

A RESOLUTION OF THE DUKE STUDENT GOVERNMENT*Concerning Students' Access to and Expectations of Counseling and Psychological Services***Policy Statement**

Duke Student Government calls upon CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services) to ensure the constant availability of appointments and minimize to the best extent possible the wait time for first time appointments. Under no circumstances should a wait time of more than two weeks be considered acceptable.

Duke Student Government also calls for the creation of a CAPS Advisory Panel under the auspices of Student Affairs. This group will meet at least once a month under the direction of a Student Affairs senator and CAPS staff member. It will submit a report to the Student Affairs committee every semester and consist of five persons drawn from CAPS and the student body, selected by the Committee on Student Affairs and the CAPS representative. Best efforts shall be made to create a group sensitive to the variety of needs of the campus community, and at least one student representative shall have patronized CAPS in the past.

Duke Student Government also reaffirms the student expectation that CAPS will provide services in the best interests of the student, ensuring confidentiality to the utmost degree and not prioritizing institutional interests over student care. CAPS has never had an issue regarding confidentiality, and Duke Student Government expects that it never will. Duke Student Government also expects that any admissions made to CAPS personnel will never be used by the University to inculcate students in a judicial process, other than in those situations afforded by law.

Duke Student Government also formally praises the recent progress of the Division of Student Affairs and CAPS in providing funds that enable students requiring urgent care to take advantage of the high quality services available at the Duke University Medical Center.

Rationale

Mental health is as important as physical health. Duke creates a stressful environment for many students, and addressing mental health issues is a priority. Depression, eating disorders, and a host of other ailments must be taken seriously and treated in a timely manner. Simply stated, a wait time of several weeks to receive an appointment is hardly acceptable. Serious harm may transpire in the weeks required to set up an appointment, and the student may no longer be willing to seek treatment at that time. Students may be discouraged from ever seeking treatment. CAPS should be as accessible to students as possible. If current resources cannot meet student needs, then services must be expanded to an adequate level.

The creation of a CAPS advisory board is a logical step. Such a board, consisting of students and CAPS personnel, will improve ties between CAPS and DSG, and offer student input to CAPS on a consistent basis. Such a group can be a source of new ideas to improve CAPS specifically for students. It will also keep Duke Student Government apprised of all new developments at CAPS.

There are many influential factors in establishing a division's priorities, and it is important to note the necessary emphasis on patient care. By ensuring students complete confidentiality and respect, they are more likely to seek treatment and need not fear punishment on the basis of their private discussions. Also, it is very important that CAPS be prepared to deal with any issue a student is concerned with; as such, it is necessary for CAPS to be prepared to refer students to nearby care, if need be.

Respectfully submitted,

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Senator, Committee on Student Affairs

*Approved by unanimous voice vote on November 29, 2006



Joe Fore
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