Excerpts from literature related to *current* student needs for counseling services and an abbreviated past history of counseling services in the Washington State Community and Technical College System.

A. Current Student Needs

1. Active Minds surveyed 2,051 high school and college students regarding the impact of COVID-19 on their mental health in September 2020.

Key Findings:

Unsurprisingly, mental health has worsened over the course of the pandemic. Almost 75% of respondents reported their mental health has worsened, worsened somewhat, or worsened significantly since the beginning of the pandemic. High percentages of respondents have experienced stress or anxiety (87.03%), disappointment or sadness (78.06%), or felt lonely or isolated (77.47%) during the pandemic. For many respondents, stress (84.25%), anxiety (82.35%), sadness (73.23%), and depression (60.7%) have all increased since the beginning of the pandemic.


Key Findings:

Eight out of 10 presidents indicated that student mental health has become more of a priority on their campus than it was three years ago.

As concern about student mental health has grown over the last three years, roughly seven out of 10 presidents (72 percent) reported they had reallocated or identified additional funding to address the issue. Presidents at four-year institutions were more likely to have identified or reallocated funding than presidents at public two-year colleges. One president reported raising $15 million to build a “comprehensive student well-being building.”

Across all institution types, over eight out of 10 presidents (85 percent) identified the vice president of student affairs as their primary point person to respond to student mental health.

We asked presidents if they had unlimited resources to dedicate to student mental health on their campus, what would be the first action they would take? Over half (58 percent) of presidents said they would hire additional staff—mostly in the counseling center.

Presidents at four-year institutions were slightly more likely to report feeling knowledgeable about student mental health issues than presidents at public two-year institutions.

Presidents at public two-year institutions were more likely to report not having the tools they needed than presidents at other institutions, while presidents at public four-year institutions were more likely to report they had the necessary tools.

Source: https://www.higheredtoday.org/2019/08/12/college-student-mental-health-well-survey-college-presidents/
3. Study: Nearly a third of Washington college students have experienced depression. (2018)

It’s the first time students at Washington colleges have participated in a specific, widely used national survey on mental health, and it shows they suffer from depression and emotional distress at roughly the same rate as students nationwide. The national survey, called the Healthy Minds Study, involved 10,000 students at 13 two- and four-year universities — including the UW, WSU, several community colleges and some private schools.

Key Findings:

Nearly 80% of college students who answered the survey reported that emotional distress impacts their academic performance, and about a third said they have suffered from depression and more than one in 10 have thought of suicide.

Source: https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/education/study-nearly-a-third-of-washington-college-students-have-experienced-depression/


From the first-ever Inside Higher Ed survey of student affairs leaders, conducted by Gallup. The survey was conducted from Jan. 16 to Feb. 12, 2020.

Student affairs officers have full agendas on college campuses, as they're often the point person for issues around such inflammatory issues as sexual violence, race relations and free speech. But those issues don't appear anywhere near the top when student affairs leaders are asked which issues dominate their time. The topics that do: student mental health, cited by 94 percent, and student well-being, by 91 percent. All other issues lagged well behind.

- 78 percent of student affairs leaders said the number of campus visits to mental health professionals had "increased a lot" in the last five years, and 63 percent said the same for the number of students on prescription medicine for mental health issues.
Fifty-eight percent said that they believe their college's president is familiar enough with student affairs issues that when she or he makes a decision on student affairs, it's the right one.

Half of student affairs leaders say they think about student mental health "a great deal." The percentages were highest at public doctoral institutions (68 percent) and private baccalaureate colleges (66 percent), and lowest at community colleges (36 percent).


Late 1950’s - Early 1960’s

Post WWII prosperity and GI educational opportunities spurred rapid growth of community colleges across the country (Arthur D. Little, Inc., 1966, p. 13). Four-year institutions adopted more stringent admissions policies - two-year colleges "opened the door," providing universal access to the nation's growing numbers of highly diversified student bodies. The 60's saw enrollment more than double and unprecedented research took place, as well as local, regional, and national funding and legislation.

In 1957, the Washington State Board of Education published a report from the Washington State Junior College Study Committee which stated "that provisions for counseling in considering the loads of the staff will become more essential since the counseling service is one of the most important services of the junior college" (p. 35), and recommended that "there be an increased emphasis on the expansion of the number of professional counselors" (p. 36). In 1965, the Washington State Board of Education published in its Long-Range Development
Plan for Community Colleges that "A sound counseling program is a fundamental responsibility of the community college" (p. 16).

