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EDUCATION PROFILE

College Students Don't Have to Manage Mental Stress on Their Own

BY DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER

As our nation continues the fight against the spread of COVID-19 infections and traditional holiday celebrations shift to social distancing and virtual events, many college students are at home struggling with the "new norm." Many are still coping with the transition to online learning, following the emergency closure of campuses in the spring; and even more are dealing with financial hardships. At Kingsborough Community College (KCC), for example, anxiety, stress, and depression were the three top reasons students sought mental health services during the spring of 2020 (as reported by the College's Counseling Center).

Like many colleges across the country, at KCC we pivoted and took a more intentional approach to delivering services and outreach. In October of this year, the Mental Health Virtual Check-In went live and since that time we have seen a steady increase of students seeking support for academic-related stress and anxiety.



Dr. Michael Rodriguez, Ed.D., director of the Men's Resources Center at KCC, talks to a student.

After meeting with a counselor in the Mental Health Virtual Check-In format, some students have requested to be connected to a counselor so they can receive ongoing counseling through the Counseling Center. We expect to see a rise in students in need of additional support. The Counseling Center staff is equipped with full-time and part-time mental health counselors and graduate interns who are prepared to manage the requests for mental health sup-

port.

In addition, since the pandemic started, KCC has hosted a monthly Dean's Dialogue open to all students. Mental health services are discussed, and students hear how our interns (students in mental health counseling programs at senior colleges) have approached the pandemic, uncertainty, and adjusting their goals.

Dr. Brian Mitra, dean of Student Affairs, has held specific Dean's Dialogues with targeted

student cohorts, including Men's Resources Center, Student Government/Club Leaders, Student-Athletes, College Discovery, CUNY EDGE, TRiO/Accessibility students, and others.

"We know that our students need the support, however, they are overwhelmed with taking classes, being a caregiver, loss of loved ones and jobs, and the uncertainty, amongst other things. We are prepared to increase our caseload and adjust to the needs of our students in the upcoming winter module and spring semester," said Mitra.

Through the support of CARES monies, we are following a more intentional

outreach approach focusing on students in: Athletics, College Discovery, Veterans Affairs, Center for Workforce and Economic Development, Career Services, CUNY EDGE, Student Government/Clubs & Organizations, Men's Resource Center, the Advisement Academies, ASAP, ESL, KLIP, and KELI. We have increased mental health screenings, check-in hours, extended evening hours,

added professional development and training for our Counseling and Health Services staff, developed student focus groups to hear what their needs are in these uncertain times and updated technology to ensure our telehealth needs and systems are current and comprehensive.

We are here to fully support our college students. These initiatives are part of the foundation of services we provide, including one-on-one personal counseling, emergency and crisis intervention, workshops, events, and student support groups. Managing mental health may seem like a ton of weights, but students don't have to carry the weights on their own.

Dr. Claudia V. Schrader is president of Kingsborough Community College (KCC), a 72-acre academic oasis located in beautiful Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn that offers students affordable two-year degrees for their future. For more information or updates about events and support sessions, please call (718) 368-5975 or e-mail Counselingandhealth.services@kbcc.cuny.edu.