



Build It and They Will Come

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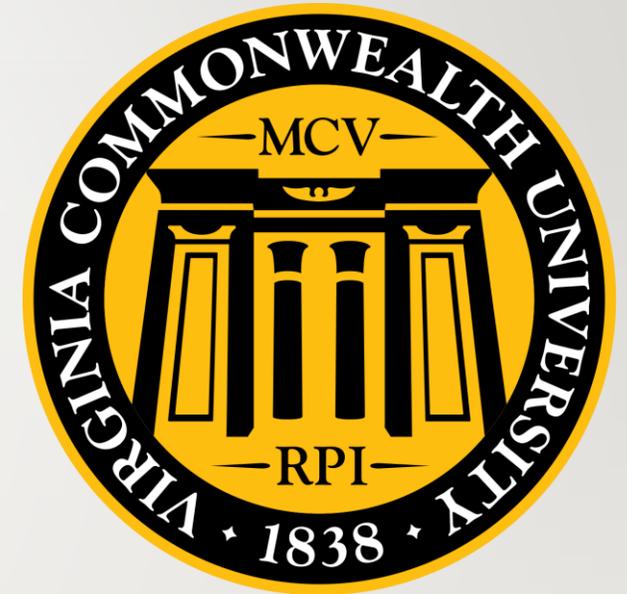


Objectives

- Explore challenges presented by staff and administration at university counseling centers related to outreach.
- Examine the process of how to build an outreach committee and the various challenges that can arise.
- Characterize the importance of relationships within and outside of the counseling center.

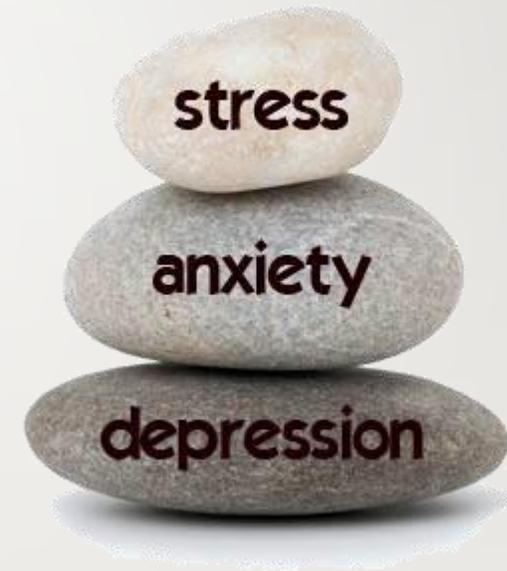
Background

- VCU is a large urban campus in Richmond, VA
 - 31,036 students
 - Two Campuses
- Who I am?
 - Outreach Coordinator for 3 years
 - UCS understaffed since my transition to the role
 - Director changed twice during those 3 years
 - No job description/no outreach statement



What are the primary concerns at UCS?

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Relationship Problem
- Stress
- Interpersonal Functioning
- Panic Attacks
- Grief/loss



What is Outreach?

