

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
COMMITTEE FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC
EXPERIENCE (CIUAE)

Monday, October 3, 2022
Microsoft Teams Meeting

Unapproved Minutes

Present: K. Wiemer, J. Gray, R. Mazzolini, N. Bereolos, T. Libert, Y. Ito, W. Johnson, L. Edwards, F. Ishaq, R. Tork, M. Christian, J. Rhode, W. Gao, T. Paquette, E. Zabela Zabelin, A. Radasanu, F. McClure, J. Tan, J-C Wang

Absent:

Guests: Timothy Paquette, Director, NIU Counseling and Consultation Services

Adoption of Agenda: The meeting started at 1:05 p.m. Y. Ito made a motion to approve the agenda; Farah I. seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Introduction & Icebreaker. Nikolas Bereolos was introduced as a new student member. Random smaller breakout groups were formed for a simple introductory icebreaker activity.

Approval of Minutes Motion to approve the September 12, 2022, minutes by L. Edward, seconded y N. Bereolos The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

Guest Speaker Timothy Paquette, Director, NIU Counseling and Consultation Services, spoke regarding mental health issues in general and issues facing NIU students, both at an individual level but also at a more collective and systemic level, and the office in general. Staff include trained mental health professionals, graduate student trainees under supervision who join us every year as part of their training and supervision, part of their doctoral work.

There is an increased need and willingness for students to reach out for mental health support. We're typically always reaching the capacity of our resources and the NIU. NIU data mirrors national data, amplified by the pandemic, political, and social justice, loss or grief, and violence issues. Other issues include financial, family, and employment.

Staff has always had to have that central core value and ability to provide multiculturally informed and trauma informed counseling services. It's just an absolute requirement of anybody who's on our staff can be able to provide that kind of support.

The Student Wellness team is now embedded as part of the counseling and Consultation services team. When we're talking about people's Wellness and well-being, it's not just mental

health that we're talking about. The Student Wellness team does all kinds of programming and targeted presentations around things that include physical wellness and sleep and being able to manage stress and physical activity. Eat well. Do what you know. Sleep well. Be well that kind of. Focus is a big part of what Student Wellness is doing, and that also highlights how we are taking this holistic collaborative approach to student wellness and well-being, we can focus on the mental health side of that, but it also highlights the importance of campus resources across the board being able to help students address different concerns and be doing better. Being able to manage better, navigating better, feeling better so that they can be successful. I think those would be the main things that I'd want to highlight.

Question/Answer L. Edwards asked about ways to contact the center. T. Paquette said they take walk ins, but that students need to answer prescreening questions, which need scheduled. No one who walks in is turned away.

F. McClure asked how news of counseling services are shared with students. T. Paquette said they're part of the orientation process, panel discussions, community outreach, Greek life, and other campus events.

L. Edwards asked about effectiveness with staff shortages. T. Paquette said services are always available regardless, and that a wait list is used as need increases.

R. Tork asked about group counseling. T. Paquette responded it's available and can be especially helpful. The initial consultation is also helpful in placement.

Radasanu asked about collaboration with other offices/agencies. T. Paquette there is in the form of training clinics for NIU students, community members, and graduate students.

M. Christian inquire about financial resources for students in need of them. T. Paquette stressed services are no cost and that is made clear. There are very few and rare exceptions, those are dealt with individually and insurance becomes an option.

Recruitment Student representation from all colleges is being addressed by email and word-of-mouth/student recruitment. Updates will be shared in the next meeting.

Breakout Groups Three breakout groups were formed with student representation in each to continue your conversation, especially after the Q&A. You might have some new ideas or things that you want to follow up on discussing in your groups, so feel free to do that. Is/are there individuals or university units that we can think about that we can talk to that we should invite that we can work with, such as counseling services? What are some solutions that CIUAE could advance or ask support that are seeking to improve the mental health care for students? So if you do get around to brainstorming a little bit about those so that we can think about some specific actions that we could take as a committee thinks that we could work on, that would be particularly helpful.

