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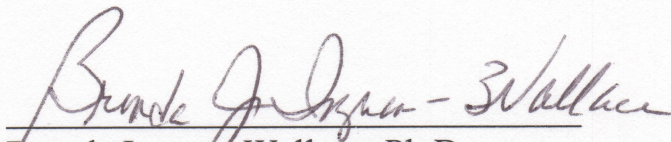# Effects of Faculty Opinion on Student Use of the Counseling Center
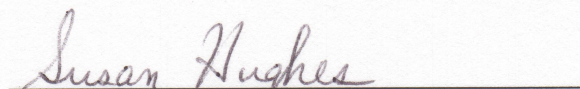
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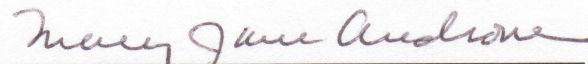
Bachelor of Arts

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

Departmental Distinction in Psychology

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Effects of Faculty Opinion on Student Use of the College Counseling Center

Mary Burns

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Abstract

This experiment considers the effects that faculty opinions can have on their students with regards to utilizing college-counseling centers. Student participants were asked to answer questions concerning their knowledge, feelings, how they believe faculty feel, and use of the Albright College Counseling Center. Faculty members were also surveyed to determine their knowledge of, feelings toward, perceptions of how their colleague's feel, and their likelihood to refer students to the counseling center. Following the survey of students and faculty, daily emails were sent to faculty to inform them of the basics of the counseling center, and the benefits of encouraging their students to utilize the counseling center. A faculty guide to the counseling center was also created for future reference. Students and faculty were again surveyed with the same survey after having been exposed to more information regarding the Counseling Center. This study found that faculty members thought the counseling center was more important than students, that students were less likely to think a faculty member would encourage them to use the counseling center than faculty, and that faculty members had encouraged students to use the counseling center considerably more than students had felt faculty members had encouraged them to use the counseling center. Misconceptions and misinformation held by faculty members was also discussed.

Effects of Faculty Opinion on Student Use of the College Counseling Center

Most college and university campuses today have some type of mental health resource available to their students and sometimes faculty. Many people consider them an important facet of a college's campus. There have been numerous studies on why students use the counseling center, the role of the counseling center on a campus, and faculty opinions of counseling centers; however research on whether or not the opinion the faculty has of the counseling center affects the student's use of the counseling center is very limited. This study aimed to determine if, on Albright College's campus, the faculty had an effect on how students used the counseling center and if they were more or less likely to encourage a student to use the center. With more and more issues facing college students today, the importance of gaining the correct help at the correct time has become a crucial subject. With faculty members being one of the most impacting forces on students, their intervention can become a crucial aspect to a student's success as well (Fister & Hernandez et al, 2001).

Today there are numerous differences among college counseling centers as well as the college student population from previous years. There are changes in not only the college campus, culture, but also in students' personal lives that generations past have not had to deal with. For instance, one of the most predominant changes among college campuses is increased diversity. College campuses are becoming progressively more diverse, as Kitzrow reported: 30% are minorities, 20% are foreign born or first generation, 55% are female, and 44% of all undergraduates are over the age of 25 (2003). With increased diversity come increased

challenges between mixing the different cultures that students may bring to the campus community. This increased diversity among campuses can cause clashes among the students themselves. These interpersonal issues are some of the reasons that a student can seek the help of the counseling center.

There have not only been changes in the campus environment, but also to the students themselves. There are more and more students presenting on campuses with severe psychological issues. Even more pressing is that it is reported that approximately 16% of students seeking help from college counseling centers have severe psychological problems (Kitzrow, 2003). The challenges these students face are causing them to come to campuses with more issues and more problems than previous generations (Kitzrow, 2003). But what does this mean for the faculty and students? Studies have shown that these issues that students are facing can have a negative impact on academic performance, retention, and graduation rates. High levels of stress are also correlated with academic problems (Kitzrow, 2003). In her article, Kitzrow (2003) suggests that mental health needs must become a priority of campuses to meet the needs of their students. It is not only the counseling centers duty to make sure these needs are met, but also everyone on the campus- administration, faculty, and staff- must be educated and trained on the mental health needs of their students and know how to recognize a student who would be in need. In this time, there is a great need for college counseling centers and will continue to attribute to the mission of colleges and universities (Kitzrow, 2003).

When it comes to students entering college, one of the main concerns of a college is whether or not the student will remain there, and if they will graduate. It is shown that, "more than 40% of all college entrants leave higher education without earning a degree, 75% of these students drop out in the first two years of college. An institution can expect that 56% of a typical

entering class will not graduate from that college" and "attrition rates can be as high as 20%" the freshman year alone (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Gerdes & Mallinckrodt's (1994) study looked at undergraduate students prior to their enrollment in college. This study aimed to determine if students remained at their institution, if they received a degree, and whether they had poor academic standing in relation to their adjustment to college. Students were first surveyed before entering college, and then assessed through six years through their academic career. This study found that the more generally, socially, and emotionally adjusted the student was throughout the student's college career, the lower their attrition rate, and did better academically. "For students who were not struggling academically, informal contacts with professors, and satisfaction with course quality, and a sense of self-confidence were important predictors of persistence. For students who were struggling academically, satisfaction with extracurricular activates, freedom from anxiety, and an absence of thoughts about dropping out were the best actual adjustment predictors of retention" (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Their study found that emotional, social, and academic issues can have an effect on drop-out and that interventions with students must involve all aspects of the college environment such as student affairs and the counseling center (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). By involving all the aspects of the environment where the student resides, the student can obtain the best help possible.

