



## **Student mental health**

### **Striving to meet UC student mental health services challenges**

The University of California recognizes student mental health as one of its top priorities and is committed to providing resources that will help students continue to have a successful higher education experience. Students have unique mental health needs that are growing in scope. There is an urgent need to focus on long-term goals that will promote a healthier learning community on our 10 campuses.

Like many universities and colleges across the country, UC campuses are coping with a series of challenges in providing the appropriate support for students who are faced with problems in this area. UC is committed to a series of initiatives that will address some of these challenges including providing additional funds for mental health services on campuses. In addition, the UC Student Mental Health Oversight Committee was charged in early 2007 with providing oversight to the implementation of systemwide student mental health report recommendations, advancing all the recommendations through dialogue and assessment, providing guidance in identifying and applying resources, and reporting back to the provost and Regents on UC's progress in this area.

### **Student mental health complexities**

University students are presenting mental health issues with greater frequency. These factors have resulted in:

- An increase of appropriate support for students who are faced with significant developmental challenges.
- Emotional stresses and mental health risks.
- About 1 in 4 students who seek counseling services has identified mental health issues and is receiving psychotropic medications.
- Visits to the student health centers for mental health -- services have more than doubled in the past 10 years.
- Campuses have seen a dramatic increase in the number of students seeking disability services on the basis of psychological or psychiatric needs.

Another primary challenge is staffing.

- The nationally recommended student-to-staff ratio of psychologists to students is between 1,000 and 1,500 students per mental health professional. UC does not yet meet this guideline.
- Workforce retention issues contribute to the problem as they do in the public mental health system -- the entire UC system lags behind the private sector in salaries for mental health.

### **Meeting UC student needs**

In December 2005, UC Provost Wyatt R. Hume charged the 12-member student mental health committee with examining trends in student mental health and how those trends are being managed both nationally and at the University of California. The goal was to identify any needed improvements in mental health services on UC campuses whether or not the campuses had the necessary resources to provide those services.

After reviewing national trends in student health, conducting interviews and examining studies and other information, the committee recommended in its report [www.universityofcalifornia.edu/regents/regmeet/sept06/303attach.pdf](http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/regents/regmeet/sept06/303attach.pdf) that UC adopt a three-tiered approach to respond to mental health issues, which includes restoring services, implementing targeted interventions and creating a comprehensive institutional approach to creating healthier learning environments.

Since completing the committee's report, the University of California has begun seeking resources to address many of the multiple challenges in this area.

- An increase in the UC's registration fee for 2007-08, approximately \$4 million is being directed specifically to mental health needs over the current academic year.
- UC has committed to a multiyear plan to fund the recommendations in the September 2006 report, and is proposing an \$8 million dollar funding increase for 2008-09.

Also, in the wake of the Virginia Tech tragedy, UC President Robert C. Dynes created a 14-member security task force in May 2007 to study how UC campuses can enhance their security, notification process, mental health services and general preparedness. The task force has completed its work and made key recommendations: <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/regents/regmeet/mar08/e2.pdf>

#### **UC's position on the student mental health initiative**

In June 2007, the California Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission approved a four-year, \$60 million initiative to expand suicide- and violence-prevention programs at schools and colleges across California. About \$34 million will be set aside for higher education. Funding comes from the voter approved Proposition 63 funds. The commission's actions are a welcome and appreciated recognition of the current challenges facing public higher education related to funding and services for student mental health needs. UC is deeply committed to moving forward on taking advantage of this additional funding.