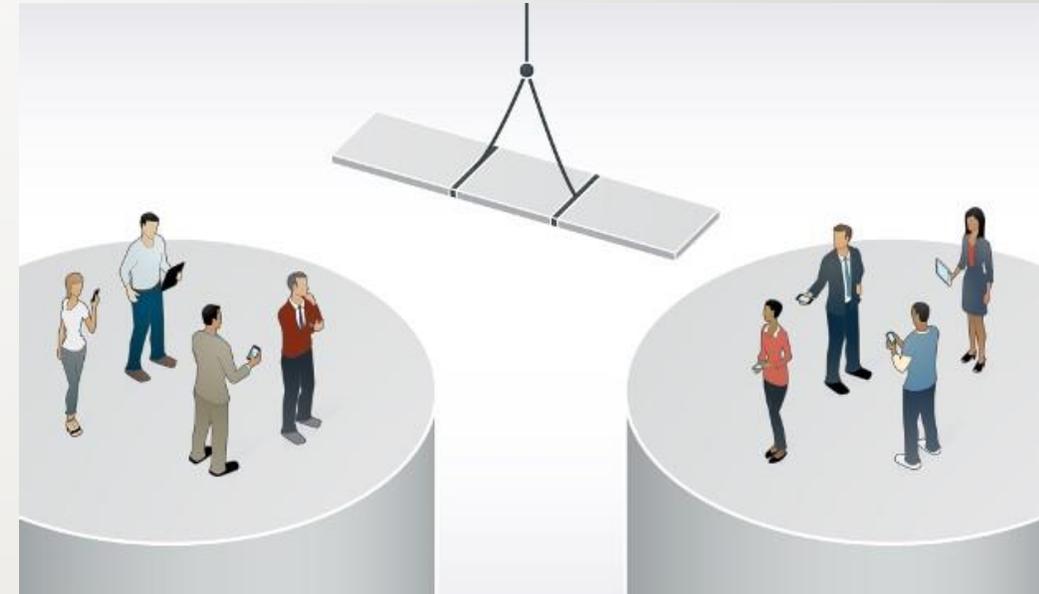
- Presentations? Classes? Workshops?
- Relationship building?
- Prevention?
- Collaborative?
- Crisis Response?
- Social Media?
- Marketing?
- Social Justice?

What is Outreach?

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A Parallel Process Emerges

- Student affairs working in silos not teams
 - **Very Caring University “VCU”**
- UCS staff engaging in outreach based on their individual interest
 - Individual staff not aware of all outreach being conducted
 - Staff disliking outreach due to focus being on marketing not prevention



Outreach Committee Emerges

- Initial goal: create an action and value statement



What is the student need that prompts change to UCS?



Wellness

(not success/not happiness/not graduating)

Outreach Goals at UCS

Create innovative, holistic programming in order to enhance student resilience and reduce stigma of mental health treatment

Promote inclusion and affirmation of diverse identities guided by a commitment to social justice.

Commitment to support students through collaborative relationships with campus partners.

So we have a vision

- . . . But limited time, staff, and money!
- Branding
 - How is UCS viewed
 - Needing to change myths, needing to be seen as open and accessible
 - What message are we wanting students to take away from our events
 - Flexibility – “Flex your Coping Skills”

6

WAYS TO COPE WITH

ELECTION STRESS

[and other media-induced, post-tragedy stress, including identity-related fatigue]



UNPLUG.

Limit your consumption of media, particularly of the 24-hour news cycle of social media variety. Stay informed, of course, but instead of constantly scrolling your newsfeed, try one of these other options.



BE PRESENT.

It is important to be aware of and acknowledge our thoughts and feelings. Pay attention with non-judgmental curiosity, and give yourself permission to feel the way you do. Although avoidance and compartmentalizing can be useful, unaddressed intense emotion can also have negative impacts.



FIND A HEALTHY ESCAPE.

Do something engaging or energizing to manage your feelings rather than turn to substances. Get outside. Practice mindfulness. Exercise. Journal. Meditate. Read something light. Make art. Watch a funny movie. Laughter is often a good antidote for stress and anxiety.



CONNECT.

Engage with supportive friends and allies. Talk about it if you need to, but also communicate your boundaries when needed. Not everyone will share your perspective. Avoid or limit conversation that has the potential to get heated. Reach out to a mental health professional such as those at University Counseling Services.



REFUEL.

Get back to basics, and focus on restoring yourself. Get enough rest. Eat well. Drink plenty of fluids, but limit your alcohol and caffeine intake. Move daily.



DO SOMETHING.

Channel what you are feeling into positive, meaningful activity. Vote. Get informed and be proactive around issues that matter to you. Find ways to engage with your community through volunteering and advocacy.

Adapted from these resources: APA. (2016). APA survey reveals 2016 presidential election source of significant stress for more than half of Americans; Green, C. (2015). A letter of support and solidarity. University of Maryland Counseling Center.



Do-It-Yourself Self-Care Box



A self care box is a place for you to store items that can help you manage overwhelming emotions. Everyone's box looks different. Below are some suggestions to help you get started.

