



**UNIVERSITY SENATE  
Faculty Affairs and Personnel Committee**

**Report and Recommendation on Dealing with Psychological Emergencies**

**1. THE CHARGE**

S-0804 ***Dealing with Psychological Emergencies:*** Investigate and make recommendations on communication processes used to inform and train full-time and part-time faculty and staff about how to address potential psychological problems with individuals around them. These situations may include potential suicides and substance abuse. Respond to Senate Executive Committee by November 2008.

**2. SUMMARY**

The Faculty and Personnel Affairs Committee (FPAC) was asked to review and investigate the communication processes used by the University to inform and train faculty and staff about psychological issues in the work and academic setting. Having done so, the committee supports initiation of a mental health campaign at Rutgers through the office of Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) which would serve to raise employee awareness and help to remove the stigma associated with mental health issues. The campaign would contain a training component on mental health awareness for Rutgers faculty and staff. This training would be expected to continue on a regular (e.g., annual or biannual) basis after the campaign is concluded. Academic units who research public health as well as student organizations and campus deans might play integral roles (planning and implementation) in this campaign effort. The campaign focus should include differences in mental health issues based on culture and ethnicity, and every attempt should be made to secure internal as well as external funding to support the campaign and on-going training components.

**3. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

The FPAC met and discussed the charge in five sessions (3/28/08, 11/21/08, 1/23/09, 2/27/09, and 3/27/09). In February 2009, several members of the committee (Finegold, Gould, Panayotatos, and Thompson) had the opportunity to interview Jill Richards, Director of Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and Gregory Blimling, Vice President for Student Affairs. In its deliberations, the committee considered resources already available to Rutgers personnel and posted on the CAPS Website (<http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~rccc/staff967.html>) as well as additional documents still in development.

**3.1. *Background and Discussion***

During committee discussions, members of the FPAC described the urgency and sometimes frustration associated with personal contact with students and fellow employees who exhibit psychological emergencies. The consensus of the committee was faculty and staff are not adequately prepared to respond to individuals in psychological crisis situations. Concerns included:

- *Availability of appropriate referral resources.* Where is information on psychological services and procedures at Rutgers posted, and it is easily accessible? How are staff and faculty (including contingent faculty and TAs) notified of available documents and established protocols?
- *Protocol.* Who should be contacted in cases of emergency with students or fellow employees? To whom are students referred when they are in crisis? Does the referral process differ among campuses?

- *Training.* Who has the skills and training needed for problems that require immediate action? How are they contacted? Should more employees receive crisis intervention training? How are faculty (including contingent faculty and TAs) and staff notified of training opportunities?
- *Immediacy.* Classrooms do not have phones, and many faculty teach during evening hours; how should employees respond when the crisis is immediate?

During the interview with Jill Richards and Gregory Blimling, Richards provided excellent background on psychological services provided in New Brunswick. Posted to the CAPS Website are pages describing what to do in case of emergencies, counseling services and educational workshops offered by the unit, peer counseling, professional training opportunities for graduate students, and a referral guide that faculty and staff can use for troubled students. Compared to Camden and Newark, New Brunswick sees more students with such issues because of higher residency hall populations; resources and structure for counseling centers at Camden and Newark also differ from New Brunswick. Richards reported that staff who see students on a daily basis (such as dining services personnel) refer more students to psychological services than faculty, who see students less regularly. In general, psychological issues in students are increasing, especially in international students who may have difficulty navigating the country and culture after arrival. In addition, apprehension is widespread because of recent incidents at Virginia Tech.

Richards reported that the prevailing model for counseling services is cutting edge where everyone on campus (including janitorial staff) knows what resources are available and where they can be found. Staff that have daily contact with students are vital in this process. The University of Pennsylvania has a successful program where two counselors conduct 1-hour workshops for faculty, financial aid officers, cashiers, and other staff. At Rutgers, Blimling reported that current efforts to increase the visibility of psychological services include the development of a new Website for CAPS, which will include videos and other training materials, printed literature for faculty and staff offering guidance in the event of an emergency, as well as plans to introduce or enhance a counseling services component to all new faculty/staff orientation training.

