

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH FOR STUDENTS (OBHS) EXTERNAL REVIEW

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Submitted by:

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Executive Summary

In Spring 2003, Dean of the College Freddy Hill organized an external team to review the Wesleyan Office of Behavioral Health for Students. The Review Team was charged to consider the goals, staffing, and programs of the office and how well it is serving different student populations.

After receiving an internal self-study done by OBHS, the Review Team visited the campus in April 2003 and met with various campus constituencies including the professional staff of OBHS, students, faculty, and members of the administration over the course of two days.

The Review Team's principal findings are as follows:

1. The Office of Behavioral Health for Students has served large numbers of Wesleyan students very well and enjoys the trust of many in the campus community. There is a high regard for the professionalism of the staff and it is evident that the clinicians work hard and are committed to their students.
2. Some in the community find OBHS too "cloistered and standoffish" and assert that the service is not responsive to the current needs of the campus. There is a sense that the department is isolated from others in the University.
3. The extremely heavy demands on the time of the clinical staff in OBHS have curtailed their ability to engage in outreach efforts or collaborative projects with other colleagues in the student services area. In addition, there is frequently a long wait for an appointment.
4. Students of color and students in the GLBTQQ feel that they are not being adequately served. There is little diversity in the OBHS staff.
5. Students complain of not having a choice in therapists. They also find it difficult to change therapists if the initial match is not satisfactory.
6. Graduates students have no access to counseling support during the summer months.
7. Students question OBHS's "accountability" and feel that they are unable to provide feedback on a regular basis.
8. There appears to be an imbalance in the resources devoted to the Davison Health Center and to OBHS, with the former enjoying richer resources than the latter.

Based on their findings, the Review Team offers these principle recommendations:

1. The OBHS needs to shift its focus from a traditional individual therapy model to more comprehensive model with a focus on outreach, group counseling, consultation and training services. Members of the staff should attend conferences and workshops that focus specifically on counseling in the college and university setting.

2. There must be a university commitment to providing additional resources to OBHS, in particular, in staffing. However, the Review Team emphasizes that the mere addition of more FTEs is not sufficient. The way in which the staff is organized must be re-envisioned to include full and part time staff and the use of practicum, intern and/or post-doctoral students. The use of part time staff will assist in increasing the diversity of the staff.
3. However, additional staffing is not sufficient to meet the heavy demand for clinical services. OBHS should establish and maintain a network of off-campus clinicians to whom students can be referred as necessary and when appropriate. Expectations need to be redefined so that students understand that they will receive short-term therapy on campus and then be referred outside. Exceptions will of course be made as needed. In addition, relationships with hospitals in the vicinity need to be strengthened and formalized.
4. OBHS should have a greater visibility within the Wesleyan community and increase its outreach efforts, including participation in new student orientation, residential life staff training, and use of the web.
5. The number of psychiatric hours should be increased to improve the management and distribution of medication.
6. Policies and procedures, intake forms, and record-keeping practices should be re-examined with a view toward streamlining them and making the forms more user-friendly.
7. Central to restructuring the effective delivery of counseling services is the introduction of some walk-in hours and the development of a triage system to reduce the waiting time for an initial appointment and to determine the necessary level and urgency of care.
8. Better arrangements for graduate students must be made to provide counseling resources for them during those times when OBHS has historically been closed but graduate students are on campus.
9. The University should re-examine the benefits available to students under the current health insurance package with a view to providing coverage for medications. OBHS staff should become more acquainted with the outpatient benefits available under this plan.
10. Finally, all staff should have the opportunity to participate in on-going professional development training and especially cultural competency and GLBTQQ training.

Interested parties who would like to read the report in its entirety may review a reserve copy in the Office of the Dean of Student Services, North College, Room 108.