

Oregon College and University Suicide Prevention Project (OCUSPP)
Progress Report
July 2011 – June 2012

OVERVIEW AND HIGHLIGHTS

OCUSPP exists to facilitate and enhance the suicide prevention work that is occurring on Oregon's college and university campuses. We do this by funneling research findings, expert advice and "best practices" to our member campuses. We also learn from one another's efforts, and we serve as a consultation group for the membership.

As part of our effort to increase our competence in working with at-risk populations, this past year we prioritized reaching out to the student veteran's community. To this end, we held a joint meeting between OCUSPP and Veterans Administration staff. The meeting was well attended and there was productive exchange of information and ideas.

We were saddened by several student and faculty suicides this past year. While these losses were very tragic, they seemed to generate interest in suicide prevention by faculty and staff at the member institutions. Hopefully, the inroads we were able to make in the departments touched by suicide will help us prevent others from taking their own lives.

OCUSPP PRIORITIES

To help us better serve student veterans, we held a joint meeting with Veterans Administration staff from Portland and Southern Oregon. The meeting was also attended by student veteran's liaison staff from Oregon State University and the University of Oregon. We discussed our respective suicide prevention efforts and programs. VA staff explained how students can best move through the bureaucracy to access veterans benefits and receive mental health services. They also described various treatment programs available to student veterans. Several OCUSPP campuses already were making use of the excellent [VA Safety Plan](#), adapting it for campus use.

Another priority was to enhance the public profile of the organization via our website. In the spring, we hired a web designer who created an entirely [new site](#) that is attractive and very functional. Our website is primarily geared for OCUSPP members and professionals on other campuses involved in suicide prevention. Plans are in the works to keep the site updated with OCUSPP initiatives and suicide prevention events.

RESEARCH

Four OCUSPP campuses participated in the [National Research Consortium](#) study of college student coping with stress and suicide. The study was designed to explore why some students become suicidal during stressful periods and emotional crises and others do not. Over 26,000 students nationwide and over 1,400 students from consortium campuses participated in the study. In the spring of 2012, we held a teleconference to determine our research questions and draw up an analysis plan. Unfortunately, the person who had offered to analyze the data for us left Oregon. Therefore, the data will be analyzed and presented to our respective institutions in 2012-13.

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WEAPONS BAN

Since its inception in 2005, OCUSPP has been concerned with reducing access to the means for suicide. This is because suicide is often an impulsive act — especially in college-aged youth. Most people who attempt suicide do so with ambivalence. Strong evidence exists that measures which make it harder to take one's own life reduce the likelihood of suicide. (For discussion and research on this topic see [Means Matters](#) at Harvard University.)

In September 2011, the Oregon Court of Appeals overturned the OUS ban on bringing concealed weapons to campus. An attempt in the Oregon legislature to institute a campus weapons ban also failed. OCUSPP had spoken out in support of the weapons ban, since access to guns is strongly correlated with youth suicide. Although homicide gets far more media attention, suicides outnumber homicides almost two to one. Guns are the most common method used in fatal suicide attempts, and research has consistently found that the risk of suicide associated with firearms is especially high for adolescents and young adults.

Fortunately, the State Board of Higher Education the State Board of Higher Education passed a policy by unanimous vote that prohibits any person from carrying a firearm into a state university building or event. This policy will be implemented through contracts with students, employees, and those who otherwise attend campus events. OCUSPP will continue to advocate for sensible weapons policies that keep Oregon campuses safe for students.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG PROGRAMMING AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

OCUSPP was invited to participate in a SAMHSA meeting in August 2011 to discuss an “Integrated Response to Public Health Issues on College Campuses: Mental Health Promotion, Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention, and Suicide Prevention.” Groups of stakeholders were brought together in Washington, D.C., including people from health promotion, suicide prevention, and substance abuse to determine whether they were duplicating efforts and explore where more integration would be beneficial.

CAMPUS SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

During the 2011-12 academic year, OCUSPP member campuses engaged in these activities:

- Had published six news articles
- Distributed suicide prevention brochures to over 1000 faculty and staff
- Trained twelve college leaders, including as presidents, V-Ps, provosts and deans
- Provided educational seminars to 244 students
- Trained 142 resident advisors

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- Provided suicide prevention gatekeeper training to 102 faculty and staff
- Offered educational seminars to eleven faculty and staff
- Provided training to 28 health center staff and 22 counseling staff and trainees
- Offered prevention training to 400 members of the public
- Hosted Shawn Shea, M.D. to provide training in the C.A.S.E. Approach to suicide assessment for 24 counseling and health center staff
- Sent 26 faculty or staff to a suicide prevention conference or workshop.
- Attended two suicide prevention webinars
- Collaborated on the assessment and reduction of suicide means risk in residence halls, e.g., retooling windows so that they only open eight inches
- Six schools have at least one dedicated suicide prevention page and seven are connected to ULifeline
- Three schools had an active suicide prevention task force and two had groups under development
- Introduced online screening for depression and other risk factors at one school and screened 135 students in this way.
- One school launched a new credited suicide prevention class, which was taken by 25 Family and Human Service students
- Hosted visits at two schools by Kevin Hines, who survived jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge. Kevin spoke to 130 students.
- Offered QPR training to 57 house advisors
- Addressed 14 students attending a Student Veteran Success class
- Produced a “100 Reasons to Stay” video that was viewed by over 4,000 people
- Launched a poster campaign that reached 5,000 students
- Conducted a post-vention for 35 individuals after a serious suicide attempt
- Taught mental health first aid to 12 individuals