The Carnegie Report
The national push for research and reporting is exemplified by what is known as the Carnegie Report (National Committee for Appraisal and Development of Junior College Student Personnel Programs, 1965). Carnegie Corporation provided funding for a two-year study of two-year college student personnel programs. In cooperation with the American Association of Junior Colleges, an independent national committee of prominent educators was appointed. The findings of the Carnegie Report are succinctly put through the following quote from that report: "The ultimate success of the comprehensive concept of higher education rests upon adequate guidance" (p. 20). The conclusions and recommendations of this National Committee became the model for Community College Student Personnel programs across the country. "The Committee has attempted to summarize the characteristics of an effective program of student personnel services for two-year institutions" (p. 3).

The Carnegie Report recommendations are summarized below:

1. Counseling is central to community college success in fulfilling its mission of providing open admission and comprehensive educational and service programs.
2. The comprehensive nature of the counseling function is described, as well as students need for continuous appraisal through the counseling function.
3. Professional counseling qualifications are defined as a two-year graduate degree in a Behavioral Science field with a supervised practicum.
4. National ratio standards are defined as an ideal of 1:300, not to exceed one counselor for every 500 students. [These figures are based on a comprehensive counseling model, where counselors perform advising and other functions in addition to personal counseling].
5. The need to ensure adequate funding for counseling programs is described.
6. Recommendations include institutional support for professional development.
By opening the door ... community colleges, therefore, have assumed the enormously difficult task of educating highly diversified student bodies. It is obvious that these institutions must provide highly differentiated educational programs. It should be equally clear that if students are to choose wisely ... they must be assisted. The student is likely to do these things effectively only if the college recognizes the process of self-discovery [career, personal, academic] as one of its principal purposes, and if [its] services are adequate in scope and quality to give the student necessary assistance. For this reason, counseling and instruction are equal partners in the education of junior college students, more than at any other level of education (p. 2).

Policy Plan for Community College Education in the State of Washington

In response to the rising demand for educational opportunities and growing body of research on community colleges (which includes symposiums and conferences in Washington State featuring members of the Carnegie Commission), the 39th Session of the Washington Legislature directed the state to prepare a comprehensive plan for the organization of Community College education (Arthur D. Little, Inc., 1966). A Policy Plan was written (the Student Service portion of which was based in large part upon the recommendations of the Carnegie Report). The Plan states that "the degree to which the community college system in the State will be successful...will depend, in important part, upon a considerable expansion of the guidance and counseling function" (p. 38), and "The community college which appears best suited for today's tasks accepts students of widely varying ages, interests and capabilities, has at its heart a strong counseling center..." (p. 14).

Five basic elements of the comprehensive community college:

1. First two-years of four-year degree programs
2. General education courses
3. Occupational education courses
4. Community services and adult education

The State must ensure that comprehensive educational programs and services are available within each college, so that students of widely different capabilities and interests can find within each college a broad range of program offerings from
which to choose, and the skilled guidance and counseling which will enable them to make sound choices. (p. 3).

Additionally, staff requirements, position descriptions and specifications of qualified personnel are mandated. Furthermore, the Policy Plan outlines how Washington State is responsible to ensure minimum standards. While individual districts are granted substantial independence, it is Washington State's responsibility to ensure that the intent of the law is carried out at each campus.

The State must ensure that whatever the desirable variations between and among community colleges may be, there is a satisfactory level of community college educational services being provided by every institution in the system. In addition to seeing that community college services and facilities are available to all its citizens, the State also has a responsibility to ensure that the programs being offered satisfy certain basic standards of quality and comprehensiveness. In other words, the range of programs offered in any college and the quality of the instruction and services being provided should not be fortuitous matters wholly dependent either upon local resources or local policies. The State therefore has an obligation ... to set guidelines, standards and criteria for defining what community college education should be so as to measure the adequacy of the programs and services being offered (p. 117-118).


