The 2020-2021 academic year continued to be a time that required flexibility and innovation for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Counseling Center. As with most other things in our lives, the COVID-19 global pandemic forced us to continue to operate and interact with students differently. We worked together to investigate new ways to best support Illinois students during these unprecedented times. I was and continue to be impressed with the innovation and persistence our staff showed.

This past year, the number of students we served through counseling and outreach was a bit lower than we would have expected prior to the pandemic. This trend was also experienced at other college counseling centers throughout the country as some students expressed hesitance to participate in virtual services. For the 2020-2021 academic year, we had 10,030 individual appointments and 2,968 group appointments. Our Outreach and Prevention Services offered 1,442 events that served a total of 19,147 students, faculty/staff, and parents. Research and what we are seeing anecdotally indicates the pandemic has and will continue to have a tremendous effect on the mental health of our students. We will continue to be attentive to these needs to ensure students are supported and access the services they need to thrive and be productive.

While responding to the impact of the pandemic was our primary focus for the 2020-21 academic year, we continued to work toward our previously set goals. This year, we expanded our embedded counseling model with clinicians added to serve in the Colleges of ACES and AHS as well as University Housing. Looking forward, we will determine how we can expand the embedded model even further as it has produced great results thus far.

As the pandemic continues, Illinois students are studying and attending classes from around the globe and likely will continue to do so even as the pandemic begins to wane. To overcome the challenge of providing counseling services to students in other states and countries, this year we contracted with Morneau Shepell to offer My SSP (Student Support Program), which allows students to reach out to a counselor no matter where they are located.

We are hopeful for a return to more in-person services as we look toward the 2021-2022 academic year, but the last few years have shown that the Counseling Center can handle whatever challenges we face and continue to support our students in innovative and impactful ways.

Sincerely,

Carla J. McCowan, Ph.D.
Counseling Center Director
Mission, Vision, and Values

Our Mission

The Counseling Center is committed to providing a broad range of high quality, innovative, and ethical services that address the psychological, educational, social, and developmental needs of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign students. We also actively contribute to the campus’ broader academic mission by training and developing students and professionals, helping build a multicultural learning community, and providing leadership in forming collaborative partnerships among Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, the Graduate College, and Administrative Affairs units.

Our Vision

The Counseling Center enhances the overall well-being of students at the University of Illinois.

Our Values

Commitment to excellence
Wellness
Diversity and inclusion
Integrity
Collaboration
The Comprehensive Counseling Center model was introduced in a 2017 article published by Brunner, et al. in the Journal of College Student Psychotherapy. The authors assert that college counseling centers are much more than sites to provide students with psychological counseling. Rather, they suggest that outreach and prevention (psychoeducation and explanation of services), training experiences for students pursuing careers as mental health professionals, and providing guidance on managing mental health crises to faculty and staff are integral to responding to the changing landscape of college mental health. Universities across the nation have reported that, like we’ve seen at Illinois, students are presenting at increased rates and severity.
As the Covid-19 pandemic continued and campus made the decision to remain remote for the 2020-2021 academic year, we continued to be flexible and serve students in new and creative ways. We built upon the groundwork we laid in Spring 2020 to offer services remotely by adding additional outreach programming online. Below is a snapshot of the programming we offered to assist students as they continued to attend classes online and grapple with how they would manage different ways to connect with one another.

Counseling Center Virtual Outreach for 2020-2021

Programming

- 19,147 students reached
- 1,422 outreach events

Programming included:
- Tuesday @ 7 workshops by Counseling Center Paraprofessionals
- Daily Mindfulness Drop-In Sessions
- RIO (Recognition, Insight, and Openness) Online Trainings
- Expressive Arts Drop-In Workshops and spaces for Black and LGBTQ+ students.

Social Media

- 32.8K times videos viewed
- 54.3K+ social media impressions

Social Media Campaigns included:
- Minority Mental Health Week
- Suicide Prevention Week
- Sleep Hygiene Week
- #FinishStrongIllinois finals stress management
Clinical Services

TOTAL INDIVIDUAL CLINICAL APPOINTMENTS: 10,030
TOTAL PSYCHOTHERAPY GROUPS OFFERED: 50
TOTAL GROUP APPOINTMENTS: 2,968

INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDENTS WE SERVED

Race
- Caucasian (40.5%)
- Asian (26.6%)
- Latinx (12.8%)
- Black (9.8%)
- Multiracial/Other (10.3%)

College
- LAS (32.2%)
- Engineering (20.6%)
- Other (13%)
- ACES (8.9%)
- FAA (7.1%)
- Business (5.1%)
- AHS (5.9%)
- DGS (4.4%)
- Education (2.8%)

Gender
- Female (59.3%)
- Male (38.8%)
- Non-binary/other (1.9%)

ACCESS AND CLIENT SATISFACTION

71.3% of respondents on our Client Feedback Survey stated they were able to get a same-day appointment the first time they called. 24.1% reported they were able to get in the second to fourth time they called.

