

Report of the Senate Committee on Students and Educational Policy (SCSEP)

Background

The Committee oversees and advises the Executive Committee on matters relating to the University's policies and procedures on the admission and instruction of students, including academic integrity, admissions policies and administration, evaluation of teaching, examinations and grading, academic experiences, educational opportunities (such as study abroad), student records, disciplinary systems and the campus environment. In general, the Committee deals with the matters covered by the following section of the *University's Handbook for Faculty and Academic Administrators: IV*.

2017-2018 Specific Charges

1. Engage with the Offices of the Vice Provost for University Life and Vice Provost for Education on the development of a repository of mental health and wellness resources at Penn and review how information on available resources is communicated to students and faculty.
2. Explore the nature and prevalence of substance abuse on campus and related educational programming and explore the possibility of developing a University Recovery Center and housing.
3. Explore the nature and prevalence of sexual violence on campus and related institutional policies, practices and resources.
4. Assess the impact of the Faculty Wellness Ambassador program.
5. Support the planning and execution of "Knowledge Teach-In" events.

Report & Recommendations

Since September 2015, SCSEP has studied the problem of mental and behavioral wellness on campus. We have met with administrators, clinicians and leaders from mental health treatment, peer and advocacy groups. These included national organizations such as ActiveMinds, local groups like PennReflect, service providers under the supervision of VPUL and VPE and members of the Mental Health Task Force. The committee found all of these stakeholders to be fully dedicated to serving individuals with mental illness and improving wellness across the University. SCSEP's fact-finding process also revealed that there are scant outcomes data about the many activities and programs across campus. This is in contrast to other universities where mental health programming has been systematically studied and, in some cases, the results published. Moreover, our findings indicate that, because of fragmented communication, there exist programmatic redundancies and missed opportunities.

The following recommendations reflect these and other findings.

Organizational Restructure: Our overall findings led us to recommend in an interim report (dated March 22, 2018) to the Provost that Penn should have a single designated leader, who possesses strong managerial capabilities and who has expertise in the field of mental-health care. This person should then execute program evaluations, determine appropriate new structures, information flow and personnel to be set up at Penn. As of the writing of this report, this recommendation is being implemented.

Communications: Students needs to be educated on which resource should be called on for a psychiatric problem of their own or for a peer. Faculty, staff and administrators likewise need to be educated on who to contact when they see a student or a colleague in crisis or experiencing distress and what the signs for the problem might be. To improve access for students experiencing a mental- health issue, all online resources should include a simple set of questions to direct users to relevant resources or emergency contact information.

Social Media: There is now a body of evidence that excessive social media use is correlated with mental-health issues. We recommend a University-wide educational initiative (which might include a University-wide course) on the impact of social media on individual health, personal identity, the nature of knowledge and truth and the community.

Development of Wellness Courses and Curricular Content: The SCSEP recommends the development of both stand-alone courses on wellness and courses that integrate topics related to mental health and wellness. The SCSEP recommends the development of a portfolio of University-wide courses that focus on wellness and may include courses that challenge students to develop, implement and evaluate wellness programs at Penn. Community outreach and service-learning courses with a focus on mental health and wellness should be offered. Additionally, a set of discipline-specific courses that include wellness components should be designed and offered. SCSEP recommends a mechanism—perhaps emanating from the Provost's office—for supporting course development and realigning teaching incentives for the cadre of faculty who volunteer to advance this goal.

Inventory of Existing Wellness Courses: SCSEP recommends identifying courses that are potentially supportive of student well-being—e.g. community-engagement ("academically based community service") courses—and measure the efficacy of these academic activities for supporting and improving student well-being. Create a page on the Wellness website where testimonial evidence from student engagement is provided.

Recovery Center & Recovery Housing: SCSEP recommends the new AVP for Wellness study the needs for both a campus recovery center and housing opportunities for students in recovery and develop a set of recommendations for enhancing support of students who are in recovery.

Clubs and Wellness: Student membership in organizations and clubs is highly competitive, often leading to distress and disappointment. In addition to adhering to all anti-hazing regulations, SCSEP recommends all University clubs systematically examine how and if their missions and requirements for acceptance and membership reflect the fundamental values of the University as a community of mutual respect.

Recommendations to 2018-2019 SCSEP

1. Assist and provide faculty consultation to the Associate Vice Provost for Wellness.
2. Provide oversight and recommendations regarding the progress of the wellness initiatives, specifically advancing the integration of wellness across all University curricula.
3. Hold an open meeting for students to provide input and continue to seek student input on existing programs, CAPS and new wellness initiatives whenever possible.
4. Evaluate approaches and strategies for pass/fail grade system in first semester of freshman year.

2017-2018 SCSEP Members

Dominic Sisti, PSOM/Medical Ethics & Health Policy, *Chair*
Sunday Akintoye, Dental School
José Bauermeister, Nursing
Laura Desimone, GSE
Sharon Irving, Nursing
Carol Muller, SAS/Music
Karen Redrobe, SAS/History of Art
Ralph Rosen, SAS/Classical Studies
Jorge Santiago-Aviles, SEAS/ESE

Ex Officio:

Jennifer Pinto-Martin, Nursing, Faculty Senate Chair-Elect
Anita Summers, Wharton, PASEF non-voting member
Santosh Venkatesh, SEAS/ESE, Faculty Senate Chair