

Student Counseling Services
Illinois State University
Comprehensive Program Review
April 5-7, 2006

COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT

BACKGROUND

On April 5-7, 2006, the Site Review Team appointed by ISU Vice President for Student Affairs Helen Mamarchev completed the campus review as part of the Comprehensive Program Review of the ISU Student Counseling Services. The members of the team are:

Mary C. Bolin-Reece, Ph.D.
Licensed Psychologist
Director, Counseling & Testing Center
University of Kentucky

Maureen E. Blair, M.S.Ed
Director, University Housing Service
Illinois State University

Nicole Brown-Davis, B.A.
Graduate student, College Student Personnel Administration
Illinois State University
and Director, Multicultural Student Affairs,
Illinois Wesleyan University

Salvatore ("Sam") Catanzaro, Ph.D.
Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Professor of Psychology
Illinois State University

Amelia Noel-Elkins, Ph.D.
Director, University College
Illinois State University

In preparation for the intensive schedule of on-site meetings, the Team reviewed a comprehensive and extraordinarily well-prepared self-study by the Student Counseling Service (SCS). In addition, the Team examined the reports produced during four major review processes in the past five years: the 2000-2001 Council for Advancement of Standards (CAS); the 2001 external review by Dr. Dennis Heitzmann (long-time director of the Penn State Counseling Center); the 2002 re-accreditation by the International Association of Counseling Services (IACS); and the 2003 American Psychological Association (APA) pre-doctoral internship re-accreditation. Meetings were held on-site with members of the SCS staff (including the director, clinical staff, support staff, trainees, and student workers), the Student Affairs Council (SAC), the Guerrilla Theatre Troupe, and the Vice President and Associate Vice President of Student Affairs (to whom SCS reports).

In accordance with the stated purpose of the Comprehensive Program Review, the Team gathered information regarding opportunities for future development and strategic planning; strengths; weaknesses; relationships with other units; and programs and services to students. The Team also kept in mind ISU's five core values as applied to the Student Counseling Services: individualized attention, public opportunity, active pursuit of learning, diversity, and innovation.

Several statements in the concluding section of the Student Counseling Services' self-study captured key themes across the Comprehensive Program Review: ". . . Our greatest strength is also our greatest challenge. . . Our greatest strength is our longstanding commitment to being a truly comprehensive counseling center. . . We will always be poised in the dynamic tension between limited resources and unlimited creativity, willingness, and ideas. The success of our organization is in managing this tension responsively – that is, being responsive to the stress experienced by our staff members, as well as being responsive to the changing needs of students and of the campus community."

At ISU, as at most major universities in the United States, demand for services often exceeds current human and fiscal resources – as more students enter college with a history of mental health needs for psychotropic medication and/or counseling/therapy, and greater reported incidence of substance abuse, suicide attempts, and psychiatric hospitalization. At ISU, as at many other American universities, budgets have been cut (or inadequately increased) by state legislatures, and funds internally reallocated by administrative decisions. It is essential for the university community to maintain an awareness of the detrimental effects of untreated mental illness and psychological distress on a student's academic performance, their ability to function within a residence hall or other living arrangement, and their development in all realms – interpersonal, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, physical, and vocational.

This Comprehensive Program Review report is written with the full understanding that significant additional resources are unlikely for the Student Counseling Services, at least in the immediate future. A number of recommendations are offered for future consideration when resource availability and allocation may allow expansion of current excellent services, establishment of new initiatives, and restoration of programs discontinued due to budget cuts. Additionally, some recommendations are given to enhance programming within the current budgeting restrictions.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SELF-STUDY AND PREVIOUS EVALUATIVE REPORTS

This section is intended to provide both summary and contextual information against which to read the findings and recommendations of the Review Team. This information is the backdrop against which our on-site interview questions were framed, and provided a base for the process of comprehensively reviewing the Student Counseling Services.

