

Student Affairs & Campus Life Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

Date February 6, 2019

Present: Jason James, Patricia Orozco, Ping Yin, Jason Robins, Maysoon Al-Sayed Ahmad, Cedric Rucker, Tevya Zukor

Next meeting: TBA

I. Introductions

Cedric Rucker – Associate Vice President and Dean of Student Life

Jason James – Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Committee Chair

Patricia Orozco – Department of Modern Languages & Literatures

Ping Yin – Department of Geography

Jason Robinson – Department of Art & Art History

Tevya Zukor – Director of Talley Center

II. Discussion of Current Conditions and Services for Students' Mental Health at UMW with Dr. Zukor

Dean Rucker commented about the way current political events (revelations about a photo on a yearbook page associated with Governor Northam's containing one person in blackface and another in a KKK robe) that are affecting students and how can these issues affect our students mental health and Jason James added it's important to us as a college to have a broader discussion with our students and be open to talk about it than ignore it. Dean Rucker responded that students correlated to mental health issues and where our students stand as political climate both internal and external and the thing that is going on with the governor having a big impact on big segment of our student's population and those individuals who support students. Dean Rucker also indicated that he had multiple conversations with students in small groups and individually on how the students are feeling not only about the political climate but also about the commonwealth. And how the commonwealth has been represented and the consequences of these activities

Talley Center director Dr. Tevya Zukor he introduced himself and the service of his office. He shared basic information about the Talley Center that faculty should know:

- They have 2 locations: the main office is in the ground floor of Lee Hall (room 106) near the health center; the second is in Tyler house next to Fairfax house
- Both offices are fully staffed
- Hours are Monday – Friday from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm
- If the faculty have a student who they are concerned about they can call the center or walk the students over, but suggests calling before bringing or sending the student so the center can prepare. The center will see students who need to be seen urgently.
- If the faculty uncomfortable talking to the student directly, they can the UMW Reporting Form (link below) to submit a report about the student they are concerned about. This report can be made anonymously, and if identifying information is given it will not be shared with the student. The main reason to include the faculty name is to give Dean Rucker a chance to contact faculty and to hear from them and ask for more information about the concern regarding the student that was reported.

- All students' information is confidential unless the student agreed on the release of the information about their situation, so receiving an update about a student's condition from the Talley Center is contingent on their agreeing to a release of this information.
- The faculty also can contact the center, including Dr. Zukor directly, to get advice on how to reach the students about their concerns regarding their mental health issues and on how to communicate with the students. The most important thing to keep in mind is that the student needs to get the message that someone is listening and cares, including by acknowledging their feelings.

Then the director highlighted some details about the suicidal ideation and mental health more generally among UMW students.

- **Mental health on campus:** He mentioned that mental health issues on college campuses have remained fairly consistent over the last century and next century: a mix of anxiety, depression, relationship concerns. The primary concern in the past was depression, but now it is more often labeled as anxiety. They tend to occur together and receive the same treatment. Other issues among students include substance abuse and eating disorders. About 50% of the students who visit the center indicate that they have had prior mental health services. Some students decide to cease treatment or medication when they arrive at college, thinking of it as a "new start." These days' students are more aware of mental health issues than before, which increases demand on the center. In the past it was more difficult for students with mental health concerns to attend college because of lack of services. But now with better treatment and counseling services provided by universities, students are encouraged to pursue their education. Many students can graduate with the help and support of the services of the Talley Center, or from providers in the area with whom the Talley Center has facilitated contact.
- **Anxiety:** The center works with these students by listening and talking to them and helps them to set up with a plan. The director believes one of the reasons the students are talking about anxiety is because of the additional pressure on the students and he also thinks anxiety is a current conversation in our society and it's now easier for students to say: "I have some concerns and I worry about things." They tend to want to talk about that when they are worried that something is not right.
- **Suicidal Ideation:** He also mentioned that they see a lot of students who have thought about harming themselves and thoughts about ending their lives. The office is very clear about this and takes it very seriously. This is something that the office handles regularly. If a student has those thoughts, it does not necessarily mean they are in imminent danger or a risk, but the center is available to meet and listen to the students to get asses and get connection to find out how serious and severe the situation is for them.
- **Helping Students:** If a faculty member is concerned that one of their students is at risk of suicide or worried about the student's safety should contact the UMW police. They are available 24\7 and can make direct contact with that student. They are trained to respond to these situations and can make sure they are safe or to escort them to the counseling center if it's open.
- **Talley Center and the Office of Disability Resources.** The Talley Center is separate from the ODR. However, some students with mental health issues identified through the center are often connected with the ODR for help. The point was made that mental health issues can fall under disability accommodation, like severe anxiety and depression. The two offices work together for the student's benefit, but the letter to faculty always comes from the ODR.

Another comment made was about training the faculty to handle certain mental health issues and what services were available to faculty in understanding certain mental health-related behaviors in the classroom. Administration knows that professors are not experts in mental health issues, but they are responsible for assisting students and connecting them to the right resources. Dean Rucker added that in the past, the school has offered workshops and training.

However, there is no one workshop that is able to cover all of the cases of individuals here at Mary Washington—every student’s situation is unique. We need to be able to help support the experience and outcome for all students (and faculty). Dean Rucker and Dr. Zukor are both able to answer questions and help and indicated that they would be willing to meet with professors or staff who have concerns or questions.

III. Chair Report and Approval of Minutes

a. Minutes

Minutes from the committee’s first two meetings were approved unanimously.

IV. Next Meeting

- a. Committee members agreed that it would be helpful to have a representatives from the Office of Disability Resources address the group.