

To: VPSA
Office Held: SGA
Issue: Staff Shortage – Darija Counselor

Problem Statement:

According to the Health Services Survey done by the SGA on January 14th, 2020, one of the main recognized issues is the shortage of staff within the Mental Health Services. First of all, there is no counselor that can speak Darija, which is a barrier stopping many students from seeking help, as they may not be comfortable expressing their feelings in a foreign language, or do not feel that they will be understood by a person with a different cultural background. This issue has previously been recognized by the Mental Health Services, the Health Center Manager as well as the previous SGA report.

Secondly, there is the issue of the unavailability, on campus, of AUI's sole psychiatrist. The Mental Health Services solely have one psychiatrist who is only available on campus for one afternoon every week. This issue has been brought to our attention by the two departments (Mental Health Services and Health Center) and further emphasized by the results of the Health Services Survey.

Knowing that mental health support can have a great effect on student's academic life and overall performance, the Mental Health and Counseling services, as a department, is one of the pillars that support the university in the achievement of its vision.

Current Situation:

Currently, the Mental Health Services include 3 counselors and 1 psychiatrist (only present one afternoon a week). The counselors speak either/ or both French and English and are all foreigners. They not only take care of their appointments with their patients, but also teach, manage workshops and events, take care of clerical work (scheduling appointments, making reports...) and work at ASI. They are already overworked as it is, more so with work that is not necessarily counseling. Consequently, seeing as there are more and more requests for appointments that are not balanced by less work for the counselors, counselors have no choice but to wait-list patients.

The psychiatrist is only present one afternoon a week, independently of emergency situations which are then relegated to either one of the counselors or to the Health Center's physicians. Even outside of such cases, considering the time of availability on campus in comparison to the number of students seeking mental help, there cannot possibly be a thorough examination or follow up before and after patients are given their medication. This also means that in a case the Psychiatrist cannot make it, patients must wait until the following week while in possession of or in need of medication that only the Psychiatrist can provide and oversee.

Suggested Policy:

Based on the set context, we suggest that two openings for jobs be put into the Mental Health Services; one for a counselor that can speak Darija and another for a psychiatrist that can be present on campus at least two days a week. This suggestion is done with the support of Mental Health Services and the Health Center Manager.

On another note, there is a need for a new staff member that can deal with administrative and clerical work, a position that can either be filled by a new full-time staff member or a part-timer.

In either situation, this will need a better organization, or an increase of the space allocated to the Mental Health Services. As for the moment, they are given rooms that are also used for other purposes which stands in the way of the patients' most basic right to privacy and non-interruption. (example: Health Center Pharmacy that is also an office for one of the counselors).

Major Obstacles of Implementation:

It has come to our understanding that the people suggested by the HR department for the filling of these opening were not qualified enough or would not want to move to Ifrane. In that sense, perhaps more effort should be put in choosing people who can come to Ifrane, or commute for a couple of days a week, are qualified and can speak Darija.