Counseling services can have a large impact on the retention of students at an institution. Ewing, Mason, & Wilson (1997) looked at students requesting counseling services on a campus to see whether these students had better retention rates than students who did not seek out counseling services. They assumed that having counseling center interventions equates to academic success or failure of the student (Ewing, Mason, & Wilson, 1997). In previous studies, it has been shown that graduation rates increased for those who had counseling versus those who

did not. Of students who had retention-related difficulties and sought counseling, 86% were still enrolled a semester later (Ewing, Mason, & Wilson et al, 1997). The study took the information of students of who had graduated or not graduated and those who had received counseling services versus those who had not received counseling services. It was found that students who received counseling had a 14% retention advantage (Ewing, Mason, & Wilson et al, 1997). If a student had trouble academically or considered dropping out and received counseling, they were more likely to continue in their education than students who did not receive counseling. This shows that students should have routine academic evaluations to determine the need for counseling. Perhaps if a student is at a higher risk for dropping out, then that student should be encouraged to visit the counseling center.

Retention rates are not only indicators of a need for counseling, student behaviors must also be carefully considered before referring them to the counseling center. Determining what these behaviors mean could be a crucial factor in whether or not students get referred for the help need and this duty is often times left up to the professor. Parr and Valerius (1999) examined faculty perceived desirability of a student's behavior. They pointed out that "the classroom environment is a complex and dynamic set of interactions between faculty and students designed to facilitate accomplishment of a variety of goals" and these "form the basis for a set of expectations for both instructor behaviors and student behaviors" (Parr & Valerius, 1999). Previous research shows that the most undesirable behaviors were: failure to complete assignments, failure to ask questions in class, and lack of participation in discussions (Parr & Valerius, 1999). Surveys were given to faculties at two universities and they were asked to rank the behaviors they found least and most desirable. Their results were that professors preferred behaviors that were described as class participation behaviors. Unlike the previous research, they

found that there were greater values placed on faculty-student interactions than before (Parr & Valerius, 1999). The least desired behaviors such as showing up late, talking during class, or interrupting, that disrupt course related interactions matched previous research. In general, Parr and Valerius (1999) concluded that when faculty genuinely perceives that a student is interested in a topic, the result is a more positive interaction and evaluation of students.

When it comes to these behaviors that are disruptive in the eyes of the faculty, the question of how the best way to deal with these behaviors still exists. On a daily basis, faculty members often experience students who are late, talk during class, eat and sleep in class, and have arguments with professors and many faculty members may not know how to deal with these behaviors and how a college counseling center could help (Fister & Hernandez et al, 2001). These behaviors are not only just disruptive; they can also be signs that there is an underlying distress with the student. This underlying distress can manifest in bad academic performance, anger, bad personal hygiene, excessive absences, and writings that display themes of despair and/or rage, homicidal and suicidal threats (Fister & Hernandez et al, 2001). These types of issues should be addressed by counseling professionals. Fister and Hernandez (2001) suggest that there must be a relationship among the faculty, staff, administration, and other students to maintain a healthy environment for the student and provide all the services that the student will need to get better. These separate people must all work together and be aware of how their actions can affect other members of the college community. They suggest that there needs to be a faculty liaison, faculty and staff handbook, and faculty and staff training program to make the faculty more aware of the services for students, and policy development and implementation. A liaison can serve as a link between faculty, staff, administration, and students, helping them interact with each other. A faculty and staff handbook can clarify procedures and techniques the

campus has for helping faculty and students. Training programs can provide valuable information, and increase communication among faculty and staff, and force the institution to function as a system (Fister & Hernandez et al, 2001). Fister and Hernandez point out that the most important thing to remember is that the college community must work together as a whole and in a collaborative manner to deal with students who may have issues (2001).

When it comes to counseling centers, the perceptions of the students and faculty can have a big impact on the use. Even when it comes to trivial things about a counseling center, the perceptions of both the students and faculty can be very important. Brown and Chambers (1986) looked at how the name of a counseling center could affect how the students and faculty perceive said counseling center. We already know that students perceive helpers, who are identified by different titles differently and we also know that these differences in perceptions can change the tendency for that student to seek help. This study aimed to look at whether a student's willingness to seek help from a counseling center is affected by how that title is perceived. A sample of the student population were asked questions over telephone about the likelihood of using a college counseling center, based just upon their name (Brown & Chambers et al, 1986). They found that how a student or faculty perceives the name of a counseling center does affect how willing they would be to utilize that center. This study also found that faculty and students are similar in their judgment of college counseling centers (Brown & Chambers et al, 1986). Perhaps if there are similarities in the judgment of just the title of the counseling center, there will be similarities between how the students and faculty perceive the counseling center itself.

Perceptions of a counseling center extend beyond just the name, extending to the needs and services provided to their students. Previous research has shown that the primary concerns of students were career planning, financial concerns, problems in negotiating the system or dealing

with faculty, and academic adjustment issues. Current studies have shown that faculty and student perceptions of the counseling center, however, do not match (Carney & Carol et al, 1980). In this study, students and faculty were both surveyed. Faculty were asked about their willingness to refer students to a counseling center and what under what circumstances they would refer a student. Students were asked about their willingness to refer a friend to the counseling center over different issues. This study found that, while both groups agreed that career counseling, financial help, and academic concerns were the most common problems, students and faculty did not have similar perceptions about alcohol, drugs, and tobacco abuse among students (Carney & Carol et al, 1980). The main concern for faculty were academic problems whereas students thought substance abuse, unclear career choices, sexual concerns, lack of information about social activities, mood issues, anxiety, and difficulties in working the college environment were perceived as more problematic (Carney & Carol et al, 1980). Overall, Carney and Carol concluded that there needs to be more work done on ensuring that faculty and students have a complete view of the services that are provided by the counseling center (1980).

