

## To Parents of UW Students

The loss of two UW students in the last week has deeply saddened our university community. I'm reaching out to parents of current students to inform you of the support programs and services available to your students and to the broader UW community. We also want to share some of our communication and responses. The UW Counseling Center is open Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., and is prepared to support all students. Students can also call an after-hours crisis counselor at (307) 766-8989 or Peak Wellness Center at (307) 745-8915. The Dean of Students Office, (307) 766-3296, is available for any emotional or academic assistance students may need. UW employees may seek assistance through the Employee Assistance Program -- specifically, Mines & Associates at (800) 873-7138.

As part of the University of Wyoming Lifesavers Initiative, led by Dr. Keith Evashevski, Director of the University Counseling Center, UW has offered Gatekeepers trainings since 2006. Gatekeepers promotes awareness and builds communication skills for participants to help them talk with and support individuals who are distressed. An average of approximately 200 people (UW students, staff, faculty, and Laramie community members) a year have participated in these trainings. A training was held today from 9-11a.m. for students, faculty and staff. Gatekeepers training is also available to parents.

The Lifesavers Coalition is another important aspect of our prevention and wellness efforts. The coalition meets regularly and is comprised of staff, faculty, students, and community members. Our coalition has benefited from local and state partnerships who have provided additional trainings in Mental Health First Aid, QPR, and ASSIST.

We provide Gatekeepers training to many of our employees and student staff including the residence hall assistants. Providing this training and awareness efforts, around suicide prevention and support, are part of our core services. In addition, our University Counseling Center distributes thousands of suicide prevention and support folders on campus. These resources being readily available to faculty and staff are critical to referrals to the Dean of Students, the Counseling Center, welfare checks with the University Police Department and admission of students to Ivinson Memorial Hospital when needed and providing the necessary follow-up. Our ongoing efforts of our Student Concern Team, chaired by the Dean of Students, Sean Blackburn are also essential to the welfare of students in our community.

In the past week, our efforts have focused on support for the families who lost their children and for students and the university community. We have also responded to parent questions. The UW Police Department, Residence Life, University Communication, Academic Affairs, University Counseling Center and the Dean of Students have been working closely to support the families and to offer services to UW students, faculty and staff.

President McGinity, Vice President for Academic Affairs Jones, Dean of Students Sean Blackburn and I have all sent communications to the university community and media that has focused upon counseling support available. (See below.) The faculty, staff and student list serves have had communication about counseling support available along with posting from our University Counseling Center. Many faculty have started conversations in the classroom to talk about where support is available too. Numerous

counseling sessions have been held in the residence halls with students and with staff. Faculty members have also been part of sessions. Individual appointments in the University Counseling Center and the other two counseling units on campus continue. Floor meetings were held last week on all floors of the residence halls, and the residence hall assistants are offering additional support in conjunction with the Counseling Center. Thankfully, we have also had the support of Peak Wellness Center in Laramie, our Employee Assistance Program, and we can call on our Psychology Clinic and Counselor Education Clinics when needed.

Students in the residence halls with a student organization held a “Walk in Prayer” on Thursday night. This week there was a “Love is Louder” initiative, part of national dialogue, occurring on Simpson Plaza on campus. There will be pet therapy on campus on Wednesday and Thursday this week and posters are in the Union; Coe Library and the Residence Halls, as a reminder of services and counseling outreach and services will continue.

I can’t begin to share the enormity of our sadness in the loss of our two students. Please don’t hesitate to email me directly or call my direct line below if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

*Sara Axelson  
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