

Building Strategic Partnerships for Holistic Student Supports

EXAMPLE: COLLEGE OF SOUTHERN NEVADA



College of Southern Nevada (CSN) (Las Vegas, NV) – The largest public college or university in Nevada with three main campuses in the Las Vegas Valley; Urban; designated as Asian American & Native American Pacific-Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI) and a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI).

The Holistic Needs Met:

Mental Health and Therapeutic Counseling:

Expanding Therapeutic Counseling Services Through Community Partnership

CSN, which has three campuses and several local centers serving the Las Vegas Valley, conducted a student needs assessment and additional ongoing assessments through a student satisfaction survey, interviews, and information conversations with students. This needs assessment included exploring students' mental health needs. The college learned that Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) was not able to provide adequate support and staffing to service the therapeutic needs of students, which was affecting students' ability to persist and complete their programs. The college administrators saw they had a waitlist for appointments, and they realized that they did not have sufficient staffing to be responsive to students' demands for evening and weekend hours. They discovered that three positions—allocated in the previous model—were not sufficient to respond to the increased demand for counseling services, so they looked at the organizations in their community that had the resources and capacity to augment their services and complement them in a way that would provide sufficient supports to students. UNLV Medicine-Mojave Counseling had sufficient staffing and availability.

“ So that's the capacity question. It was a matter of do we have what our students need when they need it and can we sustain it long term?

— Dr. Lisandra DeJesus,
Associate Vice President, Student Affairs

Through this partnership, services were expanded and made available during hours of operations that fit students' needs. One-on-one therapeutic counseling was made available on select evenings, on weekends, and through telemedicine, which became a critical resource during the COVID-19 pandemic in providing greater flexibility and safety to accommodate students' schedules and needs. UNLV Medicine-Mojave Counseling also provided group counseling, which helped students to connect to others and to be a part of a community. This was particularly helpful and important in the context of COVID at a time when many feel students felt isolated and stressed, and faced additional challenges juggling college, family, health, and work obligations. This helped students to know that they were not alone and that others were going through similar challenges. Being able to cope with stress and talk to someone or in groups helped students to persist and stay in school.

The partnership between CSN and Mojave Counseling provided for the mental health needs of CSN students, increased participation from traditionally under-represented groups (i.e. males and veterans), and expanded the clientele and demand for UNLV Medicine-Mojave Counseling. This retooled, student-centric model also increased awareness of the services of UNLV Medicine-Mojave Counseling in the community. It was truly a win-win-win for all interested parties, and invaluable to the students at the college.

These services were complemented at CSN by the implementation of the Mental Health First Aid program, which was a three-year grant-funded program that provided training to over 1,300 faculty, staff, and student leaders to identify, understand, respond, and provide support to students who may be developing a mental health problem or experiencing a crisis. In addition,

trainees were taught to refer students to CAPs when appropriate. This program has concluded, and the college is looking at how to continue providing this type of professional development to support students' mental health needs.

“The thing for me as a human being, first and foremost, and second, as a student affairs practitioner, is that we have to do great things all the time for all of our students. Because we never know where the student is at that day of the week and we don't know when is the day that we are going to save a life.

— Dr. Lisandra DeJesus,
Associate Vice President, Student Affairs

Reflection Questions:

- How did the needs assessment and other data collection help the college to identify that they did not have sufficient staffing and resources to respond to the increased demand for therapeutic counseling?
- What kinds of questions would have been critical to ask to make this determination?
- How might your college benefit from a similar approach to assessing student needs?



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