

STUDENT SENATE BILL 2024-1233

TITLE: Behavioral Awareness & Legislative Advocacy for Necessary Clinical Education (BALANCE) VOLUME X: THE NEED FOR COUNSELING & WELLNESS CENTER SATELLITE OFFICES & THE EXPANSION OF MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

AUTHOR(S): Senator Hunter Monson

SPONSOR(S): Senator Elizabeth Insuasti, Senator Aaron Rubaii, Senator Gabriela Prieto, Senator Jonathan Bedine, Senator Laura Bryan, Senator Aleah Henley, Senator Raj Mia

WHEREAS, with current offices located at Peabody Hall, Radio Road, & Cypress Hall, the Counseling & Wellness Center (CWC), depending on which office, offers a range of services that include crisis support, brief consultations, workshops, biofeedback, mind & body center, short-term individual counseling, & couples counseling [1]; and,

WHEREAS, a large majority of the services, such as “Group Counseling, Workshops, Biofeedback, Mind & Body Center, Short-Term Individual Counseling, & Couples Counseling,” offered by the CWC are only available at the Radio Road Office which is located approximately 1.75 miles from The Hub [1]; and,

WHEREAS, CWC crisis walk-ins are offered at the Peabody Hall Office from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M., and 24/7 consultations are also available over the phone “with a crisis counselor who will assess your needs and determine what services would be helpful” [2]; and,

WHEREAS, the Crisis & Emergency Resource Center (CERC) is another service of the Counseling and Wellness Center that “provides emergency walk-in crisis stabilization and range of consultation and training services for UF faculty and staff” [2]; and,

WHEREAS, the CWC’s 2022-2023 annual report found that there 953 were Client Emergency Consultation Appointments & 766 After Hours Calls, demonstrating that the current office hours are insufficient in addressing the pressing clinical needs of students & staff at the University of Florida [3]; and,

WHEREAS, the Alachua County Crisis Center reports that it “responds to about 45,000 calls on our crisis lines, with roughly 9,000 of those being from the National 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline” [4]; and,

WHEREAS, it is increasingly important that trained individuals in regard to mental health crises & social services are to be the primary point of contact in regard to individuals suffering from mental illness as they “are three times more likely to interact with police & individuals with serious mental illness are 16 times more likely to be killed by police” [5][6]; and,

WHEREAS, reported in 2020, suicide was the second-leading cause of death for college students & “60% of U.S. students felt ‘overwhelming’ anxiety while 40% experienced depression so severe they had difficulty functioning,” supporting the idea that the efficient response & effective treatment of severe mental health crises are of the University of Florida’s utmost concern in ensuring the wellbeing of its students [7][8]; and,

WHEREAS, efficient response times in addition to 24/7 counseling availability for mental health crises have proven to be increasingly effective in the treatment & rehabilitation of individuals suffering from severe depression & is endorsed by the World Health Organization [9]; and,

WHEREAS, a study found that “nearly 60% of college students have received mental health care during their K-12 years” [10]; and,

WHEREAS, from 2001 to 2019, suicide rates have increased 40% among children & adolescents while emergency department visits for self-harm rose 88% [10]; and,

WHEREAS, the U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory found that “the proportion of high school students reporting persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness increased by 40%; the share seriously considering attempting suicide increased by 36%; and the share creating a suicide plan increased by 44%” [11]; and,

WHEREAS, during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, groups at higher risk of mental health challenges during the pandemic included youth with intellectual & developmental disabilities, racial & ethnic minority youth, LGBTQ+ youth, low-income youth, youth in rural areas, youth in immigrant households, & youth involved with the juvenile justice, or child welfare systems, as well as runaway youth & youth experiencing homelessness [11][14][15][16][17][18][19][20]; and,

WHEREAS, the CWC currently offers group counseling for Anxiety Skills & Support, Wellness Support, Exploring Identities & Their Experiences, & Alcohol & Other Drugs (AOD) [21]; and, **WHEREAS**, the CWC’s home page includes services regarding Black Student Wellness, APIDA Student Wellness, LGBTQ+ Student Wellness, & Latinx Student Wellness [22][24][25][26][27]

WHEREAS, between 2011 & 2015, youth psychiatric visits to emergency departments for depression, anxiety, & behavioral challenges increased by 28% [11][12]; and,

WHEREAS, from 2011 to 2020, the weighted number of pediatric mental health-related visits increased from 4.8 million to 7.5 million [12]; and,

WHEREAS, from 2007 to 2018, suicide rates among youth ages 10-24 “increased by 57%, & early estimates from the National Center for Health Statistics suggest there were tragically more than 6,600 deaths by suicide among the 10-24 age group in 2020” [11]; and,

WHEREAS, in early 2021, “emergency department visits in the United States for suspected suicide attempts were 51% higher for adolescent girls & 4% higher for adolescent boys compared to the same time period in early 2019” [11][13]; and,

