



TO: James B. Milliken, Chancellor, U. T. System Administration
FROM: The U. T. System Student Advisory Council
DATE: May 18, 2021
RE: Review of Campus Wellness and Career Success Recommendations and Continuation

The U. T. System Student Advisory Council reaffirms and expands on the 2019-2020 U. T. System Student Advisory Council recommendations and letters regarding Career Success, Mental Health, and Title IX policies and programs Systemwide. Below we have separated these topics in three sections for your consideration. For reference, the 2019-2020 recommendations have been included as appendices.

I: Career Success

The 2020-2021 U. T. System Student Advisory Council recognizes the importance and need for career success education and training provided by each institution. Access to tailored and timely resources regarding career options and trajectories is crucial for the success of the students at all U. T. institutions, regardless of extreme circumstances (i.e., the COVID-19 pandemic, severe weather, etc.). The Council strongly believes that, by properly and adequately providing resources for career success, we will advance the U. T. System's mission to develop tomorrow's innovators. The Council acknowledges that we are experiencing uncertain economic times that require the U. T. System's graduates to be exceptional and competitive job applicants.

The Council put forth several recommendations last year (please see Appendix I):

- The ratio of career advisors to students should be consistent without regard to the size of the institution.
- Improved and standardized reporting on career services and related metrics will be established to provide a more comprehensive picture of post-graduate outcomes that can be used to continually improve services.
- A request was made to include necessary services that should be made available to all students (e.g., Career Advising, Employment Resources and Preparation, Resume/CV Review).

We want to express our overwhelming support and commend all U. T. institutions for high student satisfaction in terms of making strides toward the three recommendations described above for complete and total integration/improvement.

The Council would like to emphasize the importance of career success for our students, as well as the need for clear information and access to resources and opportunities. We

also recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic may have hampered some of the efforts in the past year.

Therefore, we recommend that the Career Services offices focus on improvements to reporting their resources and related metrics so that they are accessible to all students. Improved reporting would help current and potential students to understand their opportunities post-graduation. The Council would like to reaffirm the 2019-2020 recommendations that the following minimum dataset be maintained by institutional Career Services offices and made publicly available, similar to what The University of Texas El Paso is currently doing:

- Graduation rates/time-to-degree completion
- Time-to-hire rates of graduates
- Job-type placement
- Utilization rates of Career Services
- Student/alumni satisfaction surveys
- These reports should be organized and searchable by category for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students.

The overall improvement in career success provided to students, not only in terms of securing post-graduate employment and competitive salaries, but also in terms of job satisfaction, will be very impactful in students' lives. Additionally, by improving and standardizing reporting on Career Services and related metrics, U. T. System will establish a more comprehensive picture of post-graduate outcomes that can be used to improve services continually.

II. Mental Health

The U. T. System Student Advisory Council recognizes the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of the mental health and wellness of students, such as:

- Mental and physical isolation, concerns for job security, changes to class schedules and formats, physical health and worry for loved ones;
- Increased and changing need for mental health resources, as a result of the pandemic;
- The restriction of traditional mental health resources and their delivery;
- Compounded mental health concerns, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, that U. T. System already has been aware of and made a priority.

The 2019-2020 Student Advisory Council put forth a letter of support for the ongoing mental health efforts (Appendix II). Efforts such as Thrive @ UT and after-hours crisis counseling are available at all U. T. institutions. This letter also urges the task force to consider the following:

- Total number of virtual counselors or mental health staff (teletherapy) and utilization rates;

- The necessity of alternative-hours counseling for students unavailable during traditional business hours;
- Communication platforms and strategies for informing students of resources and decreasing stigma; and
- Communication with faculty members about the issue of mental health to encourage best practices when encountering such issues with colleagues and students.

These recommendations have become particularly urgent in light of the challenges faced during the COVID-19 era.

The 2020-2021 Campus Wellness and Career Success Committee emphasizes the importance of these continued efforts. We commend our institutions Systemwide for the timely and effective adaptation to virtual mental health services, such as:

- Virtual counseling, online scheduling platforms, and after-hours scheduling;
- Increased communication with students and faculty;
- Increased social media presence advertising resources; and
- Virtual prevention programs.

