

Counseling Center
2004-2005 CAS Study
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In 2004, Dr. Tim Pierson, the Vice President for Student Affairs, directed us to carry out an evaluation of the Counseling Center. He requested that the evaluation be conducted in accordance with the CAS (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education) Standards and Guidelines. The goal of the self-study is to reach a consensus about the strengths and deficiencies of the Counseling Center and to create our action plan to overcome the deficiencies and to enhance our services. This report shares our findings and presents the consequent action plan. A CAS Steering Committee was created to oversee all the CAS Studies conducted in Student Affairs. Pam Higgins was the committee's liaison with the Counseling Center.

A Review Committee was established to help conduct the study; the members included:

Pam Higgins, Director
Student Health and Wellness Center

Dr. Jennifer Apperson
Associate Professor of Psychology
Chair, Psychology Department

Angela Jackson, Assistant Director
Residential and Commuter Life

Roger Sudesberry, Police Sergeant
Department of Public Safety

Dr. Glen Bowman, Director
Counseling Center, Hampden Sydney College

Dr. Maureen Walls-McKay
Assistant Director of the Counseling Center

Betty Newman
Administrative and Program Specialist
Counseling Center

Dr. Wayne O'Brien
Director of the Counseling Center

After a person agreed to be on the committee, he/she was sent a copy of the SAG (Self Assessment Guide) for the Counseling Center. The committee had its first meeting on October 13, 2004. At this meeting, several things were accomplished.

- Explained the self-assessment process.
- What existing evidence will be gathered?
- What new evidence will be generated?
- How the committee will have access to the evidence?

Pam Higgins recommended that we add something to address Ethics. The committee was content with links to the ACA and the APA websites (ethical standards).

Supporting materials were organized that addressed each component part; the participants made their judgments based on these materials and their experience with the Counseling Center. They contacted us whenever they had a question or needed additional information.

The materials were/are accessible on the Counseling Center Webpage-

The committee members independently rated the Counseling Center on each criterion. During the rating process, the participants were asked to discuss our strengths and weaknesses. Whenever we were judged in noncompliance with a criterion, they were instructed to describe the discrepancy between the standard and our program. They were encouraged to recommend any actions or changes that would help bring the Counseling Center into compliance. In addition, they indicated when there was sufficient reason for noncompliance such as limited resources, criterion addressed in another office, etc.

After the Assessment Guides were completed and results calculated, the committee met to discuss the results, reach some consensus, and formulate an action. The committee met on January 27, 2005.

Assessment Results

The committee concluded that the following parts of the standards were being fully met:

1. Mission
3. Leadership
4. Organization and Management
7. Facilities, Technology, and Equipment
8. Legal Responsibilities
9. Equity and Access
10. Campus and External Relations
11. Diversity
12. Ethics
13. Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment Criteria Not In Compliance/Subsequent Action

Criterion 5.1 “The program is staffed adequately with personnel qualified to accomplish its mission.”

The committee thought that this was a two-part criterion: “staff adequately” and “personnel qualified.” They concluded that we did “not meet” the “staffed adequately” criterion.

Dr. Bowman wrote: “Staffing is very inadequate. Two CAS Self-Studies have concluded that an additional Counselor is needed. The average ratio of mental health professionals to FTE students in schools the size of Longwood is 1:1,343 (Data from the 2003 National Survey of Counseling Center Directors. Two mental health professionals would be significant for 2,500 students but Longwood’s population is much larger and expected to grow.”

Criterion 5.9 “Staffing and workload levels are adequate and appropriate to meet the demands on the program by students and other constituents.”

Criterion 5.18: “The number of CS staff members is inadequate.”

Action Plan:

Dr. Pierson, the Vice President for Student Affairs, has expressed support for an additional counselor. An additional staff member has been requested in the Counseling Center 5-year budget plan. There will be an office in the new Fitness and Wellness Center for another counselor. This is the third CAS Study that has defined the need for another counselor. We will try to collect more data such as information from the 2004 National Survey of Counselor Center Directors. In addition, there is a possibility that this deficiency will interfere with us being granted accreditation as a Center.

Criterion 5:10: “Staff members compensation is commensurate with those in comparable positions in comparable institutions and situations in the relevant geographical region.”

Dr. Bowman wrote: “Staff members compensation is very low. The average salary for the Counseling Center Director at a school the size of Longwood (2,500-7,500 students) with 15 plus years of experience is \$69,669 (2003, National Survey of Counselor Center Directors) and the average for an Assistant Director at a school the size of Longwood with 7-9 years of experience is \$51,010.”

Dr. Pierson has assured us that he will restore our contracts back to 12 months; the committee felt that this would not overcome the deficiency.

The committee thought that the \$35,000 plus benefits requested in the 5-Year Plan for an additional staff member was inadequate, based on comparable institutions, even for a counselor not having a Ph.D.

Action Plan:

There will be an attempt to collect data to support this need:

- 2003-2004 College Health Salary and Staffing Survey collected by the American College Health Association.
- 2004 National Survey of Counseling Center Directors
- Longwood's Human Resource Office is in the process of conducting a compensation study of AP professionals salaries compared to salaries at comparable institutions.

Criterion 6.1 “The program has adequate funding to accomplish its mission and goals.”

Action Plan:

Additional funds have been requested in the 5-Year Budget Plan. We are limited in the scope of what we can do because of financial limitations.

Assessment Criteria Judged to be Exemplary

Criterion 2.7g. “The program must provide crisis intervention.”

Criterion 5.1 “The program is staffed adequately with personnel qualified to accomplish its mission.”

The committee concluded that the quality of staff was exemplary even though the Counseling Center is understaffed.

Strategies to Enhance Our Program:

1. We need to promote the Counseling Center; that is, we need to make the campus more aware of what we do.
2. We will re-issue the Faculty Guide on How to Handle Students in Distress.
3. We will put the Faculty Guide on our Webpage.
4. Criterion 2.7f. “psychiatric consultation”
The Health and Wellness Center has been essential in meeting our students needs for medication, especially for depression and anxiety. Also, students will often connect with physicians or psychiatrists near home. There is not a psychiatrist in private practice in Farmville. There are, however, psychiatrists available at the Crossroads Mental Health Center. Because of the above, the committee thought that the criterion was met.
5. Criterion 2.7b. “group interventions”

The committee judged this criterion to be “minimally met.” Longwood students seem to be reluctant to engage in groups. Groups, like the Depression Support Group, also generate more individual work. Because group therapy and structured groups are requirements for accreditations, we are going to have to revisit this dilemma.