The SCS has three key functional areas -- services, programs, and training – each coordinated by an associate director. The service area includes emergency/triage, therapeutic services (individual, group, couples, eating disorders network), psychological assessment, behavioral health care services, and alcohol/drug-related interventions. The program area emphasizes developmental issues through outreach efforts (workshops, Guerrilla Theatre, web-based interventions, diversity training), consultation, liaison relationships, the IDS career choice course, and until 2003 (when eliminated due to budget constraints) up to 20 paraprofessional Peer Counselors. The training component includes the APA-accredited pre-doctoral internship, the externship/practicum for doctoral students, professional growth and development, and staff supervision of newly-hired full-time clinicians.

Additionally, there are three groups serving as advisory to the director: research, personnel, and departmental (comprised of faculty, staff and students). This division of labor contributes to the smooth operation of the SCS, with the director as clearly-identified leader supported by responsibilities distributed among senior SCS staff. In 2003, the Center entered a year-long strategic planning process which has resulted in excellent evaluative data documenting not only the Center's response to previous formal assessment processes (such as accreditation visits) but also innovation and creative response to change. The Center's physical facilities are relatively new (1992) and reflect thoughtful planning of space needs, and the technology is cutting-edge.

The 2000-1 CAS report noted four areas of SCS excellence: breadth of services and programs, technology and furnishings, group treatment, and the emergency on-call service. Of note in the 2002 IACS report were recommendations regarding increased psychiatric coverage, alcohol/drug treatment and education, clearer definition of a career development model and the relative roles of SCS and the career/placement service (because at that time, the SCS paraprofessionals were housed in the career/placement center). In 2001, Dr. Dennis Heitzmann noted the 'significant turnover' in the director's position (5 directors in 10 years), and also the strained (in 2001) relationship of the SCS and the career/placement service. The SCS has implemented most of the recommendations made by Dr. Heitzmann, and the self-study included a detailed chart of excellent progress to date (January 2006).

The SCS's 2006 Comprehensive Program Review self-study summarized current challenges and obstacles: budget/funding, visibility/marketing/stigma, diversity, comprehensiveness of service and program delivery, and the continually-changing nature of the student population. The self-study also provided a summary of strengths and opportunities which, if pursued, will expand available resources. Strengths included continued incorporation of assessment and feedback, the creative and committed staff, facilities and equipment, and support from the Student Affairs administration. The list of opportunities included: expansion of the training and group therapy programs, development of a case-management role, strengthening the referral network, enhancement of collaborative efforts related to diversity and enrollment management, potential collaborative efforts to fund a sports psychologist, re-evaluation of the after-hours emergency services, and possible re-establishment of a paraprofessional program. During the course of the on-site interviews, the above-stated challenges and opportunities became recurring themes.

FINDINGS OF THE SITE REVIEW TEAM

Strengths of the ISU Student Counseling Services

Environmental

The workplace environment of the Student Counseling Service (SCS) is one of mutual respect and concern for students and staff. Employees described the department as very supportive, caring and inclusive. Members of the SCS team expressed a shared collegial feeling of being valued and appreciated. Staff at all levels believes that their roles and contributions are important and that they are peers in a shared effort to serve students effectively and efficiently. Interns commented that they enjoy working with the people in the Center and appreciate the atmosphere and the overall commitment to care for students. The SCS is described as transparent in its processes of decision-making and management, innovative, cutting-edge, professional and energetic. Employees felt that they have the flexibility to be themselves and freedom to be creative. Group morale is good, and is enhanced by the Personnel Advisory Committee's efforts to keep the work environment light and positive. Each month, two staff volunteer to plan fun activities for the group such as potlucks, special celebration days, or posted humor. These intentional efforts to lighten the mood of the center maintain the enthusiasm of its employees and help to bring the group together. The Center is very welcoming to students and staff. When students and others visit the Center, they describe being pleasantly surprised at the comfortable setting and friendly personnel.

Staff (talent, commitment, integrity, positive morale)

Student Affairs colleagues perceive the SCS staff as extremely professional, creative, and collaborative. Staff members uniformly have appropriate credentials and are skilled, knowledgeable, competent and committed to students and addressing their needs immediately. Team members are very supportive of campus programming. The staff finds it easy to get along with one another in the spirit of collaboration and cooperation. Staff are empowered to work with significant autonomy and are not afraid to stretch themselves beyond their formal training by serving on university committees.