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- Implemented an online database at one school for their health/safety risk assessment team
- Held a “stomp out stigma” week which reached 200 students
- Hosted Frank Warren’s “Post Secret,” which was attended by 700 students
- Showed the film “Don’t Change the Subject” to twelve students

CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS

Lewis and Clark was active on a number of fronts to reduce the risk of suicide in our population. The College has a team of individuals who intervene when a community member's life could be at risk due to health or safety reasons — including suicide. In the fall of 2011, the College implemented a database that has helped improve the knowledge, communication and functioning of the team. Work also proceeded on the revision of the school’s involuntary administrative withdrawal policy, which is used as a last resort to protect the safety of students whose lives are in danger due to behavioral issues. Revisions to the policy were completed in summer 2012, and the policy has now been adopted by the College. Counseling Service staff were active in three additional areas: We implemented anonymous online screening for depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, eating disorders and alcohol use, so that students can self-assess whether they might benefit from meeting with a counselor. The Counseling Service also presented two gatekeeper training programs to 31 faculty. Feedback on the training was very positive. Finally, the Counseling Service was successful in lobbying for funding to expand access to on-campus counseling services, which will be effective in fall of 2012.

At **Oregon State University**, [Active Minds](#) continued to be a vibrant and active student group on campus, bringing speakers, sponsoring events and recruiting new students to get involved. In the fall, the campus hosted Dr. Kay Redfield Jamison who spoke about depression and bi-polar disorder. OSU launched a campus wide suicide prevention committee and began a campus gap analysis based on the [JED Foundation suicide prevention model](#). The intent was to identify gaps that are discovered during this analysis and to develop a plan to begin to tackle areas that remain unaddressed. OSU also launched a campus wide Mental Health initiative looking at a comprehensive plan to support mental health and increase flourishing among OSU students. There is a plan to bring Corey Keyes to campus to discuss flourishing and use his scales as a way of taking a comprehensive approach to mental health promotion and mental illness prevention. Staff at OSU have been excited and goal-directed as they turn their focus on research based, data driven interventions.

The **University of Oregon** revitalized its Suicide Prevention Team, drawing upon staff from diverse departments. In addition to offering gatekeeper trainings, for the first time ever, the UO offered a suicide prevention class for FHS students. This was a collaboration between faculty and staff from several departments and was very well received. Students and staff also created [100 Reasons to Stay](#), a video that engaged the campus community in jointly sending a positive,

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anti-suicide message. UO held showing of the documentary film about suicide, *Don't Change the Subject*, and counselors were on hand during Frank Warren's [Post Secret](#), which was attended by over 600 members of the campus community. [Active Minds](#), a student group devoted to reducing stigma around mental health issues, held a Stomp Out the Stigma week, which reached a couple hundred students.

The **University of Portland's** Health Center continued to increase accessibility of counseling services to meet the needs of the growing student body. It incorporated screening materials for depression into physical health appointments to better identify those at risk and make appropriate referrals to counseling services. It conducted annual gatekeeper trainings to all Residence Life staff. Emergency protocols were discussed with Residence Life staff and Public Safety to make sure that everyone was aware of their role in responding to campus emergencies. Counselors provided suicide awareness trainings to UP's Peer Health Educators, a group of paid student employees, who then took this information and incorporated it into their monthly health awareness publications. In addition, counselors began developing a new triage system, which will be implemented in the Fall of 2012 in order to increase students' access to services and enhance counselors ability to identify those at risk. The Health Center petitioned for and was granted additional funding to hire an Assistant Director of Counseling who will join the team in the Fall of 2012.

CHALLENGES AND THREATS

OCUSPP continues to struggle with the lack of dedicated staffing, both at the campus level and the statewide level. Those who provide organizational leadership typically are front-line campus mental health personnel and/or directors of their respective school's health and psychological services. These staff must juggle OCUSPP activities along with providing direct service, training and other administrative tasks. At the campus level, suicide prevention outreach must compete with the ever increasing clinical demand placed on contemporary college mental health centers. This demand appears to have increased significantly nationwide in the past few years, and there is no sign that this trend will go away or reverse itself.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

At its fall 2012 meeting, the membership set the priorities for the coming two years. These priorities include the following:

- ❖ Actively Collect and Utilize Data to Inform Suicide Prevention Interventions: This will include analyzing and interpreting National Research Consortium data from the four OCUSPP schools that participated in this important study.
- ❖ Branding and marketing a the consortium. This can include adding more information to our website that identifies us as an informed voice for college suicide prevention in the state and possibly nationally.
- ❖ Gather statewide stakeholders and discuss organizing an advisory board.