More work needs be to be done on informing faculty and students about the services that a campus-counseling center can provide. However, it needs to be known throughout the campus that the main purpose of the counseling center is to support the mission of the college (Ellingson, Kochenour & Weitzman, 1999). Often times faculty do not have proper information, do not know the scope of the services, or have a connection with students (Ellingson, Kochenour & Weitzman, 1999). There are also many misconceptions and lack of knowledge when it comes to faculty and the college counseling centers. Many faculty members reported that they would refer students to the counseling center if there were an academic issue; however "88% of students reported that the issues for which they were seeking counseling were affecting their academic

performance" (Ellingson, Kochenour & Weitzman et al, 1999). Ellingson, Kochenour &

Weitzman hypothesized that brochures and faculty training would help increase faculty

knowledge about the counseling center and encourage student use. Staff and faculty were

resistant to the training and the brochure; however, a link between the faculty, students, and rest

of campus can provide an important role in connecting the counseling center to the colleges'

academic mission (Ellingson, Kochenour & Weitzman et al, 1999).

Colleges and Universities are going through a number of changes such as growing

diversity, and their counseling centers are no exception. Many counseling centers have to

consider the idea of waiting lists and financial concerns and changes in administrative procedure.

Campuses are trying to address increased mental health issues among students, managing crises

on campuses, helping students with career exploration, and importance of retention programs all

while residing in a time period when financial resources are that are available to college

counseling centers is very scarce (Bishop, 1995). Reports from college counseling centers have

shown that "48% of institutions had experienced a reduction in the size of the counseling staff,

55% reported that there was little or no annual increase in staff salaries, 7% had actual reductions

in salaries, and 68% lost funding in other budget cuts" (Bishop, 1995). Many centers have begun

charging a fee for their service, reducing the number of services offered, limiting the number of

sessions available to students and outsourcing to other mental health institutions. Attracting

qualified psychologists can also be a problem. While the college counseling center environment

can be an attractive to psychologists, the salary issue can deter psychologists from accepting

jobs. These issues must be addressed by the administration of the colleges and universities to

ensure quality mental health service.

All of these studies have shown that there is a clear lack of information for students and faculty members on college campuses across the nation. However, there are many colleges and universities that are trying to help their faculty in guiding their students to the appropriate area. Smaller colleges, such as Alvernia University have an online *Guidelines for Faculty*, indicating the signs and symptoms of a student in distress, and with information on what to do for those students. Similarly, the University of Mary Washington also offers a guide for faculty identifying students in distress and how to deal with disruptive students (University of Mary Washington, 2009). Immaculata University has an early intervention referral form that staff and faculty can fill out if they feel that a student is in need (Immaculata University Counseling Center, 2009). La Salle University has an almost twenty page guide for the faculty, and University of Maryland gives step by step instructions on how faculty can help students in need (University of Maryland Counseling Center, 2008) (LaSalle University Division of Student Affairs, 2008). Many colleges and universities are making progress to ensure that they have well informed faculty and staff to help their students.

There are still many colleges and universities that have not made progress to ensure that their faculty is knowledgeable about the counseling center and what to do about a disruptive student or a student in need. Albright College currently has no guide or brochure for their faculty to know how to deal with a disruptive student or a student in need. New faculty entering Albright's community will receive a brief training during their orientation about the resources of the counseling center, along with other resources of the Albright community. There is an obvious need for a resource for the faculty and staff at Albright College as well as other colleges and universities around the country. The aim of this study was to determine what impact the faculty at Albright College has on its students in relation to their use of the counseling center. It was

hypothesized that the faculty does have an impact on how students view the counseling center and that the faculty having a negative opinion of the Albright College counseling center will correlate with the students having a negative opinion. Similarly, it was hypothesized that any change in the faculty opinion after their had received information about the counseling center would trickle down to the students as well. This study also hypothesized that faculty members have a number of misconceptions of the counseling center that also affect the students use of the Albright College counseling center.

Method

Participants

Student participants for this experiment were recruited by asking professors to distribute the survey to the students in their classes at Albright College. Professors of classes were asked to send out a survey to their classes via an email link. Participants were students who opted to voluntarily take the survey. There was no incentive given for taking the survey, aside from helping a student complete her senior thesis research project. For the second student survey, the same classes were emailed the link from their professor and asked to take the survey again. Faculty participants were recruited through email. The first survey was emailed to all Albright College faculty members through a link. The second survey was also administered similarly. There were 60 student participants for the first survey and 45 student participants for the second survey. Male and female Albright College students between the ages of 18 and 22 were used. For the first survey, there were 40 female students, 18 male, and 2 chose not to respond. For the second survey, there were 32 female students, 12 male students, and 1 chose not to respond.

There were 37 faculty participants for the first survey and 42 faculty participants for the second survey. Gender was not taken into account for faculty members. Whether or not the person took the survey the first and second time was tracked through a number of questions that created a code for each survey participate. Participants were asked to create a code using the first two letters of the city in which they lived, the last two numbers of their phone number, and the last two letters of the street they grew up on. There was no compensation given for the participants agreeing to take the survey. The Albright College IRB approved this experiment.

Materials

An informed consent was given to both student and faculty members before completing the survey. Each survey consisted of 13 questions and the same survey was given each time through an anonymous online system. A copy of the faculty and student questionnaires can be found in Appendix A. Examples of these question were their opinion of the counseling center, how many times they had gone to the counseling center or how many students they knew of that went to the counseling center and if they felt students would use the recommendation of a faculty member to use the counseling center. Emails were sent to the faculty with tips about the counseling center in between the first and second survey. These tips can be found in Appendix B. A faculty guide was created and can be found in Appendix C. The guide is based on information gathered from the faculty responses and will be distributed in the fall of 2009.