Relaxation

Aromatherapy
Essential Oils

Guided meditation

Deep breathing

DIY

Stress Ball
Mindful Jar
Rice Compress

Herbal Tea

Bubbles!

Take Care of Your Body

Yoga Pants
Jump Rope
Walking Shoes
Weights

Water

Face Mask

Bubble Bath
Massage Oils

Healthy Snacks

Express Yourself

Journal
Coloring Pages

Art & Craft
Supplies

Positive Statements
Towards Self

Favorite
poem/book

For more information on self-care check out our website:
<https://students.vcu.edu/counseling/selfhelp/>



FLEX Your COPING Skills



COPING STRATEGIES



- Prioritizing basic needs (eat, sleep, breathe, move)
- Do something that I find calming and soothing
- Connect
- Seek help

For more coping ideas, check out our website:
www.students.vcu.edu/counseling/selfhelp/

The Well also has information and resources on managing stress and offers weekly mindfulness sessions: <http://www.thewell.vcu.edu>



WARNING SIGNS

- Neglecting my basic needs
- Withdrawing from support
- Difficulty concentrating
- Overthinking/racing thoughts
- Physical stress symptoms

*Knowing our stress warning signs helps identify when to engage in healthy coping!



RESOURCES

(What to do when coping isn't working.)

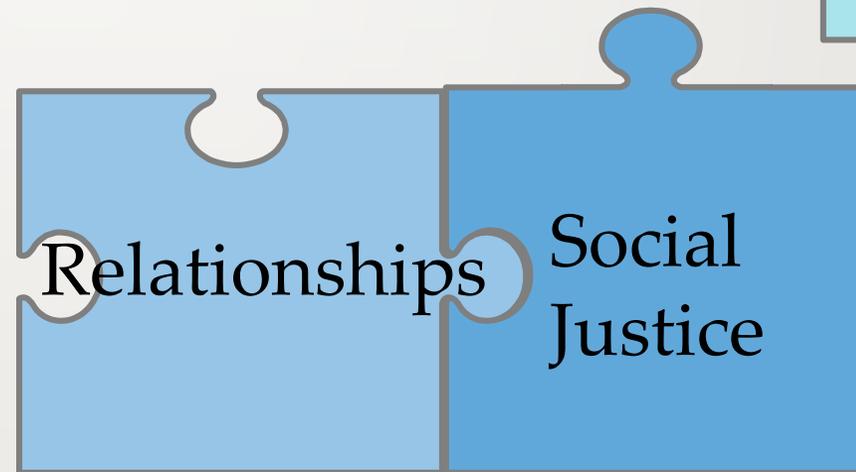
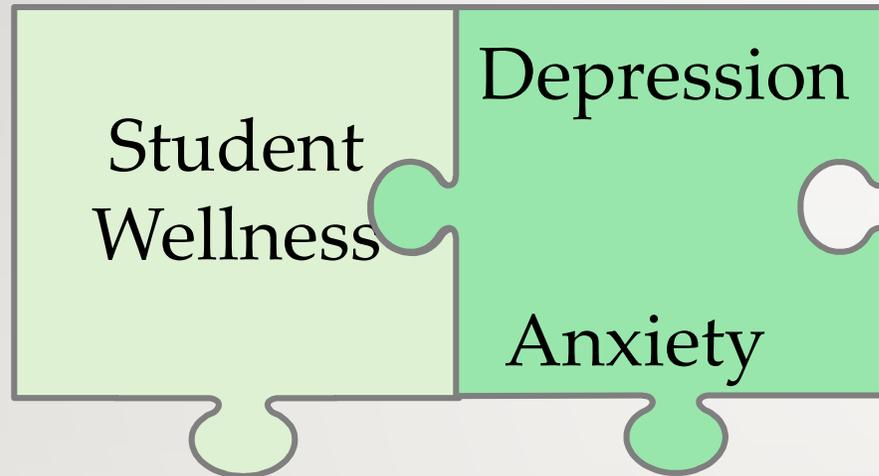
During business hours, come by UCS:

- MPC: University Student Commons, Rm 238 (804) 828-6200
- MCV: VMI Building, Rm 412 (804) 828-3694

After hours crisis: Call VCU Police (804) 828-1234 and to speak to a counselor.