The 2020-2021 U. T. System Student Advisory Council would like to strongly advocate for the integration of virtual resources, along with face-to-face resources as the vaccine becomes more readily available and we move past the COVID-19 pandemic. We are aware that these changes were made out of necessity during the onset of the pandemic. However, student feedback at various institutions (formally and informally given) has indicated that these resources are effective and appreciated. Additionally, these resources have been advocated for by the 2019-2020 U. T. System Student Advisory Council prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic because they are invaluable for students who may have non-traditional schedules, not live on campus, and/or experience mental illness.

While the end of pandemic is still unclear, the continued availability and improvement of virtual resources will be of great benefit to students long after COVID-19 restrictions have been fully lifted.

III. Title IX

The U. T. System Student Advisory Council realizes the numerous working parts of Title IX-related policy development, resolution processes, and options for support and remedies. Still, we have identified areas in which Title IX offices can better reach students, as well as tools that Title IX offices can utilize to better educate your respective student communities.

The Council put forth a recommendation suggesting that “the U. T. System should require and assist every U. T. institution in creating and publishing a flowchart or comparable

graphic that clearly delineates where students can go to receive assistance for the specific services they are seeking.”

The Council’s Campus Wellness and Career Readiness Committee wants to emphasize the importance of this recommendation. We recommend the U. T. institutions create and publish infographics to ensure clear and easily digestible information for students who seek Title IX-related services. We recommend the following be included in such a resource tool:

1. Clearly define (a) each office and (b) employee roles and responsibilities within the U. T. institution’s Title IX-related processes.
2. State what each office does not handle, which can sometimes be unclear even when responsibilities are outlined. (For example, “Student Legal Services in the Office of the Dean of Students does not provide legal support to students wishing to receive legal assistance in a sexual assault investigation but can offer outside referrals.”)
3. Provide distinctions between resources for undergraduate students, graduate students, staff, and faculty, if such distinctions are pertinent.
4. Focus on user-friendly, clear, and easy-to-understand language in the infographics and resource tool(s), with an FAQ section included.

We recommend each U. T. institution’s Title IX Coordinators work closely with your respective Student Government Association to craft infographics representative of the diverse needs of your student populations. This collaboration would ensure that the appropriate resources were listed and that students find the infographic user-friendly, comprehensive, and holistic, which will subsequently reinforce student agency and informed decision-making.

In closing, the 2020-2021 U. T. System Student Advisory Council recognizes and appreciates the efforts made Systemwide to address the 2019-2020 recommendations and implement positive change based on student feedback, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate the consideration of the above reaffirmations and new recommendations on these important topics of Career Success, Mental Health and Title IX policies and programs Systemwide.

Thank you for your continued efforts.

APPENDIX I

TO: James B. Milliken, Chancellor, UT System Administration
FROM: The U. T. System Student Advisory Council
DATE: April 27th, 2020
RE: Recommendation for the Improvement of Institutional Career Services: Standard Resources, Staff to Student Ratio, and Reports

The U. T. System Student Advisory Council Career Success Committee has identified significant inequities in the career resources available across U. T. System institutions, which we believe contributes to disparate career outcomes. Students require access to tailored and timely resources regarding career options and trajectories in order to be well prepared to enter the workforce. As such, it is our belief that all students, regardless of institution, should have access to the same quality of career resources and advising. While we understand that it is necessary to tailor advising to individual paths and degree tracks, there is a noticeable lack of consistency in available resources across the U. T. System.

In general, students attending the smaller institutions in the U. T. System cite severe understaffing in the area of career services. For example, U. T. Permian Basin only has one career advisor who oversees career services for over 7,000 students, while students at U. T. Austin and other larger institutions have career resource centers within each individual college. While we understand that resources at U. T. institutions will vary due to annual enrollment, it is the Council's belief that students across the U. T. System should have access to the same general career services, including access to career advisors, as well as access to relevant data that supports informed decision making.

The Council puts forth three minimum and necessary services that should be made available to all students. We recognize that some institutions are already offering these services, and we encourage those campuses to continue to support these resources. These minimum services should be available and tailored to undergraduate, graduate, and professional student needs.

1. Career Advising (e.g., information about the type of jobs available to certain majors, career trajectories, salaries, etc.)
2. Employment Resources and Preparation (e.g., job and internship search platforms, salary and benefit information and negotiation tips, interview techniques, etc.)
3. Resume/CV Review (e.g., workshops and one-on-one sessions)

All students across the U. T. System should have access to adequately staffed and funded offices of career services—whether they are centrally housed or operated out of colleges and schools. The number of career advisors, as well as their area of expertise, should be commensurate with the student populations of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. The ratio of career advisors to students should be consistent without regard to the size of the institution.