WHEREAS, according to a survey by *Inside Higher Ed*, 65% of college presidents indicate that “they plan to increase their institution’s capacity to meet the mental health needs of students, staff, & faculty members;” thus, in order to properly meet the needs for its students, the University of Florida needs to establish additional CWC satellite offices, expand the resources given to its counseling treatment, advocate for greater awareness about the multifaceted issues affecting mental health, & implement tangible initiatives to promote the mental wellness for the university’s students, faculty, & staff; then,

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes that students & faculty at the University of Florida rely on the aid & counseling services provided by the Counseling & Wellness Center; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate advocates for the CWC’s Latinx Resources website to be fixed [27]; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate promotes the continued awareness & implementation of wide-spread mental health resources; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate appreciates every single student at the University of Florida & reinforces the fact that each individual matters as they navigate through their own unique journey during their time at the university; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate concedes that it must do better internally in order to promote mental wellness among its members as student officials are placed under strict scrutiny & face severe anxiety & distress when carrying out their responsibilities; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate advocates for stronger action to be taken with the intention of truly demonstrating that the wellbeing of every student is of the utmost importance to the university; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate reaffirms the sentiments expressed in *Student Senate Bill 2022-1008 Resolution Recognizing May as Mental Health Awareness Month 2022* [28]; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate reaffirms the sentiments expressed in *Student Senate Bill 2022-1042 Resolution Recognizing the Disability and Mental Health Resource Crisis at the University of Florida* [29]; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate reaffirms the sentiments expressed in *Student Senate Bill 2024-1112 Resolution Advocating for the Implementation of Campus-Wide Semesterly “UF Mental Health and Well-Being Days”* [30]; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate strongly advocates for the University of Florida administration & faculty to fully comprehend the scope of the psyche of their students; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate strongly advocates for the University of Florida administration & faculty to consider how the benefits of a semesterly mental health day can prevent future crises happening to their students; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate acknowledges that every mental health crisis is different & must receive its own specific

supervision & treatment, which promotes the notion that the expansion of CWC resources as well as the Expansion of the University of Florida Police Department Mental Health Correspondent Program are of the utmost importance for the University of Florida; and,
THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate comprehensively understands the multifaceted factors that cause severe impacts towards mental wellness for students, faculty, & staff, outlined in *BALANCE Vol I-IX*; and,
THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate believes that in order to foster a truly supportive & inclusive campus culture, it is consequential that student retention & satisfaction is maintained, which is done when universities prioritize mental health & demonstrates that its students' well-being is valued; and,
THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate hopes to mitigate severe mental health emergencies through the expansion of the CWC's resources & increased provisions to the university's mental health care & crisis units; and,
THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes that the sudden spike in suicide rates & suicide attempts is a national emergency that the University of Florida is strongly advised to take action against; and,
THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate is aware of the fact that suicide is the second-leading cause for college students & is core evidence for the University of Florida to take even further action in combating mental illness; and,
THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate acknowledges that the prevalence of mental health disorders such as depression & anxiety are higher among college students compared to the general population & is an issue that needs to be dealt with in order to truly take care of students prior to their graduation & experience within the workforce; and,
THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes that it is the duty of the University of Florida to promote its students' wellbeing, academic success, campus culture, & public health for the purpose of helping them thrive during their academic journey; and,
THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate understands that individuals dealing with mental health emergencies greatly benefit from

interacting with licensed crisis professionals rather than law enforcement officers that may not be properly trained in the case of such an emergency; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate upholds the importance of physical wellbeing in regard to its relationship with mental health; thus, greater collaboration & awareness between RecSports & mental health advocacy groups would promote higher productivity levels & has the potential benefits of reducing stress & boosting mental wellbeing; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate commends the University of Florida Police Department for its efforts to prevent mental health emergencies through its Mental Health Correspondent Program; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate aims to see a day where its students will never experience depression so severe that they will incur difficulty functioning; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate acknowledges the necessity of timely responses to mental health crises; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate understands how significant academic pressure at high achieving institutions, like the University of Florida, can create severe burdens of stress & further anxiety for students; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted underrepresented groups disproportionately compared to their white peers; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate hopes to inspire other universities around the world to take a strong stance combating mental illnesses of all forms in order to protect their students, faculty, & staff that may be dealing with psychiatric disabilities, psychiatric illnesses, emotional disorders, &/or mental disabilities; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate strives to promote the early mitigation of possible severe mental health emergencies; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate believes that the CWC's lack of resources regarding domestic violence is a change that