Procedure

The independent variable in this experiment was the information provided to the faculty about the useful and importance of the Albright College counseling center for their students. The dependent variable was the change in student opinion and use of the Albright College counseling

center. A positive opinion of the counseling center was operationally defined as a willingness to encourage students to use the counseling center, a breadth of knowledge about the counseling center, and general good thoughts about the counseling center. A negative opinion was operationally defined as not being willing to encourage the use of the counseling center to students, being unknowledgeable about the usefulness and services of the counseling center, and generally unconstructive thoughts about the counseling center.

This experiment began by participants, both students and faculty, taking a survey about their use of (or encouragement of use for faculty), and what they felt the faculty opinion of the counseling center was. Every student received the same survey and every faculty member received the same survey. The surveys were administered for one week. Following that week, faculty received emails everyday for a week with information about the counseling center included. Three weeks after the first survey was administered, students and faculty were asked to complete the same survey again, in order to track a change that would have occurred because of newly informed faculty. Controls used during the experiment were to keep the true identity of the survey hidden. While students and faculty knew that they were completing a survey about their use of the counseling center and how they thought the faculty viewed the counseling center, neither students nor faculty were informed of the true nature of determining the effects the faculty has on the student population. With the exception of the faculty members administering the survey to their students, neither faculty members nor students knew that the other was taking a survey similar to theirs.

Results

A two-way ANOVA test was performed to see if there was a difference between students versus faculty on how important they felt the counseling center was to Albright's campus community. Faculty members significantly rated the importance of the counseling center (M=4.573, SD= .080) greater than the rating of the students (M= 4.053, SD=.070), $F(1,180)$=23.907, p=.000. A two-way ANOVA test was performed to see if there was a difference between the first and second survey on how important students and faculty felt the counseling center was to Albright's campus community. There was no significance found between the first survey (M=4.352, SD=.074) and second survey(M=4.273, SD=.076), $F(1,180)$=.558, p=.456.

A two-way ANOVA was performed comparing the number of times students had gone to the counseling center for the first and second survey. There was no significance found between the first survey (M=1.283, SD=.087) and second survey (M=1.244, SD=.100), $F(1, 103)$=.086, p=.770. A two-way ANOVA was also performed comparing whether or not a student would recommend the counseling center to a friend for the first survey and second survey. There was no significance found between the first survey (M=2.661, SD=.156) and second survey (M=2.933, SD=.178), $F(1, 102)$=1.322, p=.253.

A two-way ANOVA was performed comparing how likely the faculty and students felt it would be that a faculty member would encourage a student to use the counseling center for the first and second survey. There was no significance found between the first survey (M=3.300, SD=.120) and second survey (M=3.180, SD=3.180), $F(1,180)$=.486, p=.487. A two-way ANOVA was also performed comparing how likely the faculty and students felt it would be that a faculty member would encourage a student to use the counseling center for the students and faculty responses. Faculty members were significantly more likely (M=4.144, SD=.129) to say

that they would encourage a student to utilize the counseling center versus the students(M=2.336, SD=.113), F(1,180)=110.885, p=.000. A two-way ANOVA was performed comparing the faculty responses to how likely they thought a student would be to use the counseling center on their recommendation. There was no significance found comparing the first survey (M=3.838, SD=.129) and second survey (M=3.571, SD=.121), F(1,77)=2.272, p=.136.

A Chi Square test for independence was performed to see if there was a difference in the proportion of students versus faculty for how they feel the faculty views the counseling center (i.e. positive, negative, neutral). There was no significant difference found between each group, X^2 (N=119, 2)=.58, p=.748. Percentages for this can be found in Table 1. A Chi Square test for independence was performed to see if there were a difference between the first and second survey for how they feel the faculty views the counseling center. There was no significant difference found between the groups, X^2 (N=119, 2)=3.613, p=.164. Percentages for this can be found in Table 2.

A Chi Square test for independence was performed to see if there was a difference in whether or not the students and faculty were incorrect or correct in answering where the counseling center was located. There was no significant difference between the students and faculty answers, X^2 (N=184, 2)=2.033, p=.154. Percentages for this can be found in Table 3. A Chi Square test for independence was performed to see if there was a difference in whether or not the students and faculty were incorrect or correct in answer where the counseling center was located for the first and second survey. There was no significance found between the first and second survey, X^2 (N=184, 2)=.226, p=.634. Percentages for this can be found in Table 4.

A Chi Square test for independence was performed to see if there was a difference between the students and faculty for whether or not they had encouraged or been encouraged to use the counseling center. There was significance found between the student and faculty responses, X^2 (N=179, 1)=71.092, p=.000. Faculty members were significantly more likely to say they encouraged a student to use the counseling center than students who said a faculty member had encouraged them to use the counseling center. The percentages can be found in Table 5. A Chi Square test for independence was performed to determine if there was a difference between the first and second survey for whether or not faculty had encouraged or students had been encouraged to use the counseling center. There was no significant difference found between the first survey and the second survey X^2 (N=179, 1)=.094, p=.759. The percentages can be found in Table 6.

Percentages for the question of checking off issues students would go to the counseling center for as well as what faculty members would recommend a student go to the counseling center for are located in Table 7.

