Slides and presentation recording will be available on our website: http://peersforprogress.org/who-we-are/organization/peer-support-core/

Artist: René Magritte
Painting housed in LACMA
Image from https://www.lacma.org/art/exhibition/magritte-and-contemporary-art-treachery-images
This is not a program

It is a variety of programs + variety of people/settings

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Carolina Peer Support Collaborative:
A Campus-wide Collaborative Learning Network as a Central Strategy for University Cultural Change

UNC System Behavioral Health Convening 2021

Some days when you need a hand. There are other days when we’re called to lend a hand. That’s how it has to be.
President Joseph Biden, January 20, 2021

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http://peersforprogress.org/who-we-are/organization/peer-support-core/
Who We Are

Ed Fisher, Prof in Health Behavior; Global Director, Peers for Progress
Samantha Luu, Associate Director, UNC Peer Support Core
Patrick Tang, Program Manager, Peers for Progress
Hannah Barker, Graduate Assistant
Debbi Clarke, Associate Provost and Liaison with Peer Support Core
Carolina Peer Support Collaborative

COVID activities since March, 2020
PS Core funded September 1

We’re from UNC-CH there’s a Core and a Collaborative
Our Team – 11 Peer Responders

Sonam (she, her, hers) // friends and family, cultural identity, health & wellness, stress management
Hi, my name is Sonam! I’m from Cary, NC and a junior studying Health Policy and Management and Neuroscience at UNC Chapel Hill. When I am not in class or drinking coffee, I am probably watching a crime show on Netflix, on a natural trail, baking, or finding a new coffee/boba shop. I want to help peers have an open, honest, and supportive space to talk about things on their mind. I am happy to listen to anything and everything including being a part of the Indian-American community, navigating college, friends, and life during COVID-19. No matter how big or how small the situation may be, please feel free to reach out!

Toby (he, him, his) // stress, friends and family, personal identity
Hey y'all! My name is Toby, and I'm a junior from Durham, NC studying Environmental Health Sciences at UNC Chapel Hill. Growing up nearby, Chapel Hill has always been my home. I love trying new restaurants on Franklin Street and studying at coffee shops. I'm involved with APPLES and am a member of the co-ed chemistry fraternity, AXS. I am more than glad to listen and be a shoulder to listen to. Please feel free to reach out!

Sage (he, him, his) // anxiety, mental health, loneliness, transferring
Hi, my name is Sage! I am a senior Biology major at UNC Chapel Hill. I am from a small town in North Carolina with a population of about 1000 people. I transferred to UNC from a community college in my sophomore year, so I understand the struggles of transferring and being from a rural area. In my free time, I enjoy binging standup comedy specials on Netflix, spending time with friends, playing the ukulele, and watching any kind of UNC sports. I am happy to have conversations about mental health, anxiety, or any other topic that may be on your mind!

https://www.uncpeer2peer.com/
**Organization for Peer Support in School of Nursing**

Structural and process supports:
- All staff (except overnight), students, and faculty assigned to pods
- Pods: permanent small groups
- Pod leads
- Formal peer support training for Pod leads
- Emergent topic-focused support groups (e.g., Parenting During COVID-19)
- Strong administrative support from Dean Peragallo Montano
- Four members of faculty led program planning
- Program housed within the School's Wellness Center

Structure that encompasses **almost all** in the SON
School of Medicine Peer Support Advocates

The Peer Support Advocate Program is composed of 12 students per phase, who are selected annually by their classmates to be advocates and serve as peer counselors based on their records of service, diversity, and good academic standing. Advocates serve for a one-year term and are assigned to one of 6 advisory colleges so that they can participate in Advisory College lunchtime sessions, coordinate social aspects of the colleges, hold informal support sessions, and invite confidential inquiries. Peer Support Advocates receive guidance from College Advisors, veteran advocates, School of Medicine Wellness Coaches, and the Office of Student Affairs so that they can help their peers resolve common academic, administrative and personal problems.

Enhancements
• Built on existing infrastructure of peer leadership
• Worked to strengthen student leadership-faculty advisor support

https://www.med.unc.edu/advisorycolleges/advocates/

Enhanced existing student leadership structures and roles
Peer Support Pods

- Small mutual support groups
- Formed around a shared interest, identity, administrative or personal role, or other shared trait
- Communicates via digital platform
- Has a designated pod leader who has some extra training

Wide variety of pods (ex. moms’ pod, PhD students’ pod)

Icon Credit: Flaticon.com
Carolina Peer Support Collaborative

- Collaborative Learning Network
- Connects a variety of programs across campus
- Over 60 representatives from 30+ units

While the UNC Peer Support Core *facilitates* peer support across campus, the Collaborative *connects* those programs and efforts with each other across campus.
How did we get here?


From MHTF to starting the Collaborative to the growth of the Collaborative
UNC-CH Mental Health Task Force

From 2016 to 2017 at UNC-Chapel Hill,

- **60% of graduate students** reported feeling overwhelming anxiety
- **37% of undergraduate students** reported feeling so depressed it was difficult to function
- **11% of undergraduate students** reported that they seriously considered suicide

These data are consistent with national data

UNC-CH MHTF:
https://mentalhealthtaskforce.web.unc.edu/
Looking beyond diagnosed MH
Looking beyond clinical care

UNC-CH MHTF:
https://mentalhealthtaskforce.web.unc.edu/

The recommendations... illustrate key themes ...[to] be addressed on an
institutional level to ensure that mental health and well-being is valued and embedded in the culture of our University... (p. 3)

MHTF p.3 also, Ultimately we concluded that there is no simple, solitary or static solution; effectively addressing mental health requires an ongoing intersectional approach that considers a multitude of multifaceted and interconnected factors at various systemic levels.