Group 1

R. Tork reported we talked about a recap of our previous breakout group from last meeting. We briefly went over what we talked about then and then we were talking about how the presentation covered a lot of our questions, but that there were a couple that were left a little bit unanswered. Things like sharing resources and then ideas for and in that we kind of had ideas for ways to point students to information and resources. One suggestion we have is like an announcement on Blackboard. We also talked about faculty concerns, about effective ways to help students and kind of how we can bridge the gap between faculty advising counseling services and make sure to help students get what they need when they need it. Another interesting point someone brought up in the meeting was what if we did training at the beginning of the year, similar to the sexual misconduct training that we have to do every year as students. The final thing that we discussed was how long term our counseling services affect student's financial position. For example, if counseling services aren't long term. If someone needed more long-term counseling, they would usually be referred to a different professional. But if they don't have the financial resources for that referral on, what do they do?

Group 2

L. Edwards the first thing we kind of talked about is orientation, that is that the right time to talk about mental health. There's an overload of information. So, it can kind of get lost. Maybe we should kind of pull that out or find it different way to present that. Additionally, we also had some questions that we maybe want to follow up on. How often are they going out to present and like specifically where like they talked about dorms, where they going out and like Greek life and just how much is that message getting out? We talked about the importance of preventative care and in that sense we have so much limited resources are there ways that we could get some level of preventative care, so it doesn't get worse where we're having different thoughts of self-harm or issues like that. Then we talked about the financial effects. We had a personal experience in our group talking about when they were going through. The psychological assessment was \$250, and they were just unclear about what was no cost and what was free. So just kind of helping students as like we guide through that and then how do we reconcile financial problems with some students not wanting to talk to their parents? And then we kind of went into some solutions. One solution that was brought up was kind of like every syllabus has like that DRC notice maybe have kind of some like mental health notice. My personal experience I got so tired of hearing what the DRC but the point was it was drilled into my head. So I couldn't forget kind of like that similar idea always having faculty actively reach out. And then we talked about potentially some like lower-level student advocates who can just help walk students through

the complex web. That can be the University Health system. And then we just talked about more about how dorm leaders and RAs those points of connection can just be. For students and where else can we find those connections to get students to be connected and just drilling it into students' head where they can get the resources? And now that it's on some of the main notes that we had?

Group 3

F. Ishaq reported about some of the same things that have been mentioned already. The potential of how we can bridge the gap between faculty, students, academic advising and how we can get those types of areas involved. We also talked not just about mental health, but also well-being in general and how we can encourage departments or colleges to get involved in helping create environments that support student well-being overall to help students feel more comfortable in their academic environment and more comfortable with their faculty and their advisors. We also talked about communicating information to students. Again, where is the best way to do that and what is the best way to do that? But also understanding that it can be difficult to clearly for college students the first-time using therapy potentially to navigate the overall intake process. We had a personal example noting how difficult the process can be. Streamlining the process and help mitigate kind of the difficulty it can be to just be seen the first time around. We also ran across a website that we were unfamiliar with called niumissionwell.com. Unsure how that's connected with the university, but that helped prompt us to answer or ask the question. Putting in an effort to help create a location or more kind of streamlined approach to what resources are actually out there and available to students is a potential area for our group to help focus on not only communicating what's available but having those resources available and 1 area. Those are just a few of the things we talked about.

New Business Student representation from the College of Business and College of Engineering and Engineering Technology are needed and being addressed.

K. Wiemer shared information and updates on the Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award (EUTA), Excellence in Undergraduate Instruction Award (EUIA), and the David W Raymond Award for Use of Technology in Teaching. These included dates, deadlines, names, and other eligibility criteria. R. Mazzolini will work on the updates.

Adjournment F. Ishaq moved to adjourn, seconded by E. Zabela Zabelin. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote at 2:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Richard Mazzolini.