Discussion

Many students throughout their college career experience some type of distress, whether it is personal, academic, or an interpersonal issue. Many times the first person to notice that a student is having an issue is that student's professor. They see them a number of times out of the week and spend a great amount of time together. Psychological issues can present themselves as academic problems, or other disruptive behaviors (Fister & Hernandez et al, 2001). A faculty member noticing this type of behavior could help that student through their problem quickly

instead of letting it fester. With knowledge and training, faculty could become the most important liaison of the college-counseling center.

The results of this study showed that while there were no differences between the first and second survey, there were differences between the student and faculty responses. The answers that students and faculty gave for the same questions differed greatly. When asked how important they felt the counseling center was to Albright's campus, faculty members were more likely to say that it was very important than students. This goes against the hypothesis that students would share a similar opinion of the faculty members and that faculty would have a more negative opinion of the counseling center. When the faculty and students were asked how likely they thought it would be that a faculty member would encourage a student to utilize the counseling center, faculty were considerably more likely to say they would encourage a student to use the counseling center. Students were less likely to say a faculty member would encourage them to use the counseling center. While both of these questions were based on opinion, when it came to a yes or no question of whether or not they had encouraged a student to use the counseling center (for faculty) or if a faculty member had encouraged them to use the counseling center (for students) the results were very different. The majority of students reported that they had never been encouraged by a faculty member to use the counseling center. On the contrary, most of the faculty reported that they had encouraged a student to use the counseling center within the past three years. Clearly there is a discrepancy between the two groups.

This data raises the question of where this discrepancy between the students and faculty are coming from. This study hypothesized that faculty would have a negative opinion of the counseling center and that the students would share the same negative opinion. This was not the case; there was a considerable difference between the opinion of the faculty and the opinion of

the students, with the faculty's opinion being more positive than the students. However, because the students do not feel that a faculty member would encourage them to use the counseling center (whereas the faculty reported that they would), this could show that students are unaware of how the faculty members feel about the counseling center. Another interesting aspect to consider is the fact that faculty members feel that they are encouraging students to use the counseling center, however the students do not perceive this. There could be two possible explanations for this. The first being that faculty are not being explicit enough in their recommendations for students to use the counseling center and/or students are not recognizing the referral In this case, faculty could be better trained to know the best way to approach a student about using the resources at the counseling center. A second explanation could be that faculty are actually referring students to the counseling center, except anonymously through the Student Alert Form provided online for faculty members. The Student Alert Form allows faculty members to alert the college that they have concern about a student, and the college will then inform the student (without informing them who referred them) and direct them to the place to get the best help. Either way, perhaps students need to be more aware of the different ways faculty members can help them.

Even though there were no significant findings for many of the questions, important information was still gained from the responses. The first question had asked the students and faculty where the Albright College counseling center was located. While 43.3% of the students who took the survey did not know where the counseling center was or did not answer, 76.6% of the faculty reported that they did not know where the counseling center was or did not answer. This alone shows the lack of knowledge among the faculty at Albright about the counseling center. While the faculty also reported that they would be very likely to refer a student to the counseling center and that they felt the counseling center was a very important part of Albright's

campus, they also rated the general view the faculty has of the counseling center as more neutral and the faculty's written responses showed an apprehension of referring students to the counseling center and the numerous misconceptions they had. Many faculty members would not refer a student to the counseling center because of confidentiality issues, issues concerning whether or not the staff follows American Psychological Association standards, because they did not feel students were getting the help they need, and concerns about the staff of the counseling center. Many of these misconceptions must be addressed through providing faculty with more information in order to help the students gain the help need in an appropriate time and manner.

Another issue that rises in the concerns of the faculty was the idea that different areas of the college should address the academic concerns of a student. This study found that only 11.1% of faculty members would encourage a student to utilize the counseling center whereas 32.7% of the students would go to the counseling center for an academic concern. A student that is having academic concerns or issues often times has an underlying problem that is affecting them academically as well as personally. Fister and Hernandez (2001) point out that students with emotional distress can often times display this through changes in academic performance. Students who are not adjusting well socially also have a higher rate of dropping out of college than those who are adjusting better (Ewing, Mason, & Wilson, 1997). Mallinckrodt and Gerdes (1994) found that academic performance only explained half of the decisions to drop out of college. It is found that psychological distress among college students were related to academic performance and those students with higher psychological distress had more test anxiety, lower academic self-efficacy, poor time management skills, and poor use of study resources (Kitzrow, 2003). Simply sending a student to an academic center may not be enough and by working together with numerous resources on campus, the student can receive the best care and succeed

better. Without working in a collaborative manner, students may not get the exact help that they need.

While many of the faculty are lacking in their knowledge of the counseling center and its benefits to the student population, Albright College currently has no resource about the counseling center available for the faculty. New faculty members receive orientation to the Albright College campus community upon being hired and there is a half hour information session included in their orientation presentation concerning student services. There are a number student services such as the health center and academic services, including the services of the counseling center itself. Does this process really inform the faculty fully on how they can best help their students? The information given to faculty about the counseling center is brief and missing many aspects; it is not hard to believe that the faculty has a number of misconceptions.

In light of findings from this study that indicate there is a clear lack of information for faculty and clear misconceptions of how the counseling center is run, a resource for the faculty at Albright College was created. This brochure covers the services that the counseling center provides, signs that a student is in distress, what to do if they encounter a distressed student, and other misconceptions they could have. This brochure can be given out to faculty when they are hired at Albright and even to faculty who have been here for years. The goal is to provide an in-print reference guide that faculty can look at whenever they may have an issue with a student. This information will also be posted on the Albright College Counseling Center website to ensure that the information can be accessed at all times. This guide can provide the information not only for the faculty and staff, but also provide the information for the Albright College Counseling Center website. This guide can be found in Appendix C.

