

Campus Health and CAPS Response to COBA Demands

Dear Coalition of Black students and Allies,

Thank you for coming together to demand change from the university that is here to serve you. We are writing this response on behalf of The Campus Health Service, which includes Counseling & Psych Services (CAPS). While we cannot change your individual or collective experiences up to this point, we want you to know that WE HEAR YOU. Beyond this, we are dedicated to continue our commitment to action and change.

Campus Health and CAPS acknowledge your pain, and the demands that are born of that pain. Ongoing acts of police brutality serve to amplify hundreds of years of systemic racism, violence and oppression directed toward people of color in this country. The burden of this collective and individual trauma is augmented by inequity, bias, and white supremacy in health and mental health care. At Campus Health we strive toward equity, however, acknowledge the ways in which we have directly contributed to the continued trauma of QT+BIPOC people in the form of microaggressions, disparities in accessing services, inadequate representation of BIPOC people on staff, and insufficiently assessing the specific needs of underrepresented students. As your Campus Health and Mental Health center, we are committed to affirming and providing care for all our students who bear this trauma. We stand in solidarity with you and commit to take action.

The Work We're Doing

Currently, there is work being done at Campus Health and CAPS to enact change within our organization, outlined below.

Demand 6: "We demand a community-based response to emergencies and crises that do not require the presence of UAPD or any form of police."

CAPS is engaged in conversation with Housing and Residential Life to modify current protocols which involve UAPD responding to mental health crises. To this end, CAPS has committed to serving as the first and primary contact in mental health crises. We have mental health providers available throughout the day and after hours to provide support to students and Housing and Residential Life staff during these critical moments. This change will take effect in August 2020. We also commit to increasing, throughout Fall Semester and beyond, our efforts to educate the University community that CAPS remains available to respond to mental health crises. Through our existing Call and Consult service, any University community member can call CAPS when they are concerned about a student, to consult with a mental health provider.

In addition, CAPS has reached out to our community partners in Pima County to collaborate with the community wide Mobile Crisis Team. Our goal is to provide on-site crisis services in addition to our 24-hour crisis line.

Demand 10: “We demand an increase in mental health resources and create mental health funds for queer and trans, Black, indigenous, people of Color (QT+BIPOC).”

In response to demands made in 2016 we committed to improving QT+BIPOC representation within CAPS. Over the course of the past year, CAPS has had the opportunity to hire nine additional staff, positions made possible by student advocacy efforts and institutional commitment to mental health needs of University of Arizona students. Three of these positions were filled by people of color. We recognize that this falls short of even our own expectations and will continue to prioritize equitable and inclusive hiring practices to increase representation of QT+BIPOC mental health providers.

For the past several months, CAPS has been working with the Cultural Centers to establish a CAPS Cultural Center Liaison Program. The intent of this program is to place mental health providers in the Cultural Centers for a half day every week. CAPS is working with the Cultural Centers to determine the details of how this time will be used, however, initial proposals include drop-in hours for students who are in need of resources and coaching, delivery of programming designed by and for QT+BIPOC students, and the development of support groups. We aim to fully implement this program in the fall of 2020. CAPS has also collaborated with the Cultural Centers to develop a need-based fund that gives QT+BIPOC students access to CAPS services free of charge. This fund has been available for the past several years and is funded directly by the Cultural Center budgets.

Additionally, at the onset of COVID-19, CAPS worked to move access to CAPS services online within 48 hours. Since this change, we have learned that the ability to conduct counseling online has improved access for many University of Arizona students. This allows for continuity of care over the summer, and does not require a student to travel to CAPS. CAPS triage is also now offered online in a drop-in format. It is our belief that this will positively impact many QT+BIPOC students, while also recognizing that some students face financial and technological barriers to online access. This Spring/Summer, we also developed two, online drop-in support groups for BIPOC students in the wake of the disproportionate impact of COVID and the Black Lives Matter protests.

CAPS and Campus Health are also committed to serving the needs of Queer and Trans students. Several of our staff, including staff in leadership and supervisory positions, are members of the LGBTQPIA+ community. We are continually expanding our services to this community, many of which can be found here <https://health.arizona.edu/capschs-lgbtqia-resources-and-treatment-info> and here <https://health.arizona.edu/lgbtq-health>

Demand 12: “We demand that all current staff of Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) undergo racial trauma training to improve their services for BIPOC communities.”

Resulting from efforts to establish the Cultural Center Liaison Program, CAPS was challenged by the Cultural Centers to engage in trainings that increase our knowledge about marginalized communities, awareness of own biases and prejudices, and skills to work directly with students in QT+BIPOC communities. CAPS has committed to doing this work and began conversations with Native American Student Affairs and the Native American Research and Training Center to receive specialized training for engaging and working with Native American and Indigenous populations. The training is tentatively scheduled for Fall 2020, however, may be delayed due to the need to meet in person for the planned training. CAPS is committed to seeking similar trainings for our work with other QT+BIPOC communities. We aim to do 1-2 trainings for our entire staff each year.

Moreover, as part of state licensure requirements, CAPS mental health providers are also required to engage in continuing education which includes specific requirements for education around diversity and clinical work with underrepresented groups. One example of our commitment to this learning is the “Hey, White Therapist” discussion group. This was formed this summer and meets weekly to discuss whiteness, white fragility, how this can show up in harmful ways in the therapy room, and how therapists can best treat clients of color. We are committed to ensuring that all CAPS mental health providers receive training that will help to improve the experience of QT+BIPOC students who engage with CAPS’ mental health resources.

