

## EVCP Expresso ? August 2016

August 1, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

As people who care, we have felt the pain of recent events. The news assaults us at a disturbing rate with tragic outbursts of violence and strife both domestic and international. It hits us close to home in many ways and to various degrees, and our hearts go out to the victims of the tragedies as well as to affected communities. At times like these, it's important for us to remember that we are a community and not alone.

In this month's *Expresso*, I highlight some key campus support and care programs as well as considerations we make to communicate with compassion and hope:

- Help is here: Time-out for faculty and staff
- #It'sOkayTo: How are our students?
- To send or not to send? Communicating about trauma and crises

I am eager to hear your thoughts, learn how you are coping, and share any tips you may have for others. As always, you can reach me at [ExecutiveViceChancellor@ucsf.edu](mailto:ExecutiveViceChancellor@ucsf.edu) <sup>[1]</sup>.

In peace and kindness,

Dan

### Help is here: Time-out for faculty and staff

Pride, embarrassment, denial, shame, stigma?reasons people do not seek professional assistance even during times of stress and trauma. Do you know anyone who needs help but is resisting because of "what it might look like"? Andrew Parker, PhD, the leader of UCSF's Faculty and Staff Assistance Program <sup>[2]</sup> (FSAP), is grateful that most of us in California don't have the fear or skepticism of mental health services that other places may still harbor.

Thankfully, most major employers, including universities, offer an employee assistance program, a place where people can get support dealing with personal and work-related issues. At UCSF, that's FSAP, a phenomenal, free, completely confidential program that can help you deal with whatever stumbling block life puts in your path.

People need to know, first and foremost, that FSAP is "stricter than HIPAA in confidentiality," Andrew says. "We won't even disclose that we've seen someone, let alone what they talked about." Secondly, there is no shame or stigma in seeking counseling.

Andrew says the crises in the news of late take an emotional toll on people. "It certainly

promotes a greater sense of anxiety and depression," he says. Sometimes people don't even realize how much events like those we've seen lately can impact their work performance or their home life. That represents what he calls "a normal reaction to an abnormal situation." He encourages people to use FSAP whenever something may be affecting them beyond their ability to cope well with it on their own. Typically, it's just someone feeling over-stressed dealing with everyday life, rather than a diagnosable condition. It often helps to come and talk to a counselor about it.

One of the beautiful things about UCSF is the national and worldwide representation among our faculty, staff, students, and trainees. However, that also makes it tough for those of us here in the Bay Area to be far away from family and friends who are directly affected during difficult times. For instance, after the police shootings in Dallas last month, which followed on the heels of the police shooting deaths of two black men, Andrew was immediately in touch with our UCSF campus police officers, who took the news rather hard. He checked in to see how everyone was doing, and he praised our force's professionalism. This was in addition, of course, to the services provided to many others in the UCSF community who have been struggling with how to deal with recent events.

FSAP is a small but mighty team of six counselors serving 23,000 faculty and staff employees as well as residents and postdocs. They've done a lot of outreach, and more people are using their services. In addition to counseling, they train managers, provide conflict resolution services to workplace issues, facilitate sometimes-difficult group discussions, and run retreats.

I've heard that some employees would have appreciated the opportunity to talk with their colleagues after the most recent events, and managers need to recognize this. FSAP is an effective resource for managers, both in terms of training them to identify and facilitate difficult situations. If a manager sees an employee who seems to be struggling, "it never hurts to be proactive and consult us," Andrew says. "We may even tell you that you have nothing to worry about." Our own Learning & Organization Development website offers a spectrum of free online wellness classes through Skillsoft [3] that also could be helpful to managers.

A good leader, he says, is "someone who is in tune with their folks, who keeps a finger on the pulse of people who report to them, who provides opportunities for people to talk." In situations where distrust has taken hold, FSAP can help bridge the gap.

FSAP's main office is at Laurel Heights, and it also has a satellite office in the Mission Center Building at 15th and Folsom Streets, so it's a short shuttle ride away from any of our offices and labs. I'll give you that link to FSAP again [2].

