



Student Life

Sound in MIND & BODY

Addressing Students' Mental Health Needs

In the wake of the Virginia Tech tragedy, the media spotlight was once again cast on the increased incidence of mental health concerns on college campuses. Months after the media coverage of this harrowing event has subsided, the question that remains to those with a stake in fostering the health and wellness of today's coeds is what can we do to ensure that students remain healthy, both in body and in mind?

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Experts such as Jonathan Jackson, director of psychological services at Adelphi, caution against drawing generalized conclusions from the Virginia Tech shooting.

"I think Virginia Tech stands out in everyone's mind just because it's so horrible," he says. "But you have to remember that's just one in how many million of individuals on college campuses at any given time, and you really have to see that as a really, really odd and freaky occurrence. College campuses are still probably one of the safest places anybody would want to be. And for that reason, knowing that, that makes the incident even more glaring."



Jonathan Jackson



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— Deborah Ramirez M.S.W. '92, M.A. '96, Ph.D. '00

Dr. Jackson notes that greater access to college means students may come with a wider range of mental health challenges.

One factor that has remained constant is that the college years are a notoriously vulnerable time for young adults, says Dr. Jackson.

"It's a time (when), because of maturational factors or development issues, if a young adult is going to succumb to serious mental illness, that's when it's going to happen," he says. "So, the correlation between that and

being on a college campus means that we're going to see problems. That's not new."

Faced with this reality, how do colleges ensure that they are providing students with the services they need to cope and flourish?

Adelphi offers a multitude of counseling options not only for students, but also for faculty, staff, and the surrounding community.

The Center for Psychological Studies at Adelphi's renowned Gordon F. Derner Institute of Advanced Psychological Studies offers affordable, customized therapy sessions at the Garden City Campus and the Manhattan Center. Treatment for everyday woes such as adjusting to college life and dealing with feelings of loneliness to overcoming more serious problems such as depression and dealing with substance abuse is also available through the Student Counseling Center (SCC).

Founded in 1999 by Deborah Ramirez M.S.W. '92, M.A. '96, Ph.D. '00 the SCC provides free, confidential services to any student enrolled at Adelphi. Staffed by five full-time counselors trained in social work and clinical psychology, three interns who are graduate students from the School of Social Work and the Derner Institute, and a part-time psychiatrist, the SCC is well equipped to help students navigate the often tempestuous college years.

"Counseling gives students a forum to talk about feelings and conflicts," says Dr. Ramirez, director of the SCC. "Often transitions to college present students with new and overwhelming challenges. Counseling offers the student support, information, and sometimes guidance when a student is having difficulty adjusting."

For students who feel more comfortable sharing their concerns with their peers, the SCC is also home to the Peer Counseling Center, a student-staffed counseling and crisis intervention telephone call center and drop-in center.

According to Dr. Ramirez, the top five issues that students have sought treatment for since the SCC's inception are relationship issues, anxiety and panic, depression, academic problems, and loss and bereavement.

Counseling gives students an outlet to share their thoughts with an unbiased professional. One of the goals of therapy is to help students better understand their thoughts, feelings, and relationships, by looking at patterns of behavior, according to Dr. Ramirez.

"Sometimes a student just feels 'out of sorts' and doesn't know what is bothering him or her," says Dr. Ramirez. "This student can benefit from being offered a non-judgmental forum to explore his or her feelings."

And sometimes this is enough to help ease a student's mind, according to Dr. Ramirez.

"Sometimes the validation that what he or she is experiencing is 'normal' or not uncommon helps ease some of the anxiety for the student," she says.

For more information about the Student Counseling Center at Adelphi, visit <http://students.adelphi.edu/sa/scc/> or call (516) 877-3646. To find out more about the Center for Psychological Studies at the Gordon F. Derner Institute at Adelphi, visit <http://www.adelphi.edu/communityservices/derner/> or call (516) 877-4820.

—By Erin Walsh