Training

The SCS has a reputation for strong commitment to training. The pre-doctoral internship program is APA accredited and students within the program feel very supported. The interns commented that they always have someone they can consult for assistance and they appreciated that the program is graduated, with increased difficulty as the program progresses. The internship components are purposeful and deliberate and the interns feel that their supervision meetings, seminars and case presentations are very beneficial to their development. Professional staff commented that the training stays fresh, thanks in part to the trainees' curiosity and eagerness to learn. SCS also offers advanced practicum (externship) experiences for doctoral students enrolled in regional universities.

Leadership

The director of the Center was described as a strong leader, advocate, and innovator. She is credited with implementing a more efficient management structure that reduces non-value-added administrative tasks. The director understands budgetary constraints and has been able to manage the budget and mobilize her staff despite reduced resources. Under her leadership, group counseling has flourished and is used more consistently and effectively. She has also provided much-needed leadership in improving the responsiveness to alcohol and drug issues. Perhaps most important to the Center is a consistency and longevity in leadership. The current director's commitment to the position was much-needed to improve the morale of the staff and operations of the Center.

Comprehensiveness

The Center has very comprehensive program and service offerings – including 24/7 emergency on-call coverage for students, referral to psychiatric/behavioral health management services, individual therapy, educational outreach/prevention efforts, training and consultation. There is also an increased implementation of group therapy, with 10 groups currently in session. The Center also provides motivational interviewing for disciplinary purposes and received a grant to hire an alcohol interventionist. The Center continues to have a presence within the residence halls.

Quality of services

The Center provides very high quality services to its students, as indicated by professional accreditation processes and by client consumer evaluations. The services offered are consistent with the mission of the Center and there is a healthy balance between the Center's direct clinical services and outreach/prevention efforts. The Center is well-known for its group programs and the director facilitates in-service training for other universities to teach them how to implement group therapy on their campuses. SCS takes great care to refer students to appropriate areas, such as the Student Health Service (SHS), if they require additional support or expertise. The center works collaboratively with other departments to develop meaningful and effective programming. For example, the Center works in conjunction with SHS on alcohol and sexual assault programming. The Center also collaborates with Dining Services to address eating disorders. The Center has also improved its efficiency with its conversion to Titanium scheduling software, allowing all of the scheduling, database and clinical records to be computerized.

Innovation

The SCS has a reputation of finding creative ways to meet students' needs and providing innovative solutions to the center's issues. The Center provides passive programming via bulletin boards, brochures and the internet because it recognizes the changing needs and experiences of students. They also provide on-line alcohol screening. The Center has also identified specific needs of athletes, the College of Business, and students with disabilities, and created targeted marketing campaigns for these groups. Perhaps the most impressive example of the counseling Center's creativity is its Guerrilla Theater troupe, which is a diverse group of students who conduct performances addressing various social issues. The group of roughly 25 students facilitates discussions with their student audiences after their shows, and troupe members stated that they feel a sense of personal satisfaction knowing that they have made a difference in the

lives of other group members and of the students who watched their performances. The actors see the troupe as an informal support group and feel that they are normalizing common experiences, while building their own confidence and connecting with others.

Areas Identified for Further Evaluation and Consideration

Department priorities

Given the increasing demand for direct client services, a theme emerged for careful consideration of the appropriate combination of outreach activities, training and direct client contact. While the current mix of these priorities seems to benefit both the University (in order to have staff involved and visible outside of the Center) and the staff (in the ability to add variety and balance to their work), the need to increase the hours available to meet student service demands is apparent. Accreditation guidelines for the International Association of Counseling Services (IACS) state, "Staff members should have a balanced workload that affords time for all aspects of their professional functioning. Direct service responsibilities such as intake, individual and group counseling, and crisis intervention should not exceed 65% of the workload on a continuing basis." ISU has 60% of its hours spent in this area, in terms of the typical contracted distribution of effort for clinicians. While it is possible that direct service hours could be increased slightly (at a cost to outreach and other activities) without exceeding IACS guidelines, the addition of clinical staff appears to be the primary avenue to significantly-increased service availability.