Need something more immediate and readily accessible? A recently posted story on UCSF.edu, "RX to Reduce Stress at Work [4]," includes a 90-second stress relief exercise—it's embedded, so just scroll down and you'll see it. Sometimes, it's just a matter of breathing.

[back to top](#)

## **#It'sOkayTo: How are our students?**

As faculty, educators, and PIs, we have the critical responsibility for the well-being of our

students. I just wrote about taking care of ourselves, and now I'm going to focus on our collective and individual obligation to take care of our future health care providers, educators, and scientists.

Student Health and Counseling Services <sup>[5]</sup> (SHCS) gives students a place to get assistance for the often unique set of pressures in their lives. SHCS offers both primary care and mental health counseling and advocates support for students, who often feel lost in the shuffle. Twenty percent of students use the mental health services, one of the highest rates in the UC system, says Susan Rosen, MD, Assistant Vice Chancellor and Executive Director of SHCS. This indicates the tremendous strains on many UCSF students. "It's not just academic stress," she says. "It can be relationships, family, finances." And of course world events.

The number of students accessing mental health services at SHCS has grown 48% in the last five years, from 380 in 2010 to 580 in 2015. Part of the growth may be due to increased stress, but it may also be due to improved outreach. More people simply know about the program. UCSF has many students from around the world who might have different perspectives about how to approach mental health. SHCS works hard to be open and sensitive to the different cultural backgrounds. Many cultures are not as open to mental health services, and we need to encourage students to learn to talk about themselves as a means of coping, especially when far from home.

SHCS has done fantastic work in de-stigmatizing mental health counseling. I'm sure you've seen the #It'sOkayTo <sup>[6]</sup> posters around campus; you may even have seen my smiling mug on one of them, saying, "It's okay to respectfully decline requests for your time when they conflict with priorities outside of work. None of us are always as important as our professional colleagues suggest!"

The idea behind the campaign, according to Susan, is to let students know that it is okay to nourish themselves and their mental health. It has a secondary benefit of letting their faculty (i.e., us) know that, too.

When violent events make news, like the shootings in Orlando, or Minneapolis, or Baton Rouge, or Dallas, or Nice, "it's normal to have lots of different reactions," Susan says. "I also think the world is more stressful," she says. I agree with Susan. It's faster-paced. We're constantly inundated with seemingly urgent updates and commentary in the ever-present media.

If you are concerned about a student, send the individual straight to SHCS—its doors are open for walk-ins if students feel a need to talk.

Remember, it's not always easy to spot someone in distress. In addition to offering many programs for students, SHCS, like FSAP (described in the story above), also serves as a consultant to faculty and staff, encouraging them to call to seek advice on working with students going through tough times. "Often they don't know how to approach a student," Susan says. Even when SHCS sees a primary care patient, they'll ask, "How are things going?" A rash, or heartburn, or a migraine might be a sign of stress. In addition, Susan says, "We always send a mental health counselor to student events, to say, 'We're here. This is not just you, alone.' Faculty and staff don't want to assume something, invade their privacy, or embarrass them. Sometimes it's as simple as asking, 'How are you doing?' It's creating a culture of caring."

SHCS maintains offices at Parnassus Heights (tucked in the parking garage below the Millberry Union?watch this funny video [7] to learn how to find them) and in the Rutter Center at Mission Bay. Again, I'll repeat the link, so you can get in touch with SHCS [5].

Over time (especially with the passage of lots of time), and in an environment like ours, it's easy to forget the enormous pressure to succeed that our students experience, and how easy it can be to hide the feelings of being completely overwhelmed, insecure, or an outright failure. It's up to us to model healthy behaviors and best practices. And please err on the side of reaching out to students and letting them know you are there to help them.

back to top

## **To send or not to send? Communicating about trauma and crises**

Perhaps you saw the messages Chancellor Sam Hawgood sent in the last two months, one about the tragedy in Orlando [8] in June, and another [9] in July about the further challenges posed by the shootings of black men in Minneapolis and Baton Rouge, followed by the fatal assault on the Dallas Police. My colleague, Barbara French, the vice chancellor for Strategic Communications and University Relations, offered to shed some light on how we decide when to send such messages and what gets said in them.