Other people I trust and can call for support:

Pieces start to take shape



Next Steps

- Goal: Building stronger relationships outside of the center
- Research articles supporting the antidotal reports that strong collaborative relationships are essential to providing optimal care to students
- Brunner et al., 2014 – Collaboration vs Consultation

Formal Relationship building

- Looking at who UCS works with/doesn't work with
- Residential Life & Housing stands out as a department we consult with but rarely collaborate with
- Reaching out to directors

Residential Life & Housing

- 12 communities at VCU
 - Freshman
 - Living learning communities
 - Upper-class apartments
- Changes in Res Life
 - Less focus on presentation
 - More focus on community building



Answering the question:
How much *can* we offer?

Setting Clear Objectives

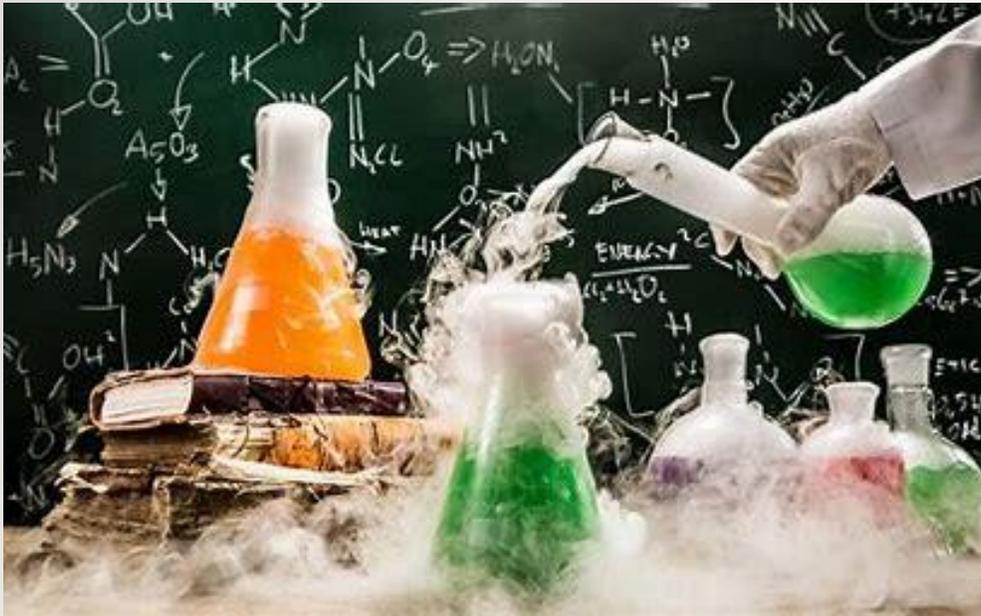
Establish a stronger, collaborative relationship

Development of trust and awareness

Increase communication related to trends in mental health and the student body

Offer support and consultation as needed

Spring 2018



- Let's see how this works!
- In January a meet and greet with HDs and Senior Staff
- Mid-semester (March) pairing were to reach out and ideally meet in person
- Reach out as needed throughout semester

Assessment

- Survey using Google Forms sent out in the beginning of June
- As of June 13 – 14 responses (out of 22)
- Highlights:
 - 43% found the meet and greet to be beneficial
 - 42% agreed that the liasonship helped to build stronger relationship
 - Only 35.7% meet in person with partner and 85.7% communicate at least once via e-mail



Recommendations from survey

- Maintain partnerships for at least 2 years
- Matching being based on professional interests
- More structure to the program and concrete objectives

Plans for the Outreach Committee

- Building on our signature programs
- Working on building a Google Drive of resources that RAs and HDs can access for events and bulletin boards
- Social Media???



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