SCS staff was divided as to how the outreach activities impact the ability to have direct student service/contact. Some felt that fewer outreach activities would allow for more direct service contact with students, while others (including outside SCS) felt that outreach is very beneficial to SCS (in terms of proactive education, staff visibility, and reducing the stigma of help-seeking).

Perceived expectations of workload within and outside of SCS

One of the difficulties in working in most Student Affairs units is the reality of working extensive hours beyond the "normal" work day. There is a discrepancy between the perspectives of the Student Counseling Services staff, who view themselves as overworked and burned out, and the other Student Affairs staff who feel the Student Counseling Services staff does not have enough direct student contact.

More education needs to be given to other Student Affairs staff as to the exacting nature of direct student counseling, so that there can be better understanding as to why the SCS clinical staff limit their direct student contact in the way they do. There should also be more explanation of the overall campus benefit of SCS providing outreach, consultation and training – and not serving solely as clinicians. Many SCS staff stated the importance of the caring demonstrated by Dr. Colbs toward them, and part of that caring is respecting a balance of the demands on their time so that they are not burned out.

Evaluate the amount of time spent in Professional Growth and Development

Some concern was shared that the amount of time spent in Professional Growth and Development may, on occasion, supersede the essential mission of the organization. Some of the staff indicated that in the Professional Growth and Development sessions, there is almost too much time spent on processing information and they wish the processing would end faster and that they would move onto the action.

While it is important to process information and provide the opportunity for thoughtful professional development, staff expressed the significant demands on their time and the need for additional staff members to meet those demands. Investigation should be undertaken as to the benefits of the current allotment of time to Professional Growth and Development and whether similar benefits could be achieved with a less significant time commitment across the year. It would also be helpful for those outside the SCS to know that during periods of "peak" clinical service demand, the PGD time is significantly decreased or eliminated.

Summer staff deployment

Student Counseling Services has been creative in its staffing to meet the demands of its unit through the use of part-time employees and trainees. As the most consistent theme throughout the department was the need to increase the number of staff, the Site Review Team recommends that consideration be given to the number of staff currently on twelve-month contracts. While outreach efforts are valued by those interviewed during the review process, the clearly-articulated press is for an increasing number of students to be seen as immediately as possible – both for their initial intake and assessment and for follow-up appointments.

Based on a review of the staff list, it appears that at least half of the staff remains on contract through the summer months. While this is the time of year when planning, project development and vacations take place, the use of reduced contracts may free up some dollars to increase the personnel dollars available during the academic year – at least until sufficient recurring funds become available for additional permanent, full-time staff. This recommendation must be approached with the knowledge that the numbers of students on campus during the summer months may increase due to enhanced summer school offerings.

Role of the staff who are not full-time clinicians

The director is aware that part-time clinicians, members of the support staff, and trainees are the staff members more likely to feel ‘outside’ from time-to-time – in part because many of the full-time clinicians are long-term hires and also in roles carrying additional decision-making and management responsibilities. It appears that the part-time clinical staff spend almost all of their time providing direct service. This is likely effective in terms of service provision, but may result in their feeling somewhat less included as ‘equals’ on the professional staff. The balance of work activities for part-time staff may need to be explored, to reduce the occurrence of ‘burnout.’ Additionally, some staff mentioned the concern that the tentativeness of year-to-year contracts impacts the sense of job security.

Diversifying staff

One of the values stated in department’s strategic plan is Diversity and the goals and sub-goals identified support this endeavor. It is also noted in the Diversity Initiatives section that the racial and ethnic diversity of the staff in Student Counseling Services is a key challenge. The Site Review Team would like to echo the need in this area and offer suggestions that may assist the staff in affecting a different outcome in recruitment and retention efforts.