MHTF (from manuscript) – “common concerns in our community related to the “work hard, play hard” and “busier is better” mentalities that permeate the Carolina culture in place of a healthier mindset that promotes balance and wellbeing of all groups on our campus ... how students can serve as advocates for other students, where gaps in resources for faculty and staff exist and how to identify and remedy widespread practices and messaging that have been normalized in our institution but that may be promoting an unhealthy campus culture.” (p. 14)
The UNC-CH report also included broad endorsement of peer support as a key strategy for addressing mental health concerns and needs and moving toward its objective of a campus culture in which “mental health and overall wellbeing is a central part of student life and a priority to the University” (p. 14).
Mental Health Task Force: Focus Area 1, Recommendation 3:
Increase resources for programs focused on peer-to-peer support, non-crisis support and discussion

UNC-CH MHTF: https://mentalhealthtaskforce.web.unc.edu/
Peer Support in Universities

• Systematic Review of Interventions among University Students\(^1\)
  – Effective interventions for depression and generalized anxiety included CBT, mindfulness, attention/perception modification
  – Peer support among those with largest effect sizes

• Among University Students
  – Students Helping Students – McLean Hospital\(^2\)
  – Student Support Network at Worcester Polytech\(^2\)
  – 6-session program for mild depression in 8 universities in UK\(^3\)
    • Led by students who completed 2-day training with stepped supervision through on-campus supervisor
    • Focus on activation, self care activities, behavior change and goals setting, self soothing
    • 34% attended all sessions, 57% > 1
    • Those with lower wellbeing more likely to complete
    • Significant increases in wellbeing

Students Helping Students – McLean Hospital
• Trained students across varied campuses in Massachusetts – 600 from 200 in 2013
• Varied skills including seeking resources, coping, navigating relationships, etc.

Student Support Network at Worcester Polytech
• Groups of 15-18 \(\rightarrow\) about 10% of undergrads

Fundamental Role of Social Connections and Support

Human beings are more effective and happier when they have someone

• they can *talk to* about personal matters
• who *cares about them*
• who can *help them* when they need help

The risk of death associated with social isolation is greater than the risk associated with cigarette smoking

Peer Support is an effective strategy for reaching those hardly reached

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Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton. PLOSMedicine, 2010, 7: July e1000316
www.plosmedicine.org
Evidence

**14 Projects in 9 Countries on 6 Continents**

**Systematic review: 83.3% of papers → positive effects of peer support**
Fisher et al., Health Affairs 2015 34: 1523-30

**Reaches “Hardly Reached”**
90% of Mexican American patients of safety net community health center or African American mothers of Medicaid-covered children hospitalized for asthma

**Cost Effective**

[http://goo.gl/cdbRSR](http://goo.gl/cdbRSR)

Peersforprogress.org

Peers for Progress and hardly reached
- 90% of unmarried, low income mothers of children hospitalized for asthma (Fisher et al. Archives of pediatrics and adolescent medicine, 2019 163 (3), 225-232)
- 90% of low income, Mexican American adults with diabetes served by community health center in Chicago (Fisher at al. Health Affairs, 2015 34(9), 1523-1530
- Systematic Review: 44/47 papers (94%) reported significant changes favoring peer support (Sokol et al Am J Pub Hlth, 2016 1541-0048 Electronic)
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Diabetes Initiative -- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

14 projects to promote diabetes management in community and primary care settings across the US

Settings included African American churches, and primary care and community programs serving Hispanic and Native American groups

Peer support a common strategy

Local ownership of improvements cultivated through Collaborative Learning Network of all grantees

Ed Fisher’s involvement with RWJF and CLNs

http://www.diabetesinitiative.org/documents/CLNReportFINAL5.22.08.pdf

Robert Wood Johnson Diabetes Initiative

Collaborative Learning Networks offer space for:

- Facilitated cross-learning
- Resource sharing
We were actively involved with Mental Health Coalition, wrapping our arms around PS at UNC, presented at last year’s BHC
....all on voluntary basis
COVID-19 Measures and Immediate Response

- UNC-CH moved online

Initial university response was heavily focused on physical health and infection. We became increasingly concerned about mental health of students, faculty, and staff.

COVID-19 Measures and Immediate Response

- UNC-CH moved online
- Began promoting peer support pods

We saw a need to address mental health and socialization, so we did so via pods

CREDIT: Flat Icon
COVID-19 Measures and Immediate Response

- UNC-CH moved online
- Began promoting peer support pods
- Continued researching peer support in student groups

We were already researching and formalizing our understanding of PS on campus

*report finalized in July, but actively conducting interviews at this time

Report: http://peersforprogress.org/who-we-are/organization/peer-support-core/
COVID-19 Measures and Immediate Response

- UNC-CH moved online
- Began promoting peer support pods
- Continued researching peer support in student groups
- Hosted webinars for students, faculty, and staff

Our continued push to support socialization and MH included webinars like this, how to develop PS programs, and how to be a peer supporter

Webinar: http://peersforprogress.org/who-we-are/organization/peer-support-core/
Reaching Across Campus

- Made a key presentation to the Provost’s Leadership Council

Ed presented to the PLC with great engagement from the Deans in attendance; “culture of mutuality” begins to resonate

South Building Photo: MHTF Cover
Reaching Across Campus

- Made a key presentation to the Provost’s Leadership Council
- Collaborative Learning Network convened for first time with 15 attendees representing 7 units

Using previous learning from RWJF and Diabetes Initiative and enthusiasm following PLC, convened a meeting with interested folks with the goal of cross-learning.

Everyone signed on to the objective that **No member of UNC-CH community is without someone to turn to**

http://www.diabetesinitiative.org/documents/CLNReportFINAL5.22.08.pdf

Robert Wood Johnson Diabetes Initiative

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