



## BEING WELL TOGETHER

### ATTENDANCE

Faculty: Ting-Yu Chen, Byron Jones, Bronwen Landless, Stephanie Standerfer, Garrick Zoeter

Students: Cara (dance), Erica (musical theatre), John (technical theatre), Julia (music education), Roxy (acting), Nicole (music therapy)

Question 1: What do you think is most exciting or important about this initiative for conservatory students?

- Student 3: That faculty are excited to change the culture.
- Student 1: That people care about this, because I didn't know until now.
- Student 3: That you have already discussed a nutritionist and mental health professional, that it is already in the works.

Question 2: What do you think really needs to be included in this initiative for it to have powerful impact on enrolled students?

- Faculty member: Moving Health Issues for Artists class and Movement for Musicians class to first semester freshman year for everyone (change to Movement for Everyone/the Academic and Health Issues for Everyone/the Academic); those classes were helpful but would be more helpful earlier in the degree
- Student 1: We need a professional to work with people like me, maybe one who can diagnose mental illness. We need resources and definite people to talk to who have counseling in their job description. We also need trained faculty, because being in this school is very anxiety inducing. This could possibly save lives.
- Student 1: Professor nominations for student mentors. I have been lucky to be assigned mentors who are well versed in mental health. Possibly train students. Maybe create a work study position who is trained in verbal counseling by a professional psychologist. Maybe psychology or music therapy majors?
- We need a person who is trained in mental health who works here only with conservatory students. That is super important; what we have now is not adequate.
- Student 1: Educate teachers about common trigger warnings. Teach everyone about anxiety and depression (the main two that you see), and teach them what to do about things like that.
- Student 2: Dancers are worried about their bodies. We need nutrition information besides what we find in our own research. Musicians as well.
- Student 1: I have a service dog. Maybe we could get a hypoallergenic therapy dog for the school?
- Faculty member: There is something called the Barzinci Project in Bosnia and Malaysia that involves student volunteerism. It focuses on moving beyond "I am not well, I need therapy" to "I am not well, but I know that I can still contribute to the world, and I can feel self-worth and do better." We need to think about therapy, but also focus on resilience so that we can get back up and do what we do.
- Student 1: I have learned to pay it forward; that is something to educate us with: once you get past your own demons, help others with theirs. In therapy, they say "This is only half of it, you need to go out and help others now."
- Student 3: We need to bring that awareness of mental health into the communities of the conservatory. There is stigma about mental health from a lot of people around campus; we need to start making it more a regular conversation.
- Student 1: We need professors who are passionate, who offers office hours and meeting times to talk about personal issues, whose doors are always open.
- Student 4: All conservatory majors have Wednesdays at 3 p.m. open besides performance forum. When we do not have performance forum, we could have conversations about mental health or split into smaller groups.
- Student 5: We could have a mental health training, which would look something like Safe Zone training. It could encompass recognizing signs of mental illness or issues in oneself and others, knowing how to handle certain situations, and teaching all of the concerns that we have mentioned thus far. We could have the training be mandatory for core classes, offer the training outside of class also, and offer it frequently throughout the year to everyone. Also with destigmatizing mental illness and getting help, it needs to start with professors. Students see how professors act and talk, and they learn. SU has done a successful job destigmatizing the need for peer tutoring – at other schools, students who have tutors might be judged or looked down upon. If professors talk about seeing a mental health professional like they talk about seeing a tutor, a lot of the stigma surrounding mental health would dissolve.



Question 3: What are the things that could make this initiative especially attractive to high school seniors who are thinking of applying to our conservatory?

- Faculty member: Stressing to incoming students that well-being is something that we care about here.
- Student 3: Going into freshman year, we could have a meeting with each major, or maybe a performance forum to get to know the mental health scene and meet the campus mental health professional.
- Student 2: If we have a health care provider with knowledge of performing arts, we could have them come into different classes and learn the students.
- Faculty member: Art can be a meaningful and powerful way to challenge mental illness, body image struggles, etc. We need to teach how to use art creatively for mental health healing.

Question 4: What are you most concerned about when it comes to this initiative?

- Student 1: People with certain mental health issues do not go to social events that are built to help them, because they are built as social events. People like this are labeled as lazy, and not treated fairly. The rigor of the curriculum is not a problem for me, but I have anxiety just being in a classroom. We need to do things in person, most likely privately.
- Student 2: There is the Not-Just-for-Women's Center, where students listen. But it is not helpful when the center is only open during business hours. Mental health issues rise at all hours of the day. Maybe it might be more comfortable to talk to peers.
- Student 5: I have seen students have breakdowns and professors have no idea what to do. We do not recognize our own signs or friends' signs of mental health issues; some students think they know how to help but they do not help much.
- Student 1: Students do not feel comfortable telling teachers about trigger warnings, and professors do not give trigger warnings normally.
- Student 1: If professors make fun of the counseling center, it shames the students who need it.