

February 7, 1997

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Student Affairs and Athletics Committee:

C. Wilson McNeely, III, Chair
Franklin K. Birckhead
Champ Clark
Elsie Goodwyn Holland
Charles F. Irons
Elizabeth A. Twohy
Henry L. Valentine, II
Hovey S. Dabney, Ex Officio

and

The Remaining Members of the Board:

John P. Ackerly, III	William H. Goodwin, Jr.
Mortimer M. Caplin	T. Keister Greer
Charles M. Caravati, Jr.	Evans B. Jessee
Warner N. Dalhouse	Arnold H. Leon
Albert H. Small	

FROM: Alexander G. Gilliam, Jr.

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Meeting of the Student Affairs and
Athletics Committee on February 7, 1997

The Student Affairs and Athletics Committee of the Board of Visitors of the University of Virginia met, in Open Session, at 1:10 p.m., in the Lower West Oval Room of the Rotunda; C. Wilson McNeely, III, Chair, presided. Franklin K. Birckhead, Champ Clark, Mrs. Elsie Goodwyn Holland, Charles F. Irons, Ms. Elizabeth A. Twohy, and Hovey S. Dabney, Rector, were present. Also present were John P. Ackerly, III, Mortimer M. Caplin, Charles M. Caravati, Jr., Warner N. Dalhouse, William H. Goodwin, Jr., T. Keister Greer, Evans B. Jessee, Arnold H. Leon, and Albert H. Small; as well as John T. Casteen, III, Alexander G. Gilliam, Jr., William W. Harmon, Craig Littlepage, Ms. V. Shamim Sisson, Cole Kelly, Ms. Nicole Kimbrough, Darrell Medley, Ms. Amy Mitchell, Tommy Smith, and Ms. Jeanne F. Bailes.

The Committee met over lunch with a group of student athletes: Misses Kimbrough and Matthews, and Messrs. Kelly, Medley, and Smith. Ms. Sisson, Associate Dean of Students, lead the discussion in which the students talked about some of their experiences at the University and answered questions from Members.

The Committee recessed at 1:45 p.m., moved to the East Oval Room of the Rotunda, and reconvened in Open Session at 1:50 p.m. They were joined by a number of the Vice Presidents and by Dr. James Turner, Director of Student Health, and Ms. Virginia Wright, Suicide Prevention Specialist in the Department of Student Health.

Mr. Harmon, Vice President for Student Affairs, introduced Dr. Turner and asked him to report on the reorganization and merger of the Counseling Center and Learning Needs Evaluation Center with the psychological services unit of the Department of Student Health. The merged unit is called Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

Dr. Turner described in some detail the services offered by CAPS. In response to a question from Mr. Caplin, Dr. Turner said about 700 or 800 students use these services each year; this would add up to about 5,000 visits. Mrs. Holland asked if staffing were adequate; Dr. Turner replied that it is not but that the Center is in the process of hiring new staff. The addition planned for the Student Health building will give the Center adequate space.

Dr. Turner introduced Ms. Wright, the Clinical Psychologist who has arrived recently at the University to run the Suicide Prevention Program. The Program has been made possible by a gift from Mr. Lyell Clay of Charleston, West Virginia, an alumnus.

The Program was organized by Dr. Rafael Triana of the Department of Student Health.

Ms. Wright observed that while suicide cannot be eliminated, its incidence can be reduced and individual lives saved. She then described the Program.

Suicide, Ms. Wright said, is the third cause of death among 15-24 year olds, behind accidents and homicide, and the second leading cause of death on university campuses. Of the general population, 1.4% commit suicide; of these, 40-60% have depression. Depression is increasing among the general population and there is a corresponding increase among the student population at the University. More males than females commit suicide, though more females than males try. Suicide is common in all classes and among all ethnic groups.

There appears to be a biological factor in suicide. Among the several characteristics which seem to be typical among persons who commit suicide are perfectionism, a tendency to "self-isolate" in times of stress, struggles about sexual identity, and substance abuse. Among students who commit suicide, 95% have a psychiatric disorder, depression being the most common. The rate of depression has been increasing since the Second World War, which perhaps explains the increase in suicide. The treatment of these psychiatric disorders might be the best suicide prevention program.

Ms. Wright described some of the goals of the Program: dissemination of information about suicide; education of RA's, Faculty Advisors and Deans; to provide individual consultations with RA's and others who might spot potential suicides; training of other Student Health personnel.

The University's Suicide Prevention Program, she said, is unique in that it links treatment, research and education.

Mr. McNeely asked how many suicidal patients had been seen by the Program. Ms. Wright said that in the first semester 88 students with suicidal tendencies had been seen and another 80 were seen by the Program's on-call service. In addition, seven students with suicidal tendencies were hospitalized.

There was considerable discussion between Ms. Wright and Members on suicide in general and about the services offered by the Program.

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On motion, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

AGG:jb

Copies to: Mr. John T. Casteen, III
Mr. Paul Forch
Dr. Robert W. Cantrell
Mr. Peter W. Low
Mr. Leonard W. Sandridge, Jr.
Mr. William W. Harmon
Mr. Robert D. Sweeney
Mr. Ernest H. Ern
Ms. Colette Capone
Ms. Polley Ann McClure
Dr. Don E. Detmer
Mr. Terry Holland
Mr. L. Jay Lemons
Ms. Louise Dudley