Another resource that could be added to Albright's community to make ensure that faculty is receiving the best information about the counseling center is a training session. While there is a small orientation upon being hired at Albright, perhaps every few years there should be a training session for all faculty members so that they know how to best deal with situations in which a student would need help. Information from the brochure could be elaborated on in a training session with things such as role-play training, and how to spot a student that could be in danger. As Fister & Hernandez (2001) examined in their article, training sessions could be very beneficial for not only the staff and faculty at Albright, but also for the students who would benefit from their knowledge.

There are a number of things that could be changed about this study. First, the time span of this study should be extended. The time between the independent variable of information given to the faculty members, and when the second survey was given out was not long enough to establish a consistent change. Had their been a greater amount of time between them, there could have been greater significance shown. While significance was not found in this study, plans for a continuation of the study are underway, and there will hopefully be more significance shown in later studies. Another aspect that could have been changed is the level of participation. While the faculty had a representative sample, the student sample could have been greater. In further research larger sample sizes could be used. Larger sizes could also contribute to the return rate of the survey and to the amount of participants that will take the survey the second time. While many people took the survey the first and second time, it was difficult to find those to take the survey both the first time and the second time. Finally for further studies, during the week where information was provided to the faculty, there should have been more information given. For further studies, more information should be provided to the faculty so that there is a greater

likelihood of a change between the first and second survey. All of these changes can provide with more statistical significance and greater depth of information.

Knowledge of the counseling center is something that is going to become very important for Albright's community as well as other college campuses. If the faculty can become informed about the resources on Albright's campus, they could better help those who might not receive the right help or the right amount of help. This study showed that there are discrepancies between the students and faculty concerning how important the counseling center is, how likely the faculty is to encourage students, and if students had been encouraged. This illustrates that there needs to be better communication between faculty and students as well as more information given to both groups about the counseling center. By faculty members working together with all of the resources on Albright's campus the students will benefit greatly. Fister and Hernandez (2001) summed it up perfectly in their article, that "it is important to recognize that the entire system must participate in a collaborative manner to bring about a systemic process" in dealing with issues students may have. Through this increase of information and communication between the students, faculty members, and the college, students can be helped personally, academically, and emotionally, making Albright College the most important resource a student can have.

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College Park, MD

Table 1

Percentages for how students and faculty feel the faculty view the counseling center for student versus faculty

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
Students	26.05%	0.00%	26.89%	52.94%
Faculty	23.52%	2.52%	21.00%	47.05%
Total	49.57%	2.52%	47.89%	

Table 2

Percentages for how students and faculty feel the faculty view the counseling center for the first and second survey

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
First Survey	24.36%	1.68%	26.05%	52.10%
Second Survey	25.21	0.84%	21.84%	47.89%
Total	49.57%	2.52%	47.89%	

Table 3

Percentages for where the counseling center is located for students versus faculty

	Incorrect	Correct	Total
Faculty	25.00%	17.93%	42.93%
Students	27.17%	29.89%	57.06%
Total	52.17%	47.82%	

Table 4

Percentages for where the counseling center is located for first survey versus second survey

	Incorrect	Correct	Total
First Survey	26.63%	26.08%	52.71%
Second Survey	25.54%	21.73%	47.28%
Total	52.17%	47.82%	

Table 5

Percentages for if the student had ever been encouraged or faculty had ever encouraged for first survey versus second survey

	Yes	No	Totals
First Survey	21.22%	32.40%	53.63%
Second Survey	17.31%	29.05%	38.54%
Total	38.54%	61.45%	

Table 6

Percentages for if the student had ever been encouraged or faculty had ever encouraged for students versus faculty

	Yes	No	Totals
Faculty	31.28%	10.61%	41.89%
Students	7.26%	50.83%	58.10%
Total	38.54%	61.45%	

Table 7

Percentages for issues students would go to counseling center for and what faculty members would refer a student to the counseling center for.

	Students	Faculty
Identity Issues	22.4%	63.9%
Family Problems	42.9%	86.1%
Problems With Professors	26.5%	13.9%
Anxiety	53.1%	91.7%
Boyfriend/Girlfriend Issues	30.6%	69.4%
Problems with Friends	28.6%	69.4%
Stress	53.1%	86.1%
Learning Disability	22.4%	16.7%
Academic Problems	32.7%	11.1%
Death of a Parent	42.9%	77.8%
Rape/Sexual Assault	55.1%	77.8%
Suicide Ideation	46.9%	88.9%

Substance Abuse	40.8%	77.8%
Eating Disorder	38.8%	86.1%
Depression	67.3%	94.4%
Parents Divorce	28.6%	77.8%
Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Concerns	12.2%	63.9%
Text Anxiety	22.4%	50.0%

Appendix A

Student Counseling Center Survey

Please describe yourself:

☐Male ☐Female ☐No Response

Age: _____

Major: _____

While complete anonymity is guaranteed, there is a need for an indentifying factor. Please enter the code as the instructions appear:

- First two letters of the city in which you were born (i.e. Reading= RE)
- Last two numbers of your phone number (i.e. 610-555-5555= RE55)
- And the last two letters of the street your grew up on(i.e. South= RE55TH)
- Example Code= RE55TH

_____

Where is the counseling center? _____

How many times have you gone to the counseling center?

☐Never ☐1-2 times ☐2-5 times ☐5-8 times ☐more than 8 times

Do you know of anyone who has seen or is seeing a counselor at the counseling center?

☐Yes ☐No ☐No Response

How likely would it be that you would recommend the counseling center to a friend?

☐Very likely ☐Somewhat likely ☐Neither Likely nor Unlikely ☐ Somewhat Unlikely

☐Very Unlikely

How important do you feel the counseling center is to Albright's campus?