Also discussed during the interview with Richards was possible implementation of a mental health campaign through CAPS that may offer the optimal opportunity to raise employee awareness of mental health issues and to instill such awareness into the community culture. This campaign would include a training component for the faculty and staff in various units. This training would be expected to continue on a regular (e.g., annual or biannual) basis after the campaign is concluded. Since there is no staff support within the unit to run this campaign or to offer regular training, resources needed to reach the roughly 100 units at the University (approximately \$150,000) must include:

- an outreach coordinator (10-month line) at an approx. \$100K salary including benefits
- media resources including document and Web design
- printing costs (including \$5,000 needed to print the emergency guide for faculty and staff)

Richards' unit is currently funded by student fees. Should these funds be used to implement a mental health campaign, VPSA Blimling reported that fees would increase about \$3 per student, an option the FPAC did not consider attractive. Alternatively, external funding might be available through grants from funding agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). This possibility of grant funding might be incentive for academic units such as the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP) and the Institute for Health, Health Care Policy, and Aging Research (IHHCPAR) to participate in the campaign. The program might also be expanded for veterans suffering from PTSD.

Following the interview with Richards, discussions within the FPAC focused on the manner in which information about psychological services is made available to staff and faculty, including contingent faculty and TAs who have a large number of contact hours with students and are often left out of the loop. The committee concurred that faculty involvement in training activities is often sub-optimal; most would not attend training sessions dedicated to this single purpose. More palatable might be short presentations on the availability of psychological services resources at regular unit meetings as well as brief, regular electronic communications containing updates and links. Well-advertised training reserved for staff, especially those not part of a regular unit, must also be offered on a regular basis. All faculty (including contingent faculty) and staff might benefit from short presentations during new employee orientation sessions. In addition, considerations should be made for those staff without regular

access to electronic mail as well as those who do not read English. The FPAC concluded that the mental health campaign would raise employee awareness and help remove the stigma associated with mental health issues. Academic units who research public health as well as student organizations and campus deans might play integral roles (planning and implementation) in this effort. Of particular concern, the committee concluded that the campaign focus should be sensitive to differences in mental health issues based on culture and ethnicity.

### 3.II. Recommendation

For the foregoing reasons, the FPAC unanimously resolved to offer the following recommendation for adoption by the University Senate:

- That Rutgers University support a mental health campaign initiated through CAPS that includes a training component on mental health awareness for faculty and staff. This training might be offered as short presentations at new hire orientations, regular unit meetings, and at well advertised meetings reserved for staff. All employees should receive brief, regular electronic communications containing updates and links, with special consideration for those who do not read English or are without regular access to e-mail. As the mental health campaign should have an academic focus, faculty in GSAPP, IHHCPAR, and other units concerned with public health should participate, and student groups and campus deans should play integral roles in planning and implementation. For employee issues, CAPS should work with University Human Relations. The campaign focus should include differences in mental health issues based on culture and ethnicity, and every effort should be made to secure internal as well as external funding to support the campaign, including the new hire required to run the campaign, as well as on-going training components.
- That the training component for faculty and staff above should continue on a regular (e.g., annual or biannual) basis after the campaign is concluded, possibly offered, as above, as short presentations at new hire orientations, regular unit meetings, and at well advertised meetings reserved for staff.

## 4. RESOLUTION

**In Support of the University Senate's Faculty and Personnel Affairs Committee's Report and Recommendations:**

***Whereas, the University Senate Faculty and Personnel Affairs Committee has examined and reported on Dealing with Psychological Emergencies; and***

***Whereas, the University Senate has reviewed the Committee's report and its Recommendations, finding those recommendations to be sound and in the best interests of Rutgers University;***

***Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Rutgers University Senate endorses the "Report and Recommendation on Dealing with Psychological Emergencies" and urges the Administration to implement its recommendations.***

### Faculty Affairs and Personnel Committee 2008-09

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