The data available related to career services and career success is also variable across U. T. System institutions. While the database SeekUT helpfully reports projected income for students at one, five, and ten years post-graduation, this only provides a limited view of success. To help remedy this, the Council recommends that the following minimum dataset be maintained by institutional career services offices and be made publicly available, similar to what U. T. El Paso is currently doing:

- Graduation rates/time to degree completion
- Time-to-hire rates of graduates
- Job-type placement
- Utilization rates of career services
- Student/alumni satisfaction surveys
- These reports should be organized and searchable by category for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students.

We believe that with the implementation of the three minimum career services identified, the U. T. System will improve the overall career success of its students, not only in securing post-graduate employment and competitive salaries, but also in job satisfaction. Additionally, by improving and standardizing reporting on career services and related metrics, U. T. System will establish a more comprehensive picture of post-graduate outcomes that can be used to continually improve services.

Thank you for your consideration.

APPENDIX II

TO: James B. Milliken, Chancellor, U. T. System Administration

FROM: The U. T. System Student Advisory Council

DATE: April 27th, 2020

RE: Letter of Support for the Continuation of U. T. System Mental Health Initiatives

The U. T. System Student Advisory Council would like to extend to the Board of Regents a letter of support and further recommendation regarding the emphasis placed on student mental health. The mental health and student safety funding approved by the Board of Regents in February 2018 was timely in its delivery of essential resources to students across the System. The U. T. System has been a consistent leader in efforts to combat the rise in mental health concerns for students and faculty alike, efforts which have not gone unnoticed by the student population. The Board of Regents' emphasis on mental health has elevated the priority of the student mental health at institutions across the board. Below are just a few examples of resources made available through funding by the U. T. System Board of Regents for which students find particularly valuable:

- Thrive @ UT – Developed initially at U. T. Austin, this app has since launched Systemwide. The application interface encourages students to take steps toward improving overall wellness and wellbeing.
- Therapy Assisted Online – online modules for developing successful relationship and communication skills and mechanisms for coping with anxiety, stress, and depression.
- After-hours crisis counseling available to all students at U. T. institutions.

In light of the 2018 Board funding for mental health coming to an end, we recommend an assessment be conducted on the success of the funded initiatives. We recommend establishing a new Mental Health Task Force to identify the effectiveness of these programs, and to make recommendations for additional support at either the System or institutional level. This task force should identify opportunities for putting in place new services and resources, in addition to enhancing existing programs, and focus on supporting targeted groups, including graduate and professional students. The report should be published and made publicly available on the website.

Some of the topics we believe should be addressed by the proposed Mental Health Task Force include:

- Total number of in-person counselors and other mental health staff on each

campus, with utilization rates.

- Total number of virtual counselors or mental health staff (teletherapy) and utilization rates.
- The number of trauma-informed counselors at each institution specifically for sexual assault survivors, to include sufficiency for student needs and compliance with International Accreditation of Counseling Services.
- The necessity of alternative hours counseling for students unavailable during traditional business hours, such as practicing professional/health students and working students.
- Communication platforms and strategies for informing students of resources and decreasing stigma.
- Communication with faculty members about the issue of mental health to encourage best practices when encountering such issues with colleagues and students.
- Identifying new and ongoing mental health initiatives to fund at the System level.

Following the findings of the proposed Mental Health Task Force, we strongly recommend the continued funding of successful mental health resources for students, faculty, and staff. Furthermore, we recommend prioritizing available funds to meet the greatest needs as identified by the task force. Mental health maintenance continues to be of high importance to students at U. T. institutions, and we hope that the Board of Regents will continue to share that priority.

Thank you for your consideration.

APPENDIX III

TO: James B. Milliken, Chancellor, U. T. System Administration
FROM: The U. T. System Student Advisory Council
DATE: April 27th, 2020
RE: Support Resources for Survivors of Sexual Misconduct

Executive Summary

After careful consideration, The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council respectfully submits the following recommendations regarding providing support to survivors of sexual misconduct.

