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UCSA Announces Results of Sweeping Student Mental Health Services Evaluation

OAKLAND, CA - On Thursday, the UC Student Association announced the results of a statewide study ranking student mental health services provided by University of California campuses. Using a rubric of seventeen questions posed at both professional staff and students who access these services, each of the nine undergraduate institutions received a grade A-F with recommendations on how to improve three areas of service: accessibility, outreach to students, and diversity of providers.

The average grade for all nine campuses was a C. The lowest grade (59% or F+) was given to UC Merced. The highest grade was a B- at UC Davis. Grades for individual campuses and the rubric questions used are all available online at ucsa.org/SMH-RUBRIC.

The goal of the study was to draw attention to areas of improvement and urge the UC Office of the President and campus administrators to continue expanding financial support of on-campus mental health centers. Major holes in service include wait times of 2+ weeks, lack of follow-up visits, lack of physical space where care can be provided, and lack of diverse staff who students feel are qualified to understand their unique social and cultural experiences. The next step of the study is to bring the grades to campus administrators to start a conversation on how mental health services can better serve the UC's student population.

Mohsin Mirza (a student at UC Santa Barbara), who chairs the UC Student Association's undergraduate committee that initiated the study, commented Thursday, "we acknowledge that [Counseling and Psychological Services] staff are working hard and want to encourage students to access the services that exist now. CAPS staff are not to blame. However, we believe that UC administration should invest more to support on-campus centers in doing their important work."

The study is the first initiative of the #HowAreYou campaign by the UC Student Association. Subtitled "A Call to Reform Student Mental Health Services," the campaign responds to growing student concern that their mental health needs are not being met by the UC. Over 350 students from all nine undergraduate campuses voted at UC Student Congress in 2015 to make #HowAreYou the largest priority for student advocacy over the next two years.

"Our priority as students is to be able to finish our academic careers without sacrificing our physical and emotional well-being. Students face enormous stressors like inflated costs of attendance and housing, as well as academic and social pressure. All we want is a counseling center that is able to cater to a diverse student population and prepared to be there when we need help," said vice-chair of the undergraduate committee **Sam Alavi** (a student at UC Davis).

The following students on each campus are willing to comment on their participation in the study and the grades received by their campus: UC Berkeley Yasmeen Ahmed (stateaffairs@asuc.org); UC Davis Sam Alavi (sjalavi@ucdavis.edu); UC Irvine Caroline Nguyen (cnguye48@uci.edu); UC Los Angeles Ria Jain (rjain014@ucla.edu); UC Merced Phil Coba (pcoba@ucmerced.edu); UC Riverside Faiza Zahid (fzahi001@ucr.edu); UC San Diego Krystl Fabella (kfabella12@gmail.com); UC Santa Barbara Siavash Zohoori (zohoori.siavash@gmail.com); UC Santa Cruz Guillermo Rogel (suavpe@ucsc.edu).

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