

STUDENT SENATE BILL 2024-1524

TITLE: Resolution Supporting Comfort Dogs on the University of Florida Campus to Destress During Reading Days or Finals

AUTHOR(S): Member at Large Catherine Isakson

SPONSORS: Majority Party Julia Seifer

WHEREAS, college students often experience significant levels of stress and anxiety, particularly during finals week [1]; and,

WHEREAS, a survey by the American Addiction Center found that exams were rated among the highest stressors for college students [1]; and,

WHEREAS, studies have shown that interactions with animals, especially dogs, have psychological benefits for students [2]; and,

WHEREAS, providing opportunities for students to destress has been proven to be beneficial to both their mental health and academic performance [3]; and,

WHEREAS, several universities across the country have successfully implemented dog therapy programs during finals week, including Bucknell University, Kent State University, and a number of Canadian Universities [1]; and,

WHEREAS, the University of Florida has a responsibility to support the well-being of its students, and is already taking steps to do so through GatorWell, the CWC (Counseling and Wellness Center), and other initiatives, like events put on annually by the Health Affairs Cabinet; and,

WHEREAS, working with local organizations to bring dogs to particular areas on campus during finals week may offer a convenient and enjoyable way for students to destress; then,

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes the importance of students' well-being and academic success.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate supports initiatives to aid in student success and promote mental health, particularly during finals week, specifically by bringing in comfort dogs.

THEREFORE, LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes that the Health Affairs Cabinet, alongside GatorWell and local organizations with dogs in need, may collaborate and provide a mental health break for students by providing comfort dogs during reading days or finals week at designated areas on campus.

Proviso: The author of this bill would like to recognize Senator Emeritus Gabriela Castro for aiding in the creation of this bill.

Proviso: A copy of this resolution shall be sent to Health Affairs Cabinet Director Aaron Sindhu, Executive Director of UF Counseling and Wellness Center Dr. Ernesto Escoto, Interim Director of UF Counseling and Wellness Center Dr. Rosa West, Director for GatorWell Dr. Monica Webb, and former Senator Gabriela Castro.

[1] <https://tethertug.com/blogs/news/puppy-rooms-are-transforming-college-campuses-during-finals-week>

[2] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6826684/>

[3] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9169886/>