- Consult with colleagues on campus who have been able to recruit and retain a diverse staff, to identify strategies that may apply.
- Consider recruiting from other disciplines (perhaps Social Work) which may provide the job market with a more diverse graduate pool – but key to this consideration is whether visible diversity of the applicant pool is more important than the discipline/training of the new hire (which may be an issue regarding the need for psychologists to supervise interns and other trainees).
- SCS candidate interviews could include interviewers from units with more diverse staff (Housing, Dean of Students, International Affairs).
- Recruit candidates who know the current staffing situation and are both willing and able to be a part of building a diverse staff.
- Build on the success that the staff has had of building a “work life balance” focus for the staff culture to make it a top priority to diversify the staff. It should be noted that the issue of diversity with respect to recruitment and retention of persons of color was raised in only one session.

Role of “on-call” staff in the Emergency Room

A recurring theme throughout the interview was the concern, from various perspectives, about the “on-call” service to local Emergency Rooms. Some of the staff feel particularly uncomfortable when asked to make a determination as to whether an apparently suicidal student is capable of returning to the residence halls without supervision. Because of this, there is concern about personal and professional liability.

Our understanding of the issue: Arrangements have been made with the local hospitals, so that when Illinois State students arrive in the Emergency Room in crisis, one of three scenarios unfolds. When the students are not a threat to themselves or others, the Emergency Room personnel follow their assessment protocol and typically release them. When the students are clearly a threat to themselves or others, the Emergency Room personnel follow their protocol and typically admit them. When it is unclear, the Emergency Room personnel may call the Illinois State SCS "on-call" person to provide his/her evaluation. This arrangement has reduced by half the number of times that the "on-call" person has responded to the Emergency Room.

Beyond liability concerns, this arrangement was raised as an issue by the "on-call" staff due to the difficulty in maintaining balance in one's life when called out in the middle of the night. It was stated by the "on-call" staff and the Director that most of the calls requiring the "on-call" staff to leave his/her home are for calls to the Emergency Room. One comment was made that they have to do the Emergency Room runs "on top of their regular jobs" indicating a sense that the staff does not view this as part of their appropriate duties.

It appears that the value in having the "on-call" person respond to the Emergency Room is questionable, as the student in the Emergency Room may not be a client and may not seek follow-up treatment at the ISU Student Counseling Services. While there was mention that the "on-call" person at times serves as an ambassador for the University, the question is whether or not this is the appropriate role for the "on-call" person to play.

It was very clear that some feel the information gathered from the Emergency Room visits is valuable. Knowing when an Illinois State student has been admitted to the hospital is useful to other Student Affairs units. This is one piece of evidence regarding the cooperation and coordination between Student Counseling Services and various Student Affairs units.

While there are some definite benefits, there is also enough concern about the Emergency Room visits that the process and procedure should be investigated. The need to evaluate this arrangement has been recognized both within the department and by the leadership of Student Affairs, though for different reasons. The suggestion for the new General Counsel of the University to look into potential liability issues surrounding the emergency room visits is probably necessary. Additionally, since much of the concern was raised from the Student Counseling Services staff themselves, an internal assessment of the process and procedure is advised.

As it is evaluated, the Site Review Team would like to offer the following considerations.

If the Emergency Room visits are to continue, it would be important to clarify the role, procedures and guidelines for the "on-call" staff. Who makes the final decision on the release of the student is of particular concern given that the SCS "on-call" staff person is not a member of the hospital staff, does not have admitting privileges, and is not an MD. There are also concerns about the University's liability if Illinois State SCS staff are making clinical evaluations that lead either to admission or discharge.

Additional concerns were raised because of the lack of a HIPAA agreement with the hospitals. Despite that lack of an agreement, the hospitals are sharing medical records during these emergency room visits. Also, at present, the SCS "on-call" responder makes clinical entries into the hospital record, which may be a violation of HIPAA (in the absence of a formal business agreement). Second, it would also be important to work through the logistics of managing the typical workday responsibilities following an on-call experience when a staff person is called to the hospital for several hours. While there have been noted improvements, it also would be helpful to refine the communication between University employees when a student is released and other employees are involved (as in a transport from a residence hall for an attempted suicide), within the limits of HIPAA and FERPA.

