

The Hidden Gem: HU's counseling center is starting to attract more of the student body

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While some students are happy with the newly reorganized counseling center, some students point out the hassle of scheduling an appointment.

In a survey, there was a trend of great reviews for the counseling center, but there is a need of more counselors. Out of 32 responses, 13 responses said this will make their experience better.

"More people are finding out about them, so they're busier and they can't focus on everyone like they used to," said one junior Journalism major from Detroit, MI.

According to the director of the counseling center, Valerie Proctor, there are peak seasons for appointments. The beginning of the semester has the most availability with less than five days from the time that students set the appointment. Toward the end of the semester, the center becomes more hectic which causes a two to three week wait.

At times when the center is booked, counselors recommend community resources instead.

The counseling center is made up of three counselors and a secretary who make it their duty to service as many students as they can. The director is currently interviewing counselors to join the center.

The three counselors are Valerie Proctor, Ayana Churn, and Amanda Albright. The expertise of these counselors ranges from mental health and wellness, LGBTQ and substance abuse to depression, anxiety and anger.

On the Hampton University website, it says the counseling center's sole purpose is to "offer individual counseling for enrolled students who have personal concerns, emotional distress, interpersonal issues, psychological disorders, and critical crisis situations."

The counseling center is open Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

Counseling, however, takes place from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Appointments can be made by phone or in-person. There is limited walk in service, but depending on the crisis these women will take students.

Emergency appointments are determined by a screening tool used to evaluate the severity of the situation. If there is a crisis, the next available counselor will see the student. Other appointments or meetings taking place at that time are pushed back.

"My first appointment was referred by my professor after I had a really bad panic attack in class. It took some time for me to warm up, but in the end, I'd say it was definitely effective," one student who prefers to stay anonymous said. Students are not forced to attend sessions.

Students can be referred to see the counselors by any faculty member, coach, parent, or health center staff member, Proctor said. "The most effective way is if students come in on their own because although someone may believe they need help, the student may not be ready to seek help." The only mandated sessions are for students who are involved with drugs and alcohol and anger management.

600 appointments are made per semester and the center services 12 to 15 percent of the student body.

Proctor has been the director of the counseling center for two years and has seen an increase in student appointments due to implementing a new software that keeps track of appointments.

The counselor center is planning to do more outreach to service as many students as they can.

Sixty-two students filled out the survey, and mostly sophomores and juniors use this resource. Other students are not aware of the benefits of the counseling center, so enhancing outreach methods and hiring more counselors will further increase student participation with the counseling center.