



University of Pittsburgh

Student Government Board

Office of the President

848 William Pitt Union
3959 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
412-648-7969
Fax: 412-648-2141

To the University community:

As of next week, there will be two vacant psychiatrist positions in the University Counseling Center, as one former psychiatrist retired and the other moved to a new job outside of the University. The Counseling Center and Division of Student Affairs have been working extensively to recruit and hire new psychiatrists through a regional and nationwide search process that began this past May when one psychiatrist announced their upcoming retirement. The University is committed to identifying candidates who demonstrate a widespread knowledge base on how to work within a university setting, but this search has not yet been able to hire qualified psychiatrists to fill these positions. Students who have been seeing a university psychiatrist have been connected to community partners, and the University is working to accommodate all student needs using community resources while the search process continues. We will continue to work closely with Counseling Center Administration to ensure an efficient and quick search for qualified candidates and to restore psychiatric services.

There have also recently been concerns expressed with the new Counseling Center [scope of practice](#) where individual counseling sessions are limited to 8 per academic year while group sessions stay unlimited. This change was made to create immediate access and alleviate the wait period between sessions for students seeking counseling services, and since the implementation of this new policy, several wait periods for different types of appointments have shortened so the Center can see more students. Initial screening appointments can now be carried out the day of an initial visit, and the goal is to have follow-up appointments within a week of an initial screening. There is also now a staffer on hand during the Center's hours of business who is available to see emergency cases. This new scope of practice allows the Center to accommodate as many walk-ins as possible, resulting in 100% of students who are seeking help to have initial contact with a clinician the same day this semester, usually within an hour. A summary to recent changes at the Counseling Center can be found [here](#)

Finally, Student Government Board wants to continue emphasizing that although we did just conclude our 2nd annual Mental Health Awareness Week in partnership with Pitt Active Minds and the Talk About It campaign, and though we are in the middle of Pitt's month of awareness, we are committed to carrying on this topic of discussion throughout the year. We will continue the conversation on campus mental health by organizing and advertising programs that demonstrate the importance of maintaining a good mental state in addition to educating students on how they can support friends, family, and other students who may be struggling with mental health issues. We will also continue our pre-existing initiatives to expand University resources. A representative from SGB sits on the University's Mental Health Task Force, which has been expanding Counseling Center staffing over the past few years from having 12 full-time counselors to having 20, in addition to signing and starting a 3-year partnership with the Jed Foundation to analyze our current services and gather recommendations on how we can improve. The Mental Health Task Force also continues to increase the number of faculty and staff trainings done on mental health awareness and risk, and works to bring more resources to Pitt students. If you are interested in working with us to continue increasing campus awareness of mental health resources and to improve Pitt's campus, or if you have any questions on the above information, please email us at sgb@pitt.edu or contact Dr. Ed Michaels, the director of the Counseling Center, at edmichaels@pitt.edu

Best regards,

Natalie Dall

President - Student Government Board