If Emergency Room visits are to discontinue, it would be important to clarify the role, procedures and guidelines with the hospital and with other University employees who might be involved in a transport, discharge and/or follow-up. It would also be important to consider how the ambassador role currently filled by the SCS "on-call" staff at the Emergency Room is filled – if this is a role that the University would like to continue. The issue of liability should also be evaluated to ensure that it is reduced for the University rather than shifting the exposure from one segment of the University to another.

Career exploration and development

Although much has been done to overcome the historical confusion between Career Services and Student Counseling Services, it is clear that confusion persists as does some mild antagonism about this issue. Several of the staff indicated, even ten years after the fact, that there are still some lingering issues over the relationships with Career Services and how the career exploration process is handled at Illinois State. Staff indicated a definite confusion from students as to how to pursue career exploration. Several staff felt that communication about the location of the career exploration services at the University is confusing for students.

When career exploration is viewed as a developmental task for college students who are clarifying their personal identity, it is logical that related services reside in Student Counseling Services. Though logical, it does not eliminate the confusion for student seeking these services. Clearly, this issue has been addressed several times during the history of the Student Counseling Center. However, it is an issue which needs to be readdressed so that services can be provided to student in a manner that is clear and understandable – perhaps on a flow-chart or brochure to help students visualize the career exploration, decision-making and development process on a continuum with specific assistance available from several services.

Relationships with Academic Affairs units

In the SCS self-study report, much was outlined as to the coordination with several units within Student Affairs and that coordination was reiterated by members of the Student Affairs staff. However, a lack of articulation in the self-study regarding the collaboration with Academic Affairs may indicate the need for a more purposeful look at the opportunity for and realities of collaboration with Academic Affairs. Some indicated that they would welcome any opportunities for future collaboration, especially with Academic Affairs. However, as is not unusual in many units that have a staff with longevity, there is some assumption that various Academic Affairs units are functioning in the same way they have in the past. One of the staff commented that they are always involved "whenever Academic Affairs asks" – indicating a willingness to work together, but perhaps a lack of knowledge as to the best opportunities for collaboration.

A purposeful look at the outreach activities with Academic Affairs should be undertaken in the same way that the collaboration with Student Affairs was articulated in the self-study. It may be that more collaboration is occurring than what was discovered in the self-study and site visit. However, a through investigation of the collaborative efforts may lead to both better knowledge about the existing collaborations and the opportunities for future partnering.

In-house communication

In several areas, some concern was raised as to the effectiveness of current in-house communication methods. While some expressed satisfaction with the in-house communication during the unusual crises of the past year (i.e., the murder of an Illinois State student), there are perhaps some areas of communication that could be revisited to assess their effectiveness. While efforts have been made to make sure that communication is open, there still may be some gaps in the flow of information. For example, if staff meeting notes are not routinely circulated, posted or included in a shared computer drive, those options might be useful.

Because of various staffing needs, the support staff expressed occasionally feeling as if they do not have as much information as they need to be able to effectively complete all of their duties. Specifically, it would be helpful to the front desk to have confidential client information on a limited “need-to-know” basis so that they are prepared to address emergency calls or walk-ins, in order to smoothly engage the student in the direct-service process.

The full-time staff of Student Counseling Services is encouraged to explore various methods to ensure that the part-time staff has access to the same information as the full-time staff. It also may be important for part-time and/or newly-hired staff to be supported and encouraged even more to speak up and offer ideas and creative problem-solving. While longer-serving staff members often see their comments as providing a historical context, several staff members indicated that they feel that new ideas are at times “shot down” before there is an opportunity to discuss them more fully.

The ad hoc committee structure could be an effective vehicle for providing a forum for the generation of creative ideas. It seems clear that some of the most successful programs in Student Counseling Services (Guerrilla Theater) came about because of “think tank” type groups. Therefore, this type of structure could be used to creatively solve some of the issues facing Student Counseling Services.

