

A Community that Cares Task Force Recommendations- Executive Summary

In February of 2017, Dr. Vistasp Karbhari convened a group to consider how best to create a culture of caring and support on the University of Texas at Arlington campus. The task force, composed of faculty, staff, and students were tasked with assessing the current programs available to assist students and aid in their ability to overcome challenges, conducting research and benchmarking to determine best programming models and practices to address student needs and finally to recommend changes to existing programs and propose new programming.

TASK FORCE STRUCTURE

At the start of the process, the Task Force formed three committees:

- **Current Practices/Current Resource Gaps**
- **Best Practices: Other Universities and Literature**
- **Data Gathering: What we have and what we need**

Each committee created sub-groups as needed to address the charge of the committee within the Task Force. The full report is the accumulation and recording of the output of the committee and included a review of the relevant literature, an examination of current practices of peer and aspirational universities, an assessment of current programming, and an evaluation of data available regarding the services provided on campus. Below is an executive summary of the final task force recommendations.

TASK FORCE FOCUS

As the committee considered the literature, benchmarking data and UTA data we considered areas of support initiatives to focus our University efforts on in order to adequately address the growing needs of our students. These areas are:

- Disability
- Food Insecurity
- Housing/Shelter
- Financial
- Intimate Partner/Sexual Violence
- Health & Wellbeing
- Childcare
- Crisis/Emergency Response

Additionally, the task force considered the unique needs of veterans, LGBTQ, Women, International Students and undocumented students in our recommendations. The task force however recognizes that each of these unique populations has a program or task force on campus exploring the specific needs of these populations and thus directed recommendations specific to each of these populations are not included in this report.

OVERVIEW OF KEY TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Basic Needs

The task force identified basic needs that when unmet significantly impact a student's capability to be successful in their academic pursuits. The task force made several recommendations that are already fully implemented.

- Shelter- The task force recommended and has secured a 2 bedroom on-campus apartment that can be used to place up to 4 individuals needing emergency relocation. This space can be used for temporary hardship, as a relocation for domestic violence situations or as a temporary solution to a longer-term situation to afford the University time to work with the student to identify a long-term solution.
- Food insecurity- The task force recommended a number of solutions to students facing food insecurity and in partnership with Chartwell's Food Service, the Tri-C organization and Panera Bread have developed and implemented a number of short term and long-term responses to students facing food insecurity.
- Financial Emergency- The task force recommended the continued growth and support of the University's emergency assistance fund with a specific focus on support for those needing textbooks, students who are Veterans and students with medical emergencies.

Sexual Assault Prevention & Education Center (SAPEC)

The task force recommends the creation of a comprehensive Sexual Assault Prevention and Education Center. The SAPEC will house a Program Coordinator, a Confidential Advocate, Peer Educators and Peer Advocates. In addition, the task force would recommend bringing the Title IX coordinator as space allows to facilitate the support and accommodations for reporting students. This synergy of staff will facilitate more outreach programming, prevention education and awareness campaigns as well as focused training regarding key topics that impact the safety and security of our students as it related to interpersonal violence.

In addition, we have added a grant-funded victim's assistance program through the police department which provides for a dedicated crime victims' advocates to be available to meet with students who have been victims of any form of interpersonal or violent crimes. These advocates working hand in hand with the staff of the SAPEC will provide the highest level of response to students.

Faculty and Staff Training

Despite an abundance of support service and resources available to students the limited knowledge of faculty and staff both in how to respond to students in crisis as well as where to send them to seek support is creating a void in students knowing about services and support available to them.

The task force has recommended the creation of a comprehensive and broad sweeping education and marketing campaign to get current faculty and staff up to speed on resources and services. Additionally, we plan to review the employee orientation and compliance program to identify ways to adequately

train incoming faculty and staff about the services and resources. Further, departments on campus should identify a leader who has a higher level of training so that when they are unaware of where to go or how to respond to a student there is a colleague in close proximity who can advise them on the appropriate protocol.

Expansion of Mental Health Services

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) program counseling and psychiatry should both be expanded to adequately support the growing mental health needs of our students which will require the creation of adequate office space for these clinical providers. In the future we recommend an Integrated Wellness Facility that can serve as the location of Health Services, Counseling and Psychological Services, Health Promotions and Campus Recreation; however, the current recommendation is a relocation of services to create a “West Campus CAPS” program in the Maverick Activities Center. This location will allow easier access to students residing in the large number of west campus apartments and those in the new West Campus Residence Hall. Additionally, the expansion of the clinical staff must also take into account ways to support our online student population and those without easy access to our traditional clinical hours (8am-5pm Monday-Friday) therefore the task force supports broadening services hours in CAPS to allow for evenings and weekend scheduled appointments and walk-in accessibility.

This expansion of services will include resources, services and support for all types of interpersonal crisis. This includes the addition of a BIT case manager and other staffing in the Dean of Students area to facilitate medical withdrawals, Emergency Assistance, Crisis intervention and to manage a 24 hour CARE line (similar to the community 411 number) to provide emergency support and resource information.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

This abbreviated version of the task force recommendations provides a quick overview of a few of the areas being addressed as UTA continues to position itself as a Community that Cares. The comprehensive task force report makes recommendations for each of the areas of focus; Disability, Food Insecurity, Housing/Shelter, Financial Wellbeing, Intimate Partner/Sexual Violence, Health & Wellbeing, Childcare and Crisis/Emergency Response while also recognizing that the goal of being a community that cares is that we are nimble enough to respond to any situation or concern which has the potential to negatively impact our student population.