In the spring of 2019, Campus Health formally established the Diversity & Inclusion Committee. The committee was established, among other reasons, to ensure we continue our commitment to our Mission and Vision. It also gives us an opportunity to communicate our work towards inclusion within Campus Health to those we serve. The inaugural committee included 17 Campus Health staff members, of which four were from CAPS, and 6 student representatives. In the last 12 months, the committee has assumed the task of evaluating cultural responsiveness at Campus Health, developed action plans to address shortcomings, and have improved on the work already done by Campus Health. Here are just a few things the committee has been working on:

- Facilitating opportunities, awareness, and access to training and education on diversity and inclusion for staff, both as employees of the organization and as healthcare providers in collaboration with our university partners
- Currently working with the Thrive Center on First Generation College Student training for a healthcare setting
- Established the Campus Health diversity statement: *“The Campus Health Service is committed to positioning itself as an exceptional student health center by fostering an inclusive culture that encourages, supports, and celebrates the diverse backgrounds of our patients and employees.”*
- Evaluating procedures, processes, and ongoing efforts to promote diversity and inclusion
- Ensuring care delivery that is inclusive and respectful of the community we serve through culturally responsive training
- Enhanced recruitment of underrepresented candidates by connecting with and posting positions with organizations that focus on underrepresented groups
- Modifying the use of our electronic medical record system to display preferred names
- Ensuring all forms and surveys use the UA standard of ‘Inclusive and Functional Demographics Questions’

The recent events across the Nation highlight the need for committees like ours and the need for change. Now, more than ever, is the time to commit to real change and progress. Many departments across campus have recently put out statements on this issue, but the most important statement is one of action.

There is More Work to be Done

We recognize that we are not able to meet all demands immediately, and we have a commitment to continuing the process of striving toward equity. The work is ongoing, and we will continue to approach it with humility, dedication, and collaboration with the campus community and QT+BIPOC students. While CAPS (and Campus Health as a whole) currently face certain restraints affecting the entire campus (and the Nation), we will continue to pursue these goals. We are committed to improving our organization and services in the following ways:

Short term:

- While Campus Health has an active Diversity & Inclusion Committee, we recognize that participation from outside of our organization will be important to keep our work connected to BIPOC, LGPTQ+, and other intersectional student needs and concerns. That is why in the Fall, **we will be inviting students and staff from the university's cultural centers to participate in this committee.**
- We recognize that we must communicate the actions we have and are taking toward equity in care to the campus community, and QT+BIPOC students in particular. We are currently developing plans to **inform, connect, and collaborate** with students and staff more effectively in sharing our work, and continuing to learn how else we can improve.
- We acknowledge the importance of transparency and accountability with regard to addressing student demands and needs. We will be developing a page on the Campus Health website that will **track our progress** on these demands for the campus community to see.
- We also acknowledge the lack of resources for QT+BIPOC students, and aim to bolster Campus Health and CAPS website to include **more in-depth resources**. An example of this is the recent addition of Black Lives Matter Resources and Tips for Speaking Out Against Racism webpages found here: <https://health.arizona.edu/black-lives-matter>
- (Demand 12) We seek to prioritize the ongoing training of our staff on issues pertinent to QT+BIPOC communities. This will include **1-2 trainings each year**. Formal and informal discussion and consultation groups focused on diversity and inclusion will also be established and/or continued.

Long term:

- (Demand 10) Although we have made some progress since 2016, as highlighted above, we have not yet achieved the diversity in staffing at CAPS that we are aiming for. This has been a priority for CAPS in hiring processes and, once hiring of new staff is possible again, we will **continue to prioritize hiring QT+BIPOC mental health providers.**
- (Demand 10) CAPS aims to expand a **training program to train mental health providers** at various stages of their education (practicum, pre-doctoral internship, post-doc, masters internship, etc.). Training programs provide an additional avenue for recruitment of QT+BIPOC counselors, and potentially creates a pipeline for future CAPS staff members. CAPS' current training program is comprised of two doctoral practicum students. These positions are often filled by QT+BIPOC psychologists in training.
- (Demand 6) While CAPS has plans in place to ensure that mental health professionals are the first responders in student mental health crisis events, there are times where a student will

need to be safely transported to a hospital for care. Under these circumstances, CAPS is limited by a lack of resources within the Tucson community for safe transportation as an alternative to police. CAPS recognize how critical it is for students in crisis to be and feel safe under these circumstances, and is **committed to advocating within the campus community to make safe and affordable non-police transports a reality.**

The Need for Institutional Change

While Campus Health and CAPS remains committed to making changes within our organization, we face challenges at the institutional level, here at the University of Arizona and at all levels of government. Although not insurmountable, such challenges include limited funding for Campus Health and CAPS initiatives, availability of qualified mental health professionals who are POC (a problem perpetuated by systemic injustice), and cost of service delivery; all amplified by recent COVID related hiring freezes, staff furloughs and budgetary constraints. Moreover, Tucson crisis system shortcomings, crisis transportation regulations, lack of mental health training for first responders, and state and federal budget cuts, directly impact University students. **We commit to advocating for systemic change and seek to partner with students, faculty, and staff seeking similar change.**

Call for Student participation

It is critical that we hear from students as we learn to better serve the QT+BIPOC members of the University community. As noted above, we will invite further student participation in our Diversity & Inclusion Committee. Before designing additional programming for QT+BIPOC students, **we commit to involving those students in the identification of needs, and programs that meet those needs.** To that end, **we specifically invite students from the Coalition of Black Students and Allies to participate in those efforts.**

Actions we will take:

We commit to the actions outlined above and seek public accountability to these commitments. We look forward to hearing from you.

In Solidarity,

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