New possibilities

Even as all constituencies cited resource constraints (both in terms of staff and operating funds) as a major challenge facing the Student Counseling Services, a number of possible opportunities for strategic growth became apparent during the course of the site visit. Such opportunities could enhance the professional development of the staff and the profile of the SCS, while creating the potential for revenue generation, at least in some cases.

First, SCS might consider developing consultation services related to diversity and organizational development that could be offered on campus and in the community. Such services would be based on existing strengths within SCS, with respect to fostering a healthy and welcoming organizational environment. Even though SCS acknowledges that it needs to further diversify its staff, the Site Review Team considers SCS to be ahead of the curve, relative to much of campus, with respect to organizational culture and diversity-fostering initiatives. The expertise of SCS leadership and staff in this area could be valued by other units that might be interested in learning from their experience. Examples could include conducting workshops for department chairs or other managers or conducting environmental audits for units across campus. There might even be the possibility of developing such a consultation service into a self-supporting fee-for-service agency for the campus or the community. Such services could be offered in cooperation with the Office of Diversity and Affirmative Action or Human Resources.

Second, SCS might consider enhancing its number of partnerships and collaborations on campus. Such enhanced partnerships would build on existing ones within Student Affairs and could conceivably expand to include Academic Affairs units. Enhanced partnerships might be a creative way to maintain or increase the impact of outreach and prevention programs even if demand for clinical services requires reducing the total percentage of staff time dedicated to programming, as described above.

It was clear during the site visit that Student Affairs units who have partnered with SCS (e.g., Student Health and Campus Dining) are pleased with these collaborations and would be open to the possibility of more. Several Academic Affairs units and programs provide natural fits for collaborative outreach and prevention efforts, including Academic Advising, Office of International Studies and Programs, Women’s Studies, Latin American and Latino Studies, and a nascent group interested in developing a GLBT Studies curriculum. Working with such groups, which serve students directly as they negotiate challenging personal and career-related decisions, or integrate issues of social justice and diversity with the curriculum, seems a natural fit for SCS. As

the Psychology Department's Clinical-Counseling Psychology Program matures, there might also be an opportunity to revisit a more extensive partnership with this academic program. Such collaborative efforts could also enhance the opportunity for SCS to supplement its resource base via grants and contracts, and they would certainly be a source of cross-pollination of ideas that could be mutually beneficial to SCS and academic units.

Third, as one response to recent reductions in funding, SCS might explore adaptation or adoption of the fee-for-service model currently in place in the Student Health Service, within the limits of University policy. SHS charges a modest "front-door fee." Even if this model was deemed inappropriate at this time, SCS could consider reasonable fees for services beyond a certain point (defined in terms of either quantity of contacts or nature of services) or for comprehensive assessment conducted by staff, interns, or externs.

Finally, the Site Review Team suggests that consideration be given to identifying one or two areas on which a national reputation could be built for the department. When this question was asked of Student Affairs leadership, the two areas identified were alcohol and drug issues, and suicide prevention. As both are concerns for college students and for which expertise exist among the staff in Student Counseling Services, consideration of these two areas is encouraged. It is easy to imagine SCS establishing itself as the leading contributor to energetic campus partnerships dedicated to addressing these areas, thereby establishing national prominence for developing creative responses to these daunting challenges.

Recommendations regarding resources for SCS

The following recommendations are made with a future orientation, toward a time when funds may become available either through re-allocation, a loosening of the current cap on student fees, and/or an increase in general funds provided by the state legislature.

