

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, ACADEMIC SENATE

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August 3, 2018

**JANET NAPOLITANO, PRESIDENT
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**

Re: Student Mental Health Support Services

Dear Janet:

At its July 25, 2018 meeting, the Academic Council endorsed the attached letter from the University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP) requesting that the University (1) prioritize additional funding for student mental health support services; and (2) advocate for permanent state funding augmentations sufficient to meet increasing student demand for mental health services.

Council is troubled by UCEP's finding that the number of UC students seeking out mental health services is increasing, just as individual campuses are experiencing critical shortages in counseling staff and reducing some of their insurance-covered student mental health services. Council understands that mental and behavioral health problems impede student progress and success; are broadly relevant to both undergraduate, graduate, and professional students; and can impact classroom learning and safety. While more funding will not address all of the problems, it can help to ensure that campuses will have enough resources in place to provide a supportive academic environment.

Council also understands that the faculty have a key role to play in supporting student mental health on campus. Faculty often serve as mentors to students, have knowledge about campus mental health resources, and are aware of protocols for managing students in crisis. However, not all faculty may be equipped to identify students in distress, best react to their needs, or be able to provide optimal direction to appropriate resources. We believe the University would benefit from a coordinated initiative focused on faculty training in this area. Council recommends an effort involving UCEP, UCFW, and the UCOP Offices of Academic Personnel and Student Affairs which is informed by campus Disability Resource Centers.

We look forward to working with you on this. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Shane N. White, Chair
Academic Council

Encl.

Cc: Vice Provost Carlson
Vice President Holmes-Sullivan
Academic Council
Senate Director Baxter
Senate Executive Directors



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY (UCEP)
Ed Caswell-Chen, Chair
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June 18, 2018

**SHANE WHITE, CHAIR
ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

RE: STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICES

Dear Shane,

In June, UCEP briefly discussed the important issue of student mental health after learning that at least one campus (UCLA) had reduced mental health services for students covered by the Student Health Insurance Plan. We have been somewhat reassured to find that students are in fact allowed unlimited visits when mental health treatment is deemed “clinically necessary” and that The Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act prevents group health plans and health insurance issuers that provide mental health benefits from imposing limits that are less than those benefits than on medical/surgical benefits.

However, recognizing that mental and behavioral health problems impede learning has important implications. We believe that there is significant room for improvement in mental health care availability, because the need for services is ongoing and not diminishing in scope, and that the challenges students face are complex. We know, for example, that UCSB has seen a 20% increase in the number of students needing mental health services in the past five years. Clinicians at UCLA saw roughly 15% of the student population during the last academic year. At the same time, campus health services are faced with critical shortages of clinical staff, high turn-over rates, and low morale among mental health clinicians. We note that dealing with students who present with mental health issues is a welfare and safety issue for faculty and other students, because distressed students may make others concerned about their safety.

UCEP requests that the Academic Council ask President Napolitano to prioritize funding for mental health services and the University should urge the State to permanently allocate sufficient funding to meet the demand for services. The committee is pleased that the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates will turn its attention to student welfare issues next year. More generally, the purpose of this memo is to share our concerns about student mental health services with Academic Council as UCEP plans to focus more intently on this matter in the future.

UCEP appreciates the opportunity to comment on this matter. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ed Caswell-Chen, Chair
UCEP