1. The U. T. System should require and assist every U. T. institution in creating and publishing a flowchart or comparable graphic that clearly delineates where students can go to receive assistance for the specific services they are seeking.
2. U. T. System should require each institution to employ case investigators in an appropriate ratio in relation to the number of Title IX cases reported to the university, according to the most recently available reporting data.
3. U. T. System should require each institution to employ full-time confidential employees, exempt from mandatory reporter status, and formally trained in accordance with SB 585, in an appropriate ratio in relation to the estimated number of students who experience interpersonal violence during their college years.
4. U. T. System should draft and require each institution to distribute an advisory notice to all students regarding the significance of the new reporting requirements outlined in SB 212. The notice should be sent through campus-wide emails prior to the 4th class day every academic semester.

Background

Sexual violence has shown to be more prevalent in college campuses than any other crimes. According to the CLASE Academic Survey in 2017, 25% of students at academic institutions reported student-perpetrated sexual harassment victimization (CLASE Academic, 2017). High rates of student-perpetrated sexual harassment have been found, especially at the undergraduate level, with 68% of student sexual harassment incidents occurred on-campus (CLASE Academic, 2017). Seventeen percent of undergraduate female students reported having experienced unwanted sexual touching, and undergraduate students identifying as LGBTQ+ reported higher

rates of victimization than majority students (CLASE Academic, 2017).

Furthermore, victims of sexual misconduct reported having impacts on their daily life due to their victimization. Eleven percent of victims had to take time off school as a result of victimization (CLASE Academic, 2017).

While there are several preventive efforts that need to be undertaken on college campuses, disciplinary and reporting measures need to be streamlined to reduce further negative impact on students affected by sexual misconduct. Students should be made aware of who on their campus is a designated reporter of sexual misconduct and who is a private advocate. Increased trust in institutional reporting systems will increase the number of sexual misconduct reports, thereby removing barriers to academic success and overall student wellness. Survivors of sexual misconduct have expressed concern for their mental health when having to report their experience repeatedly. Streamlining an easier process for reporting sexual misconduct and knowing who to go to would mitigate emotional risks undertaken through disclosure.

The majority of victims of sexual harassment, stalking, dating/domestic abuse and violence and unwanted sexual contact (72%) did not disclose to anyone about the incident prior to taking this survey (CLASE Academic, 2017). The majority of victims (77%) did not disclose the incident(s) prior to taking the survey (CLASE Health, 2017). Eight percent of victims who disclosed told someone at their U. T. academic institution (CLASE Academic, 2017). Victims screened positive for depression at more than twice the rate (22%) of non-victims (10%) (CLASE Academic, 2017). Victims also reported higher overall rates of physical health problems than non-victims. For example, gastrointestinal issues occurred at nearly twice the rate in victims (23%) than they did in non-victims (13%) (CLASE Academic, 2017).

Summary of Policy and Practice Issues

The Council researched student perceptions of how campuses handle instances of sexual misconduct and determined there are several gaps and discrepancies in resources provided to support survivors of sexual misconduct and interpersonal violence across U. T. institutions. First, it is important to note that many students believe that the Title IX reporting process is unduly complicated and cumbersome. Moreover, each UT institution has its unique procedures when assisting complainants/respondents in the Title IX investigation process and when providing resources for survivors. We believe there is an opportunity to provide guidance to institutions to implement changes in the area of handling incidents of sexual misconduct that extend further than what the State and Federal requirements are currently. The goal of any changes would be to improve student support services, allow survivors of sexual assault to be knowledgeable of the resources available to them, and to improve access to these resources.

While a number of U. T. policies and Rules are in place to ensure compliance with relevant federal and state laws, several procedural issues have been identified that are cause for concern for students, leading many to refrain from seeking university resources due to fears of unintended consequences. To help address this, the Council believes that the U. T. System needs to streamline resources and address discrepancies in services among the institutions.

Recommendations

In an effort to ensure the institutions are transparent in their divisions of responsibility and the proper channels to discuss matters related to interpersonal violence and sexual misconduct, the Council submits the following recommendations:

1. The U. T. System should require and assist every institution in creating and publishing a flowchart or comparable graphic that clearly delineates where students can go to receive assistance for the specific services they are seeking.

The creation of such a resource is critical because it will reduce barriers for survivors seeking support. Greater transparency and responsiveness from each respective university will enhance trust among students for university procedures and resources and can encourage more survivors and other students affected by related matters to utilize resources offered by the university.