☐Very Important ☐Somewhat Important ☐Neither Important nor Unimportant

☐Somewhat unimportant ☐Very Unimportant

Has a faculty member ever encouraged you to make an appointment or utilize the counseling center?

☐Yes ☐No ☐No Response

How likely to do feel it would be that a faculty member would encourage you to make an appointment at the counseling center?

☐Very likely   ☐Somewhat likely   ☐Neither Likely nor Unlikely   ☐ Somewhat Unlikely
☐Very Unlikely

In general, how do you feel the faculty views the counseling center?

☐Positive   ☐Negative   ☐Neutral   ☐Not Sure

Please check any issue that you would go to the counseling center for (check all that applies):

☐Rape/Sexual Assault   ☐Gay/Lesbian/ Bisexual Concerns   ☐ Family Problems

☐Boyfriend/Girlfriend Issues ☐Identity Issues   ☐Problems with Professors

☐Depression   ☐Parents Divorce   ☐Test Anxiety

☐Academic Problems   ☐Substance Abuse   ☐Stress

☐Anxiety   ☐Suicide Ideation   ☐Problems with Friends

 ☐Eating Disorder   ☐Death of a parent   ☐Learning Disability

☐Other

Appendix B

Faculty Counseling Center Survey

Please describe yourself:

☐Male ☐Female ☐No Response

While complete anonymity is guaranteed, there is a need for an indentifying factor. Please enter the code as the instructions appear:

- First two letters of the city in which you were born (i.e. Reading= RE)
- Last two numbers of your phone number (i.e. 610-555-5555= RE55)
- And the last two letters of the street your grew up on(i.e. South= RE55TH)
- Example Code= RE55TH

_____

Where is the counseling center? _____

How many students do you know of that has seen or is seeing a counselor at the counseling center (within the past three years)?

☐None ☐1-2 Students ☐2-5 Students ☐5-10 Students ☐More than 10 Students

How likely would it be that you would encourage a student to make an appointment at or utilize the counseling center?

☐Very likely ☐Somewhat likely ☐Neither Likely nor Unlikely ☐ Somewhat Unlikely

☐Very Unlikely

How important do you feel the counseling center is to Albright's campus?

☐Very Important ☐Somewhat Important ☐Neither Important nor Unimportant

☐Somewhat unimportant ☐Very Unimportant

Have you ever encouraged a student to make an appointment at the counseling center?

☐Yes ☐No ☐No Response

How likely do you feel it would be that a student would use the counseling center at your recommendation?

☐Very likely ☐Somewhat likely ☐Neither Likely nor Unlikely ☐ Somewhat Unlikely

☐Very Unlikely

In general, how do you feel the faculty views the counseling center?

☐Positive ☐Negative ☐Neutral ☐Not Sure

Please check any issue that you would encourage a student to make an appointment at or utilize the counseling center for (check all that applies):

☐Rape/Sexual Assault ☐Gay/Lesbian/ Bisexual Concerns ☐ Family Problems

☐Boyfriend/Girlfriend Issues ☐Identity Issues ☐Problems with Professors

☐Depression ☐Parents Divorce ☐Test Anxiety

☐Academic Problems ☐Substance Abuse ☐Stress

☐Anxiety ☐Suicide Ideation ☐Problems with Friend

☐Eating Disorder ☐Death of a parent ☐Learning Disability

☐Other

Please explain why you would/would not encourage a student to use the counseling center:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix C

Did you know? Emails

2/24/09

Did you know...

That the Albright College Counseling Center is FREE for all students?

It is located in the Gable Health Center on Linden Street and can provide services such as:

- Individual and relationship counseling
- Consultation for students, faculty and staff
- Limited psychological screening for students
- Referrals to community providers

Appointments can be made and any questions answered by calling the Gable Health Center 610-921-7532.

2/25/09

Did you know that…

as a faculty member you may be one of the first to recognize a student is in distress?

Some common red flags may be:

- Obvious changes in mood or behavior
- Tearfulness, depressed mood
- Threatening behavior or stalking
- Extreme restlessness, agitation
- Change in grades, class attendance, or work habits
- Obvious anxiety, panic, or avoidance
- Coming to class drunk, high, or hung-over
- Direct or indirect expressions of hopelessness/suicidal thoughts
- Evidence of Self-Inflicted harm
- Poor hygiene/inappropriate clothing
- Bizarre or unusual behavior or speech
- Significant weight changes
- Irritability outburst or disruptive behavior

If you observe these red flags by a student, encourage them to contact the Albright College Counseling Center at 610-921-7532.

2/26/09

Did you know that...

Even students with just academic problems can benefit from the counseling center.

Many times students will be experiencing issues that are not related to their personal life, but rather their academic career. From grades, to majors, to what to do with the rest of their life, students are under numerous academic stressors. Albright's campus has many resources such as the Career Development Center, and the Academic Learning Center. All of these issues cause stress however and many may need to work out more than just their grades. The Counseling Center offers the perfect place for students to work through the stress of their academic career, while they are working with other areas of Albright's Community. By combining the resources of Albright's community, they can work to the best of their ability.

2/27/09

Did you know that…

There are currently four highly qualified counselors at the Albright College Counseling Center. They are:

- Alex Leski, LSW
- Dr. Jan Sebes
- Sally Lengel, MSW
- Dr. Peggy Seibert

They would be happy to help any student you may encourage to see them. The director of our counseling center is Dr. Brenda Ingram-Wallace. She is currently a professor in the psychology department at Albright and she does not perform any of the services offered at the counseling center.

Encourage your students to make an appointment at the counseling center by calling 610-921-7532.