1. Hire and house at the Student Health Service a psychiatrist at a minimum of 1.0 FTE, with a goal of 1.5 FTE psychiatric availability within the next three years. The existing service is inadequate in quantity, and this need has been mentioned in previous evaluative reports as far back as 2001. It was shared with the Site Review Team that a plan is in place for the aforementioned 1.0 FTE psychiatrist to begin in fiscal year 2007.
2. Increase the Student Counseling Services clinical staff by 1.0 FTE as soon as possible, and an additional 1.0 FTE within three years if funds can be found. There is clear justification for additional clinical staff for direct service, and for supervision of trainees and professional staff in the process of licensure.
3. Add one new full-time APA pre-doctoral intern. This would help meet direct service and program needs, and would help relieve the shortage of opportunities for doctoral students seeking internship placement. Of more significance, intern positions may allow recruitment of persons from more diverse backgrounds, who then might be recruited into any open permanent positions.
4. Eliminate student workers from the front desk and support staff functions of the SCS. Related to preservation of confidentiality, the next IACS re-accreditation is almost certain to identify the need for student workers not to have access to any client files, the appointment calendar, the reception area, and the phone lines used for scheduling appointments.
5. Related to point 4, above, hire one full-time support staff employee (filling a previous position that has either been lost or frozen), so that adequate coverage is available over the lunch-hour, in case of illness/vacation of another staff member, and in emergency situations. Consider writing this position to include one or two evenings of work, to allow for therapy groups to be offered in the evening if demand indicates.

6. Related to point 4, above, re-deploy graduate assistant student workers from the front desk to the programs area. Consider having one take a greater role in training and supervising the Guerrilla Theater troupe, to free one clinician for more direct service work.

7. As supervision allows, recruit up to four externs for advanced practicum of two days per week each. Presumably, this would occur for academic credit rather than a stipend.

8. Re-institute the paraprofessional peer presenters program – with a core group of six students from various disciplines. These students, with adequate training and supervision, could provide much of the educational/prevention outreach programs on topics such as stress management, healthy relationships, how to help a friend with an eating disorder, decision-making skills as applied to career/life development, and other topics not requiring extensive training or credentials as a mental health professional.

9. Review the organizational structure for the Health Promotions area with consideration to housing this function under Student Counseling Services. As the Student Health Service is currently completing its own Comprehensive Program Review, their results and recommendations may offer insight for both departments to explore a structure that would be more effective. One option would be to re-locate health promotion efforts entirely to the Student Counseling Services, to include student paraprofessionals currently at the Student Health Service, regarding sexual assault and alcohol/drug awareness. This would diminish any current overlap in efforts, and contribute to the utilization of a revived paraprofessional group, which could be managed in part by a graduate assistant working under the supervision of the programs coordinated.

CONCLUSION

The Site Review Team, in its comprehensive program review of the ISU Student Counseling Services, gathered information from an exemplary self-study report and from on-site interviews with members of the SCS staff at all levels, from members of Student Affairs units, and from the leadership of Student Affairs. SCS is a comprehensive university counseling center providing a full range of outstanding direct clinical services, outreach, consultation and training. Of particular note are the SCS group therapy program; its outstanding response to students in crisis; the innovative and very effective Guerrilla Theatre troupe; strong leadership; a very healthy workplace environment; competent, creative and committed staff members; excellent collection and utilization of evaluative data; and the SCS's documented response to recommendations offered in four previous assessment processes in the past five years. The future holds opportunity for increased collaboration and new partnerships with other units of the university, and the potential to develop a national reputation as a leader in best practices regarding group therapy, suicide prevention, and addressing alcohol/drug use in the college student population.

As SCS stated in its self-study, and as referenced in the introduction to this report, SCS faces the challenge of balancing its commitment to being a comprehensive center against limited resources and increasing demand for direct clinical services. In the larger view, Illinois State University is similarly challenged to consider the depth and breadth of services to be offered to the increasing number of students who arrive at college with long-term and significant mental health service needs (both for counseling/therapy and for medication). Ultimately, the staff of SCS will need to grow in order to meet the increasing numbers and needs of ISU students. In the short-run, some professional staff time may be shifted from programs to direct clinical service, perhaps by having trained paraprofessional students provide more outreach programs to their peers. The importance of outreach programs as an educational and prevention-focused component of SCS services should not be overshadowed by the expectations of students, parents and others regarding both immediate and on-going direct service availability. Finally, for both personal and professional functioning – but perhaps even more as role models for ISU students – the SCS staff having a healthy work-life balance is a not-to-be-ignored key to the continuation of a very fine Student Counseling Services at Illinois State University.