needs to be done effective immediately as outlined in *BALANCE VOL VI* & should be a provision added to the proposed CWC satellite office expansion; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate supports increased funding towards mental health initiatives & the CWC in order to further develop programs that boost the wellness of the University of Florida student body; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate further supports the expansion of GatorWell's Wellness Coaching & Mindfulness Resources in order to achieve higher levels of understanding of the diverse experiences of the student body & how to better prevent possible discrimination; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate highlights the need for greater awareness about the CWC's specialized resources & specific services to underrepresented groups; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate perceives how individuals from marginalized groups not only face discrimination through various rhetorical means, such as microaggressions, but also through the disregard seen in the United States healthcare system; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate strongly advocates for the expansion of the University of Florida Counseling & Wellness Center to be similarly modeled to the following resources offered by the University of Central Florida's Counseling & Psychological Services: "College Students & Trauma, When Terrible Things Happen, Connecting with Others, Coping with Grief, Coping with Tragedy (Eng. & Sp.), Coping with a Natural Disaster In the Wake of Trauma Positive Self Care after a Traumatic Event (Eng. & Sp.), Not Alone, Culture of Respect, & Let's Be Clear," which all offer scenario specific counseling options to better understand the needs of the student(s) [31]; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate further advocates to include Testing of Learning Disabilities, ADHD, OCD, &/or Autism Spectrum Disorder Assessments to the resources provided from the CWC [31]; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate firmly supports for the perseverance & protection of the University of Florida's Equal Access Clinic against external pressure & recognizes that the fundamental belief of "healthcare for all" is to be given to all students [32]; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes the exponential rise of mental health issues for young adults & acknowledges the university's integral role in actively combatting the surge in such issues; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate advocates for promotion by the University of Florida to comprehensively address student mental health challenges as part of the institution's efforts to support its students' well-being & success; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate upholds the principle that the confidentiality for those seeking out counseling is to be preserved, so the expansion of CWC satellite offices is to be located in an inconspicuous area that protects the privacy of anyone needing aid; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate calls for the University of Florida to implement CWC satellite offices located closer to highly-populated areas of campus (i.e. The Hub &/or the Reitz Union) aid in order to promote increased effectiveness & availability of response time to mental health crises.

Proviso: A copy of this resolution shall be sent to the University of Florida President Ben Sasse, University of Florida Provost J. Scott Angle, Vice President for Student Life Heather White, University of Florida Student Body President Olivia Green, University of Florida Counseling & Wellness Center Executive Director Ernesto Escoto, University of Florida Counseling & Wellness Center Interim Director Rosa West, University of Florida Counseling & Wellness Center Associate Directors Jennifer Stuart, Natasha Maynard-Pemba, & Alvin Lawrence, University of Florida Counseling & Wellness Center Associate Director (Administrative Services) Marie Southern, University of Florida Counseling & Wellness Center Associate Director of Crisis & Emergency Services & Consultation & Referral Team Coordinator Olivia K. Pitkethly, University of Florida Counseling & Wellness Center Faculty Council Chair Ginamarie Russo.

[1] <https://counseling.ufl.edu/about/location-hours-contact/>

[2] <https://counseling.ufl.edu/services/crisis/>

[3] <https://issuu.com/ufcwc/docs/cwcannualreport-2022-23-0915>

- [4] <https://alachuacounty.us/depts/css/crisiscenter/Pages/CrisisCenter.aspx>
- [5] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9243918/#notes-a.e.dtitle>
- [6] <https://doi.org/10.7870/cjcmh-2009-0005>
- [7] <https://www.imagine-america.org/deteriorating-mental-health-u-s-college-students-part/>
- [8] https://www.artandhealing.org/campus/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiA8YyuBhBSEiwA5R3-ExagMdEw0PmS0IQ80gGfTPtxsPQSWTzzvyQvBpa5wJLKJfcDTWCsTBoCjnsQAvD_BwE
- [9] <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-in-emergencies>
- [10] <https://timelycare.com/nearly-60-of-college-students-accessed-mental-health-care-in-grades-k-12-timelycare-survey-finds/?cat=news>
- [11] <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-youth-mental-health-advisory.pdf>
- [12] [https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37129655/#:~:text=Results%3A%20From%202011%20to%202020,001\).](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37129655/#:~:text=Results%3A%20From%202011%20to%202020,001).)
- [13] https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7024e1.htm?s_cid=mm7024e1_w
- [14] <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10803-020-04816-6>
- [15] <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32939917/>
- [16] <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jir.12769>
- [17] <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2020.102273>
- [18] [https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chc.2010.07.001\)](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chc.2010.07.001)
- [19] <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1054139X20305929?via%3Dihub>
- [20] <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32401283/>
- [21] <https://counseling.ufl.edu/services/groups/>
- [22] <https://counseling.ufl.edu/services/>
- [23] <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/governance/executive-leadership/2023/04/11/survey-college-presidents-upbeat-despite>
- [24] <https://counseling.ufl.edu/resources/blackstudents/>
- [25] <https://counseling.ufl.edu/resources/apida/>
- [26] <https://counseling.ufl.edu/resources/lgbtq>
- [27] <https://counseling.ufl.edu/resources/latinx/>

[28] <https://sg.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Student-Senate-Bill-2022-1008-Resolution-Recognizing-May-as-Mental-Health-Awareness-Month-2022.pdf>

[29] https://sg.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Resolution_Recognizing_Resource_Crisis-2022-1042.pdf

[30] <https://sg.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/SSB-2024-1112-Resolution-Advocating-for-the-Implementation-of-Campus-Wide-Semesterly-UF-Mental-Health-and-Well-Being-Days.pdf>

[31] <https://caps.sdes.ucf.edu/resources/>

[32] <https://equalaccess.med.ufl.edu/>



3/21/24

Monish Vijayaraghavan
Senate President

Date