96.8% 94.1% 95.4%

Students receiving services agreed or strongly agreed that:
- they benefitted from having an objective listener who offered a new viewpoint.
- counseling helped their well-being.
- they were satisfied with their counselor.
Consultation and Crisis Management

Counseling Center staff are always available to assist students who are in the midst of a crisis or to consult with faculty and staff about how to approach a student who may be in need of our services. Through our trauma response efforts, triage efforts for students who feel they need to be seen right away, and our liaisons across campus, we strive to be there for the campus community when they need it most.

TRIAGE SERVICES FOR UNPLANNED APPOINTMENTS

NUMBER OF UNPLANNED APPOINTMENTS

nearly 100

LIAISONS ACROSS CAMPUS

While the Counseling Center provides consultation to any person on campus who has concerns about a student, we had formal Counseling Center liaisons with the following units for 2019-20:

Asian American Cultural Center
Applied Health Sciences
Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center
College of Applied Health Sciences*
College of Fine and Applied Arts*
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences*
College of Medicine
Division of General Studies*

Gies College of Business*
Graduate College
Grainger College of Engineering*
LaCasa Cultural Latina
LGBTQ Resource Center
Native American House
University Housing*

*Served by an embedded counselor.
Outreach and Prevention Services

TOTAL OUTREACH EVENTS OFFERED: 1,442
TOTAL PEOPLE REACHED: 19,147

For each hour of outreach conducted, we reached, on average 8.67 students.

OUTREACH POINTS OF PRIDE

- Our psychoeducational offerings continue to expand. These workshops now comprise more than 10% of the our outreach efforts and include workshops on managing ADHD, test anxiety, perfectionism, time management, and emotional regulation/mindfulness.

- Our Alcohol and Other Drug Program offered early intervention classes on alcohol and marijuana information classes to assist students who may be grappling with substance use. Staff also led ACE IT trainings that reached 6,660 first-year and transfer students with information on safer drinking practices. Staff focusing on AOD issues engaged in prevention during high-risk times such as Unofficial and Halloween.

- Our Counseling Center Paraprofessional Program (CCP) continues to thrive as undergraduate peer educators are trained to do outreach on behalf of the Center. The hallmark of the CCP program, Tuesday @ 7 workshops, reached 405 students this year. CCPs continue to employ creative engagement with their peers.

- Inner Voices Social Issues Theatre allows us to reach students in innovative and unconventional ways. During the 2020-2021 academic year, Inner Voices celebrated its 25th Anniversary. A reception was planned to mark this tremendous milestone, but had to be postponed. Inner Voices continues to evolve as the current situation makes live performance inadvisable.
This year, our students received clinical services from four doctoral interns, two social work interns and five practicum counselors who successfully completed their training at our Center. Additionally, our Counseling Center welcomed a new Associate Director of Training, Dr. Tzu-An Hu, and a new Assistant Director of Training, Dr. Patricia Ricketts. Our colleagues in these new roles come with a wealth of experience and it is expected that this area to continue providing excellent training to the next generation of mental health professionals, which positively impacts our students.
For the 2021-2022 year, our focus is on the following areas.

- **Decrease barriers to student access of Counseling Center Services.** In response to student concerns that current appointment scheduling system creates barriers to access, the Center will develop an online self-scheduling system for initial access to clinical appointments. This option will provide students the autonomy to schedule an initial access appointment via a secure portal.

- **Increase equity, inclusion, and social justice awareness among Counseling Center staff.** We have started preliminary conversations with the Office of Access and Equity about a climate assessment at the Counseling Center. As stated in our mission statement, we strongly value social justice at all levels. We have noticed that staff departures have been overrepresented among certain identity groups and seek to better understand the experiences of all staff and make improvements as needed. This is paramount and is intricately tied to the services we provide to students.

- **Develop and implement a plan to return to in-person services.** A transition committee will review current safety guidelines from campus and national agencies and develop policies for a return to in-person services as appropriate. Staff will begin initial implementation August 1, 2021 to allow for a soft roll-out and additional tweaking before the start of the semester.

- **Introduce use of therapy dog as part of Counseling Center services.** Dr. Emily Barnum has secured certification for her dog, Louis, and (pending final approval) we will begin bringing Louis to the Counseling Center for limited clinical and outreach and prevention service. We hope to begin acclimating Louis to campus on August 1, 2021 and expect him to be onsite several days a week. The benefits of animal assistant therapy are well-documented, and we are thrilled to be adding this intervention to our services. We will continue to monitor feedback regarding the addition of Louis to our staff.
Our Counseling Center Paraprofessional class of 2021.

Primary supervisor Deidre Weathersby with intern Michelle Spiewak.

Primary supervisor Patricia Ricketts with intern Jose Soto-Crespo.