The decision to send these messages is made here at UCSF and does not come from the larger UC system. Typically, four of us who report to the Chancellor try to keep our ears to the ground. Barb, Associate Chancellor Theresa O'Brien, Vice Chancellor of Diversity and Outreach Renee Navarro, and I will convene. "One of us will say, "I think this rises to the occasion," or "I'm getting calls," Barb says. "Something to indicate an incident has risen to the level of impacting our community."

We started using these messages as a response to natural disasters around the world, such as the earthquake in Nepal and the typhoon in the Philippines. Those not only affected some members of our community, which is global in nature, but they also called for a health care response, a call answered by many from UCSF. And now, while there are days when the entire world is undergoing convulsions of grief and despair?war, violence, and injustice?we try to be judicious about sending enterprise-wide email. "You don't want a message every day," Barb says. "You want it to be of real value to our community; to have impact and importance."

"Because we're a university, we need to create forums and healthy ways to communicate about the events outside our walls," Barb says. "But the decision whether to reach out is not always easy. Everything in the world affects members of the UCSF community. When does UCSF respond? It's more an art than a science." For example, following the events of a couple weeks ago, the Black Caucus at UCSF and the Offices of the Chancellor, Diversity and Outreach, and my office held a town hall, "Healing in Challenging Times." It was an evening of open hearts, truth-telling, and commitment to be a part of the change we desire, and I am glad we made the time and space available to all who had a need to come together.

Often we use the messages to remind people of the counseling services available. We also

use them to remind people to sign up for WarnMe [10], a service organized by our police department that can alert you to something happening that may impact safety at a certain part of our campus. For instance, over the past several weeks, WarnMe texts and emails went out regarding incidents at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and on our Parnassus campus.

?Sometimes we use these as opportunities to remind people how UCSF tries to keep us safe,? Barb says. ?At times like this, we want you to know that you?re part of the UCSF community and, if you?ve been touched by something, you shouldn?t feel that nobody is interested.?

Sometimes it?s a catch-22. On July 15, the Emergency Operations Command leadership sent a university-wide email advising caution due to a potential for violence. Several members of our community responded that the message fed into the negativity and fear, but our safety was the main focus. What if something happened and nothing was sent?

We will continue to try and do our best in striking the right balance between reminding one another of the impact of world events on our community and not inundating you with messages. How I look forward to the day when such messages are strikingly rare and unexpected.

back to top

## Dan?s Tip of the Month



If you want or need a break from all the global turmoil and

you like love stories that include inventive music, the innocence and headstrong passion of youth, and enchanting character development, be sure to check out **Sing Street** (still showing at some theaters and available on iTunes [11]). Simply delightful! And if you want more in a similar vein from the (I think) brilliant director John Carney, take in **Once** as well (also available on iTunes

[12]).

back to top

## Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor & Provost

513 Parnassus Ave, Medical Sciences  
San Francisco, CA 94143

### Connect With Us!

TwitterFacebook

Contact Us  
About Us  
UCSF Main Site

© 2020 The Regents of the University of California

---

**Source URL:** <https://evcprovost.ucsf.edu/evcp-expresso/201608>

#### Links

- [1] <mailto:ExecutiveViceChancellor@ucsf.edu>
- [2] <https://hr.ucsf.edu/hr.php?org=c&AT=cm&S=Faculty+and+Staff+Assistance>
- [3] <http://learning.ucsf.edu/skillsoft>
- [4] <https://www.ucsf.edu/news/2016/07/403536/ucsf-develops-program-help-san-francisco-workers-deal-stress-job>
- [5] <https://studenthealth.ucsf.edu/>
- [6] <http://studenthealth.ucsf.edu/mentalhealthawareness2016>
- [7] <http://studenthealth.ucsf.edu/location-directions-hours>
- [8] <https://chancellor.ucsf.edu/blog/tragedy-orlando>
- [9] <https://chancellor.ucsf.edu/blog/healing-challenging-times>
- [10] <https://warnme2.ucsf.edu/>
- [11] <https://itunes.apple.com/us/movie/sing-street/id1098886505>
- [12] <https://itunes.apple.com/us/movie/once/id270012018>