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## Counseling interns to provide free services for all Georgia Southern University members through Summer Term A

April 22, 2020

All across the nation and world, individuals are stepping up to do their part and help each other during a global pandemic. Whether it's making face masks for health care workers or donating to local shelters for those needing supplies, people are making a difference.

At Georgia Southern University, students just weeks away from completing their degrees in counselor education have volunteered to help their University members during this time of need. Offering free additional counseling services to all Georgia Southern faculty, staff and students, the counseling interns are prepared and ready to help.

"Counselors help their community," said Pamela Wells, Ph.D., LPC, associate professor of counselor education, "and Georgia Southern is their community. Even though Georgia Southern students may be scattered right now, we are all still one community, and we recognize that our community may need some additional support right now."

While the University's Counseling Center continues to offer student services at a distance, Executive Director Jodi Caldwell, Ph.D., explained that research shows that times like these can cause an increase in need for consultation.

"There are many media outlets and research studies being cited that speak to the increased levels of emotional distress due to rapidly changing environments, self-isolation, and concern regarding what the future looks like given the COVID-19 situation," said Caldwell.

Where Caldwell says the University is currently lacking is faculty and staff services.

"We do not have the resources to provide on-going counseling to faculty and staff," she said. "That is why I think the idea of creating on-line support groups for faculty and staff, moderated by therapists is wonderful. While it will allow the graduate student therapists the opportunity to complete the clinical hours that they need for graduation, and ultimately licensure, it will also provide a forum of connection, understanding and community that faculty and staff may not be feeling in this necessary time of social distancing. I think it is a win-win for everyone."

Services will be completed using telehealth procedures utilizing the secure connections via Google Suite.

"The interns have taken continuing education on telemental health, and they are looking forward to working with a new modality," said Wells.

Services to be offered will include one-on-one counseling sessions for any Georgia Southern student that is residing in Georgia. *Georgia residency or being within the state of Georgia while being counseled is a requirement of the state's counselor licensure.*

"While we are only able to provide counseling services to students who are physically in Georgia, we will also help students outside of Georgia find low/no cost resources in their area," said Wells.

Consultation for faculty and staff members of the University is not restricted by residency.

“Faculty and staff may have questions about mental health, but also are seeking information on how to best support students during this quarantine life,” said Wells. “They can request a consultation with a counselor-in-training, and we can help.”

Internally to the College of Education, which houses the master’s of counselor education program, the program is also currently working to provide psychoeducational group sessions to help the College team connect and cope with current work and non-work related tensions.

Any student in the Georgia Southern community who would like to receive services, please complete the following forms: (1) [Participant Intake Form](#) and (2) [Participant Informed Consent](#).

Faculty and staff can contact Wells to set up a consultation by emailing her ([pwells@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:pwells@georgiasouthern.edu)) with the word “Consultation” in the subject line.

Counseling appointments will be offered through the end of Summer Term A, June 18.

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