Based upon the Policy Plan (and the recommended model as reported by the Carnegie Commission), Washington state's Community College Act became law in 1967 (State Board for Community College Education, n.d.). Community colleges will "offer an open door to every citizen, regardless of his academic background or experience...and offer thoroughly comprehensive education, training, and service programs" (p. 6). The supporting documentation upon which the Community College Act was based clearly shows that to achieve success in its mission of providing "open-door" (p. 4) admissions and "thoroughly comprehensive" (p. 6) programs, community colleges must provide students with adequate access to a professionally staffed, sound counseling program, because inherent in the open-door policy is the responsibility of all community colleges to provide educational opportunities for students with various occupational aspirations and with a broad
range of interests, needs, and levels of abilities and intelligence. To make the open-door policy a reality, the community college must make available competent counseling services (State Board of Education and The State Board for Vocational Education, 1966, p. 2).

Professional qualifications, faculty status, counselors' comprehensive role, and ratio information are clearly defined within the supporting documentation.

The Washington State Community College System Master Plan

As mandated by the 1967 Act, the State Board is responsible for minimum standards and quality assurance (State Board for Community College Education, n.d.). This document also spells out the responsibility of the State Board for ensuring that the mission of the community college system is met, guaranteeing that the people of Washington State be served by its mission. In answering the question, “How will this be accomplished?”, the Master Plan outlines the following: The State Board does so by proposing system-wide goals and then allocating resources to achieve those goals. The State Board defines the purposes of community college education in Washington as follows: 1. To Serve the Individual...the achievement of these purposes will be supported by guidance and counseling. 2. To Serve the Community...3. To Serve the State...These purposes are to be achieved through the offering of a wide range of vocational training opportunities and related guidance services... (p. 7). The Master Plan includes the specific goal to provide "guidance and placement counseling at or above nationally recommended levels" (p. 16). As we have shown national recommendations include definitions of professional counselors (with specific training and faculty status), as well as ratio guidelines (National Committee for Appraisal and Development of Junior College Student Personnel Programs, 1965). The final draft of the Master Plan listed one counselor for each 300 students as the nationally recommended ratio (Canfield, n.d., p. 23). The document further specifies that "The State Board asked the...Legislature for special funds to bring student services, especially guidance and counseling, up to standards. It is hoped that the implementation of budgeting formulas in future years will make this need more clearly identifiable" (p. 16).

Washington's Open Door Colleges Comparing the State's Community Colleges with Recommendations by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education
In 1970, the State Board for Community & Technical Colleges published a report entitled “WASHINGTON’S OPEN DOOR COLLEGES: Comparing the State's Community Colleges with Recommendations by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education”. This report provides further evidence that the Carnegie Commission's findings were the model upon which Washington state's community college system was based. Of the comparison to Carnegie Commission findings, the State Board reports that the influential body recommended directions for development of community college education in the United States. The Board approved for publication a report compiled by the staff to compare the system's performance against the Carnegie Commission recommendations. In general, the staff indicated that the state system was so much in line with the commission's recommendations that it could have served as their model (Washington State Board for Community College Education, 1970, p. 1).

The central question this report sought to answer was "How has the state of Washington done in meeting the spirit of the Community College Act?" and they did so by comparing the state's community college system to recommendations of the Carnegie Commission. "In supporting the goals of the system as outlined in Design for Excellence [the Master Plan] one of the objectives is 'to provide guidance and placement counseling at or above nationally recommended levels' " (p. 14). In working toward the recommended levels of guidance and placement counseling (which the state defines as one of the five basic elements of comprehensive colleges), "the state board...has developed a budget model for student personnel services...greater financial effort is required to provide for adequate guidance services...and the real need for qualified guidance specialists" (p. 14). This study specifically lists each recommendation of the Carnegie Report followed by a report on the status of Washington's community colleges relative to the recommendations. The Carnegie Commission concludes (and the Washington study emphasizes) that "guidance is particularly critical for students who attend community colleges because many have not developed clear educational or vocational goals and a great many face the interrelated problems of financial, academic and personal pressures" (p. 14).

Source:

Dr. John Terry, the Executive Director of the State Board of Community College Education wrote:

“We who are in leadership positions in the community colleges give easy lip service to the importance of meeting student needs. Words – no matter how pious or how significant a role the speaker may hold – are meaningless unless they can be translated into action. At issue is the quality of student development. Student development cannot prosper without the participation of an effective and comprehensive counseling program. Counseling from the historic perspective has been an integral part of the community college mission. Under the stresses of retrenchment, the safe assumptions about the centrality of counseling were found to be inadequate. Student services, including counseling, were not as central to the mission as many complacently assumed, as a consequence, they became too frequently the targets of opportunity for the surgery of retrenchment.”