The Council encourages U. T. System to provide guidelines to the institutions to ensure that each flowchart and resource delineation incorporates basic elements. First, each office and employee role should be clearly defined in terms of responsibility. The flowchart should also state what each office does not handle, which can sometimes be unclear even when responsibilities are outlined. For example, it is important to note that Student Legal Services will not provide legal support to students wishing to receive legal assistance in a sexual assault investigation but can offer outside referrals.

Lastly, each flowchart should provide distinctions between resources for undergraduate students, graduate students, staff, and faculty, if such distinctions are pertinent. Ultimately, it is important that the flowchart is user-friendly and is clear and easy to understand. Attaching an FAQ section would be appropriate.

2. U. T. System should require each institution to employ case investigators in an appropriate ratio in relation to the number of Title IX cases reported to the university, according to the most recently available reporting data.

In order to determine the ratio, U. T. System should take into account the average length of investigations and caseload per investigator at each institution, and implement an acceptable standard in the number of employed

investigators so that each U. T. institution is able to complete most Title IX investigations within the federal standard of 60 days.

U. T. System should follow up with each institution on an annual basis to ensure that each university is on track to adhere to the case investigator/case ratio. In addition, the Council recommends that the U. T. System provide financial support to schools limited in budgetary resources, provided that those schools agree to submit reports to the U. T. System in their progress in ensuring each investigator has a manageable caseload and in completing investigations within 60 days.

3. U. T. System should require each institution to employ full-time confidential employees, exempt from mandatory reporter status, and formally trained in accordance with SB 585, in an appropriate ratio in relation to the estimated number of students who experience interpersonal violence during their college years.

Full-time confidential employees are great resources for survivors to evaluate their options and figure out appropriate next steps. At many institutions, the Title IX process is perceived as confusing and intimidating. According to Student Emergency Services at U. T. Austin, “[a]dvocates (confidential employees) were the students’ first point of contact for support services in 51% of cases” from 08/01/18 to 07/29/19. Furthermore, 54% of the 119 cases serviced by advocates at U. T. Austin throughout 2019 were not reported to Title IX, demonstrating student need for support by means other than reporting.

The new mandatory reporting requirements enforced by SB 212 make it more difficult for survivors to make their own decision regarding reporting, as most university employees, including faculty and staff, are obligated to report. Texas Education Code, Section 51.290 requires each postsecondary educational institution to designate “one or more employees as persons to whom students enrolled at the institution may speak confidentially concerning sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.”

The Council recommends that U. T. System establish an appropriate ratio for employed full-time confidential advocates with recent study findings that one in five women and one in twenty men have experienced sexual violence (CLASE Study, 2017). In addition, according to the American Bar Association, 28% of students on college campuses experience dating violence. These statistics should be used to help determine the Systemwide ratio. The Council recommends that U. T. System provide financial support to schools limited in budgetary resources to ensure that survivors and individuals affected by interpersonal violence have adequate access and that each confidential employee’s caseload does not exceed 60 cases.

4. U. T. System should draft, and require each institution to distribute, an advisory

notice to all students regarding the significance of the new reporting requirements outlined in SB 212. The notice should be sent through campus-wide emails prior to the 4th class day every academic semester.

While faculty members are currently advised to include their mandatory reporting responsibilities in their course syllabus, several professors have not taken these measures, with few or no repercussions. In order to ensure that each student is aware of the new state requirements, the advisory notice should be sent out to all students, in addition to each institution's faculty and staff.

U. T. System should be responsible for drafting the notice, and the language should be approved by each U. T. institution. Once the language is agreed upon, each institution must send the notice prior to the 4th class day during every academic semester.

Thank you for your consideration.

References

The University of Texas System Academic Institutions. (2017). Cultivating Learning and Safe Environments: An Empirical Study of Prevalence and Perceptions of Sexual Harassment, Stalking, Dating/Domestic Abuse and Violence, and Unwanted Sexual Contact. Retrieved from

https://www.utsystem.edu/sites/default/files/sites/clase/files/2017-10/academic_aggregate-R11-V4.pdf.

The University of Texas System Health Institutions. (2017). Cultivating Learning and Safe Environments: An Empirical Study of Prevalence and Perceptions of Sexual Harassment, Stalking, Dating/Domestic Abuse and Violence, and Unwanted Sexual Contact. Retrieved from

https://www.utsystem.edu/sites/default/files/sites/clase/files/2017-10/health-aggregate_R11-V4.pdf.