversations between students and instructors should identify how a student can work around an illness or injury to best continue academic efforts and activities. Instructors have final authority to excuse absences.

The Center for Health & Wellbeing will not provide written medical excuses for class absences due to acute illness.

In the event of illness or injury requiring hospitalization or extended absence from classes, with permission from the student, we can notify the student’s Dean’s Office who will then contact the student’s faculty. We will not give any information (including verifying that a student has been seen or date of visit) without the permission of the student.

We encourage open and honest dialogue between students and instructors throughout the semester and in particular when students are unable to attend class. This approach encourages students, as emerging adults, to advocate for themselves and to take responsibility for their health and actions. This also encourages instructors to see students as emerging adults and to communicate directly with them if concerns arise.

Attachment 4
Attachment 5

(Optional additional language)

If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal or in danger of self-harm, call someone immediately, day or night:

CaPS: 412-268-2922
Re:solve Crisis Network: 888-796-8226
If the situation is life threatening, call the police
On campus: CMU Police: 412-268-2323
Off campus: 911

If you have questions about this or your coursework, please let me know. Thank you, and have a great semester.

- Sample 1: Take care of yourself

Take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is almost always helpful.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is here to help: call 412-268-2922 and visit their website at http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for help getting connected to the support that can help.
Sample 5: Personal investment

Diminished mental health, including significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry, or problems with eating and/or sleeping can interfere with optimal academic performance. The source of symptoms might be strictly related to your course work; if so, please speak with me. However, problems with relationships, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis can also contribute to decreased academic performance. CMU provides mental health services to support the academic success of students. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) offers free, confidential services to help you manage personal challenges. In the event I suspect you need additional support, I will express my concerns and the reasons for them, and remind you of campus resources (e.g., CaPS, Dean of Students, etc.) that might be helpful to you. It is not my intention to know the details of what might be bothering you, but simply to let you know I am concerned and that help, if needed, is available. Getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do --for yourself and for those who care about you.

Adapted from University of Alaska Anchorage

student-health-counseling-center/integrated-suicide-prevention-initiative/_documents/