Appendix D

Faculty Guide to the Counseling Center

See Next Page

Please note the layout of these pages will differ in the actual guide., however the information and graphics are the same.

Albright
COLLEGE

Faculty Guide to the Counseling Center

Albright College Counseling Center

The Albright College community has a counseling center located at on the corner of Linden and Richmond Streets, across from Smith Hall. The Gable Health Center is also located in the same building.

There are a number of services that the counseling center provides. Such as:

- Individual, group and relationship counseling
- Consultation for students, faculty and staff
- Limited psychological screening for students
- Referrals to community providers

All services are free to full-time undergraduate day students and graduate and ADP students at the Reading site. Students are allowed up to eight sessions, but will be referred to an outside source if they need more.

Appointments at the counseling center can be made Monday thru Friday 10am until 6pm. To schedule an appointment, students must call the Gable Health Center at 610-921-7532.

Counseling Center Misconceptions

Because we are such a small community, there is no confidentiality.

Even though Albright is a small, close knit community, the counseling center works very hard to guarantee complete confidentiality to students. Any information shared is kept between the student and the counselor.

It's not my place to say anything.

Because faculty works so closely with students, they are often times the first to notice distress. By the time someone else noticed a student was in distress, the

problem could be much worse. Your encouragement to use the counseling center could make all the difference.

A student with a particular problem could be kicked off campus.

Students are not punished for seeking help in the counseling center. All information given stays between the student and their counselor. Student Alert Forms simply allows the resources to reach out to a student when the student may not seek help themselves.

Only students with severe problems should go to the counseling center.

Students with even the smallest problems can benefit from the counseling center. Smaller problems can quickly turn into bigger problems if left to their own. It is a free resource, so encourage your students to utilize it!

What to Do

If a student approaches you about an issue or seems distressed, don't ignore the situation. Speak to the student in a clear, straightforward fashion that shows your concern. Don't trick the student into seeking help. Consider the counseling center as a resource and discuss making an appointment with them. If you are uncomfortable speaking to a student about an issue they may have, consider filling out a Student Alert Form (look on page 6 for more information).

What if their problem is academic?

Many times students will be experiencing issues that are not related to their personal life, but rather their academic career. From grades, to majors, to what to do with the rest of their life, students are under numerous academic stressors. Albright's campus has many resources such as the Career Development center, and the Academic Learning Center. All of these issues cause stress however and many may need to work out more than just their grades. The Counseling Center offers the perfect place for students to work through the stress of their academic career, while they are working with other areas of Albright's Community. By combining the resources of Albright's community, they can work to the best of their ability.

What if there is an emergency?

If you experience a student that is causing danger to him or herself or other, please contact security as soon as possible, and security will contact the appropriate persons to help the student.

Utilizing Albright's Resources

If a student:

- Has disorganized or erratic performance, such as incoherent writing or speech
- Missed assignments or appointments
- Has repeated absences from class or dramatic change in grades
- Is seeking special accommodations

Refer them to the Academic Learning Center

If a student:

- Is trying to choose a concentration
- Confused about their future
- Searching for a job after graduation

Refer them to the Career Development Center

If a student:

- Have expressions, essays or projects with themes of hopelessness, isolation, despair, or rage.
- Dramatic change in energy level, constant worry or anxiety, persistent sadness or frequent tearfulness
- Worrisome changes in hygiene or personal appearance
- Signs of alcohol or drug abuse
- Noticeable cuts, bruises or bandages
- Direct statements indicating distress

Refer them to the Counseling Center

What about a Referral?

Albright College currently has a system in place if you observe distressed behavior by a student and wish to refer them to the counseling center. This is called the Student Alert Form (or Student At-Risk Form). You can also refer a student to the counseling center by calling the counseling center directly, or the counseling center director, Dr. Brenda Ingram-Wallace at ex. 7585.

How Do I Fill Out A Student Alert Form?

Filling out a student alert for is very quick, easy, and can be done online. To find the form:

- Click on Academic Forms under the Academic section of Albright's Website.
- Next, scroll to the bottom and click *Student At-Risk Form.*
- Sign in with your username and password if necessary.
- Click on Student Alert Form on the left hand side.

After completing the form, the student's information will be directed to the appropriate department and contacted by that department. You will receive an email notifying you that the student has been contacted; however in supporting FERPA and HIPPA, this is the last contact you will receive. The student will not know that you have referred them and at this point, you must trust the counseling center or any other department to help the student.

Why is the faculty so important to the Counseling Center?

As faculty members, you are one of the first to notice if a student is in distress. Many students will even turn to you for help. Timely expressions of interest and concern could be critical in helping a student. While many are looking for an empathetic ear, some issues may be outside your range of knowledge. Sometimes students may not express their problems to you, but rather show some signs of concern or distress. These red flags could be:

- Obvious changes in mood or behavior
- Tearfulness, depressed mood
- Threatening behavior or stalking
- Extreme restlessness, agitation
- Change in grades, class attendance, or work habits

- Obvious anxiety, panic, or avoidance
- Coming to class drunk, high, or hung-over
- Direct or indirect expressions of hopelessness/suicidal thoughts
- Evidence of Self-Inflicted harm
- Poor hygiene/inappropriate clothing
- Bizarre or unusual behavior or speech
- Significant weight changes
- Irritability outburst or disruptive behavior

Keep reading for more tips on how to handle situations where you may notice a red flag by a student!

Albright College Counseling Center

1829 Linden St.

Phone: 610-921-7532

Fax: 610- 921-7590

Sessions: Monday-Friday 10am-6pm

Appointments Made: Monday-Friday 8am-5pm