**Student Assistance Proposal 2015 (summer)**

**Departmental Overview:**

During the course of the past several years, student deaths, high profile lawsuits, and events such as those at Virginia Tech, Northern Illinois, Rutgers University, and Arizona have increased the emphasis being placed on institutions of higher education to ensure that students in distress are being recognized and supported on today’s college campuses. Research has shown that the responsibility for this task should be expanded to the entire campus community. Further, the need to establish a central localized office to oversee this effort has been adopted on a national level. The role of such an office is to provide appropriate information and coordinate referral and support services necessary to assist students individually and to promote a safe campus environment. Syracuse University has embraced this new model by establishing the Office of Student Assistance (SA). The next necessary step is to adequately equip the office in an effort to maintain and improve its effectiveness.

Our own campus is experiencing a time of great change and opportunity for supporting all students. It is crucial that our University dedicate resources to support the development and well-being of the whole student.

…. “student success is a unifying, comprehensive concept that links academic and student affairs educators in the education and transformative preparation of the whole student. The desired student learning outcomes cannot be achieved in the classroom alone – nor without the classroom; similarly, they cannot be achieved through experiential learning outside the classroom alone – nor without those opportunities. The health and well-being of students – from the broadest perspective – contribute to, and, indeed, make possible student success. Health creates capacity; students whose health status is positive and flourishing have greater ability and readiness to learn and engage fully in all meaningful educational experiences inside and outside the classroom.”

-Daniel C. Silverman, MD, MPA, Ric Underhile, PhD, Richard P. Keeling, MD, Keeling & Associates. “Student Health Reconsidered: A Radical Proposal for Thinking Differently About Health Related Programs and Services for Students.” Spectrum (June 2008)

The Office of Student Assistance views “distress” broadly and addresses life issues, serves as a centralized triage office and information hub for students, staff, faculty, and parents, and provides case management to students in distress and crisis. In this role, SA pinpoints and coordinates institutional and community support for distressed students. SA investigates and responds to reported concerns of any student and provides ongoing case management support as well as referrals to support services within the University and off campus community agencies. SA provides specific services to oversee the exit and re-entry process for students leaving the University for reasons related to physical and/or psychological wellbeing. SA outreaches to students who are alleged victims of crimes, who have faced significant illness or injury, personal loss, and those who have displayed issues related to mental health including alcohol and drug abuse. In addition, SA provides students involved in the conduct process access to procedural advisors and, in collaboration with the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, oversees that process on behalf of the University. SA in collaboration with the ICC portfolio, often assumes the role of providing assistance and support to students who are victims of bias related incidents. SA provides absence notifications to schools and colleges on behalf of students and serves as a critical link between Academic and Student Affairs.

In addition to the above, Title IX lawsuits and concerns have increased the attention being placed on institutions for sexual assault victims, alleged perpetrators, and the University response to known incidents. Most recently SA has taken on supporting victims as well as alleged offenders of sexual and relationship violence. In collaboration with the Counseling Center, we are now responsible for providing interim relief and ongoing advocacy support to student survivors. We accompany students to meetings with DPS, Title IX Coordinator, Family Court, the DAs office, etc. We are often managing these cases for the University ensuring that all support options are offered and the University response protocols are followed. Additionally, SA counsels the alleged perpetrator(s) in these cases. We are tasked with supporting the students through conduct and University processes, accompanying students to meetings with officials, providing accommodations, support, etc. During the 2014-2015 year, **over 95 student cases required services from the Office of Student Assistant with issues related to Title IX**, **sexual assault, and relationship violence**. While we are not currently tasked to do so we are often holding the case information and ensuring that the University processes are working correctly and students are as well prepared as possible. With pending legislation such as Enough is Enough the requirements of the University will only expand.

The impact of the Office of Student Assistance is great and the service that we provide to the University community is crucial. We provide a centralized support resource available to all students: part-time, full-time, undergraduate, and graduate as well as their families. We provide consultation to staff, faculty, and administration regarding students in distress and high risk situations. Our services enhance the well-being and the safety of the entire University community.

**Departmental Status and Challenge:**

Student Assistance acts as the centralized triage support center for the entire University both graduate and undergraduate, full and part time, international and domestic students and is currently operating with three full time staff members. The Director has limited ability to act as a case manager due to increasing administrative roles and responsibilities. Approximately 15% of the students we see are graduate level students and approximately 11% are international students. The numbers of students seeking services from SA is dramatically on the rise. **The total number of clients supported by SA has increased 47% from Spring ’14 to Fall ’14. The total number of appointments has increased 44 % for the same time period. During the ’14-’15 year 2,301 students received services from the office. That total continues to climb each year. In addition, as a result of the work done by SA to increase our visibility, there are more students, faculty and staff who have the knowledge of and the need for the services that SA provides. This directly threatens the viability and effectiveness of SA, given its current resources. In order to effectively serve the campus community, it is imperative that SA receives additional resources immediately. Additional, more proactive prevention efforts are needed to enhance the health and wellness of students and in turn their academic and global success. At this time we are unable to provide those critical services.**

In order to meet the changing needs and increased demand as outline above, it is essential that SA’s request for additional staffing be seriously considered and granted. Adoption of this proposal is seen as mission critical in order to meet the increasing needs of the University community, our students and their families, to upgrade our comprehensive prevention efforts, and to strengthen our outreach support to individual students and the University community as a whole.

**Proposal and Costs:**

* **XXXXX**

**Proposed Outcomes:**

* **Ability to ensure compliance with Title IX regulations and provide appropriate support to victims of sexual and relationship violence as well as students accused of violations of sexual and relationship violence.**
* **A case manager dedicated to each individual school/college to create a more direct link between Student Assistance and the Academic units.**
* **Enhanced support services and retention efforts for International and Graduate student populations. *Both of which have been identified as critical by The General Body as well as several of the Chancellor’s Work Groups.***
* **Provide timely and sufficient appointments and follow up for all students and families seeking services within Student Assistance.**
* **More timely response to concerns from faculty and staff.**
* **Enhancement of collaborations with academic advisors, Academic Support Offices, and faculty to enhance and streamline academic advisement processes and services to students. *Again, this has been identified as critical to The General Body and several of the Chancellor’s Work Groups.***
* Continuation of service to the Health and Wellness portfolio, The Division of Student Affairs and the University through membership on teams and committees as requested.
* Increased collaborative efforts within and outside of the Health and Wellness portfolio to further develop and implement prevention and education presentations for the University community.
* Increased collaboration between the University and local hospitals, health care providers, and other support services.
* Increased participation on the national level by contributing expertise and scholarship regarding the evolving role of case management and the Behavioral Consultation Committee.