For nearly three years, approximately 120 counselors, counselor educators and other key stakeholders worked at creating state guidelines for comprehensive counseling and career guidance. This effort was led by a rare cooperative effort between the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to create guidelines for kindergarten through community and technical college education in Washington State.
The K-14 state guidelines were developed to:

- Clarify the counseling role as implied in educational reform, school-to-work, and other legislation.
- Update the existing Washington State model to align with national standards for comprehensive counseling programs.
- Create a seamless system to ensure that diverse, changing needs of each student would be met from kindergarten through community/technical college.
- Provide a common set of standards throughout the state.

Included was the development of counseling and guidance components and competency benchmarks in the three foundational domains of comprehensive counseling – Educational Development, Personal/Social Development and Career & Planning.


**Services and Functions**

Counselors are vital members of campus planning and retention efforts. They provide essential educational programs and services designed to meet the needs of their unique communities. Counselors use psychological theory and research to help students make progress toward their educational and career goals and with their emotional and social development.
Educational Counseling/Academic Advising

Educational counseling includes helping students learn strategies for academic success and addressing personal barriers. Counselors provide services such as interpreting basic skills and placement test results, reviewing information about educational programs and courses, explaining college policies and procedures, and guiding students to appropriate information in their fields of interest. While academic advising and educational planning are done at various levels of depth and complexity by different employees, counselors are uniquely trained to interview students and develop a holistic educational plan that takes into account a student's educational background; emotional, social, and academic readiness; levels of support; family circumstances; and schedule. Martin (2004) reports that holistic academic advising has been the most frequently requested student service provided by counselors in the community and technical college system. Other examples of educational counseling include assisting students with choosing a program of study; transferring to a university; withdrawing from classes; coping with math, speech, or test anxiety; exploring learning styles; and improving study skills.

Career Counseling

Career counseling involves students in an exploration of personal interests, motivations, values, and abilities, and teaches the development of decision-making skills through the selection of career goals. Counselors instruct students about employment trends, specific career and job search skills, as well as select, administer, and interpret standardized career assessment instruments. Counselors may oversee or work in tandem with college career centers to provide additional services. Counselors help students use career exploration databases and other resources that provide students with tools to explore occupations and various training programs.

Personal Counseling

Personal counseling addresses issues such as the balance of school, work, and home; difficulties in class; dealing with anxiety or depression; confronting prejudice or discrimination; relationship problems; identity confusion and uncertainty; managing grief, anger, or shyness; coping with major life transitions;
lack of confidence and assertiveness; time and stress management; and dealing with perfectionism and unrealistic expectations.

Crisis Intervention and Mental Health Response

In collaboration with campus security, college administrators, and community referral resources, counselors assist with a host of mental health related issues. Counselors are familiar with the mental health resources in their community and make appropriate referrals as needed. Counselors generally do not provide clinical diagnosis or long-term treatment in the community college environment.

Instruction

Counselors regularly teach classes related to human development and applied psychology. The primary objective of instruction is to improve student success through coping skills, decision making, goal setting, career development, and effective life management.

Consultation and Advocacy

Counselors consult and advocate for students with instructors, administrators, and other campus offices (Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2003). They help address complaints, assist in identifying and resolving complex situations, provide training and feedback on classroom behavior and/or challenging students, and serve the campus-wide community through committee work, planning bodies, and guest lecturing.

Staffing and Organizational Structure

According to the Revised Code of Washington (RCW 28B.52.020, 1991), community and technical college counselors are faculty members based on their status as "academic employees". They have a minimum of a master's degree in counseling, psychology, or related field (Washington Administrative Code, WAC 131-16-091, 2004) from an accredited university that includes a supervised practicum and internship in counseling. Some counselors have additional training or licensure in mental health and/or addictions counseling. Counselors adhere to a professional code of ethics, maintain confidentiality, and follow duty-to-report laws according to the professional guidelines and ethical standards set by their professional associations and state licensure boards.
The institution and the state must provide adequate financial resources to ensure the provision of a broad range of counseling services. This requires strong institutional commitment to provide necessary facilities, staffing, and operational funding.