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ABSTRACT

This report suggests that through the promotion of student unity, students can gain the necessary power to engage in representative conflict which will change the monolithic nature of higher education and prevent open, destructive conflict with the system. Legitimizing student safety-values can complement representational conflict by promoting the release of tension and thereby enabling students to turn their efforts toward constructive endeavors. Student withdrawal can be prevented with new designs that promote student responsibility, authority, and participation in the higher education system. Racism on campus can be prevented through the promotion of a celebration of ethnic differences. New designs imply that mental health delivery systems on campus will have to become more open and involved with community programming and participation. A brief questionnaire by which services can judge how responsive they are to community involvement and how prepared they are to adjust programming efforts to new designs are included. The new designs suggested are offered not only as a means to prevent stress and conflict on campus, but also as a means to increase the quality of educational life for each campus member. For related documents concerning mental health on campus, see HE 004 816, HE 004 827, HE 004 828, HE 004 829, and HE 004 830. (Author)

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# New Designs: Prevent Educational Casualties, Promote Educational Growth

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## FOREWORD

The WICHE program Improving Mental Health Services on Western Campuses was designed to focus on the very complex human concerns evolving from the current state of higher education. The program, in its study of these problems, has convened task forces deliberately comprised of representative members from the university community and from the larger community. The task-force design was used not only to facilitate an exchange of ideas, but also to explore applications of the community model as a means for resolving campus problems.

The Mental Health Services and the Changing University Community Task Force's report, *Quality of Educational Life, Priorities for Today*, discussed how life on campus has been affected by changes in society and changes in the university's role. These changes have placed new demands upon the higher education system. But dynamics within the system have grown inflexible and dehumanizing as a result of system priorities--stability, predictability, and maintenance. These priorities set in motion dynamics which compel campus members to conform to system needs. Human concerns that would dictate that the system grow and change in conformity with campus needs are suppressed. The quality of educational life suffers as a result. Problems proliferate as pressures build between system demands and human needs. A sense of purpose is eroded. Dissatisfactions among campus members are high. Crises or conflicts erupt easily.

The Mental Health Consultation on the Campus Task Force in its report, *Consultation: A Process for Continuous Institutional Renewal*, presented a consultative design process as a means to reach a higher quality of educational life. Members of the campus community can use the design to assess and define various objectives in relation to needs; they can also employ the consultative design for developing, implementing, and evaluating programs and policies whose objectives have originated from the assessed and defined needs.

The Preventive Intervention Task Force, likewise, sought for measures campuses can use to achieve a higher quality of educational life. From the task force's perspective, there are three overriding conditions on campus--the monolithic nature of the higher education system, student withdrawal from education, and racism--which produce levels of stress so high as to seriously erode the quality of educational life, and which stand in greatest need of preventive interventions. There are many measures a campus could take to prevent these conditions. But task force members feel that the most effective preventions for these conditions can be found in measures which lay completely new tracks upon which the course of events can run, rather than measures which smooth out bumps along the old tracks.

In their final report, *New Designs: Prevent Educational Casualties, Promote Educational Growth*, they discuss new approaches which campuses could undertake. They suggest that through the promotion of student unity, students can gain the necessary power to engage in *representative* conflict which will change the monolithic nature of higher education and prevent open, destructive conflict with the system. Legitimizing student safety-valves can complement representational conflict by promoting the release of tension and thereby enabling students to turn their efforts toward constructive endeavors. The task force suggests that student withdrawal can be prevented with new designs that promote student responsibility, authority, and participation in the higher education system. Racism on campus can be prevented through the promotion of a celebration of ethnic differences.

The new designs imply that mental health delivery systems on campus will have to become more open and involved with community programming and participation. Task force members offer a brief questionnaire by which services can judge how responsive they are to community involvement and how prepared they are to adjust programming efforts to new designs. The new designs suggested by the task force are offered not only as a means to prevent stress and conflict on campus, but also as a means to increase the quality of educational life for each member of the campus community.

I wish to express my appreciation to the task force for their participation and contributions to the program. The task force meetings, with their frank and honest exchange of ideas, were, I believe, a valuable learning experience for us all. I would also like to express my thanks to the program's Staff Associate, Lu Anne Aulepp, who assisted with task force meetings and in the assembling of the final report. Valuable assistance was given by our Program Secretaries, Linda Martin, who made task force meeting arrangements, and Cheryl Towns, who prepared the report manuscript for publication.

James H. Banning, Ph.D., Director  
Improving Mental Health Services on Western Campuses

New Designs:  
Prevent Educational  
Casualties,  
Promote Educational  
Growth

NEW DESIGNS: PREVENT EDUCATIONAL CASUALTIES,  
PROMOTE EDUCATIONAL GROWTH

A stitch in time saves nine. But if the seam remains under stress, even a timely stitch is inadequate. The article's original design may need to be changed in order to reduce the level of stress upon the seam.

Within the structures of our campuses there are a number of splitting seams and seams under extraordinary levels of stress. Many preventive measures can and should be taken, but the members of this task force believe that among the best preventions would be the promotion of new designs to cope with the stresses. We believe stresses which build as the result of the monolithic higher education system can be prevented by promoting student power and safety valves within the system. Many stresses which cause student withdrawal from school can be prevented by promoting student responsibility and multilevel participation in the functioning of the higher education system. The stresses racism causes can be prevented by promoting a celebration of differences on campuses. Mental health and student services, through their efforts in prevention programming, can assist the development of new designs that will promote these changes.

*The Monolithic System*

For decades, or even centuries, students have watched wits with the educational system and have contended with the code of conduct in a symbolic, nonviolent way. They have engaged in what social theorists call "nonrealistic conflict"; that is, some sort of behavior motivated by sentiments of hostility, but falling short of a frontal attack or direct confrontation.

One of the university's major lines of defense is the establishment of clear-cut distinctions or boundary maintenance between itself and the continual flow of students through its doors. The university relies upon its sources of power in maintaining the boundary in its contention with students. Today, much of that power, is derived from overlapping and interlocking relationships with legislatures, government agencies, business and financial interests, philanthropic foundations, and the military.

From the students' viewpoint, perhaps the most formidable weapon wielded in the nonrealistic conflict has been the university's boundary maintenance function. It has served to keep students disenfranchised and the "establishment" in power. As stresses have increased in one area or another within the campus structure past patterns of nonrealistic conflict have been unable to take the pressure, and violence has occurred. In seeking preventive measures imagination should be used to promote student power.

On the basis of equality or near-equality the two sides can establish new patterns for nonviolent confrontation.

One new form of nonrealistic conflict that could be applied to the campus scene is the socially controlled exchange between individuals chosen as representatives by mutually hostile groups. Students could engage in representative conflict with universities if they had the approximate strength. Therefore, if representative conflict is to substitute for campus violence, attention will have to be given to developing the means by which students can unite as a regional or even national collectivity or social class. The students' issues will have to go beyond local, petty concerns and deal with issues generically relevant. As cohesion and unity develop, such issues will become clarified. Student representatives will be able to present society and higher education reasoned arguments and ideas for needed changes. They may even go beyond representative conflict to research and development concerning educational issues that foundations, the government, business, or even the university will be interested to underwrite.

To accomplish student collectivity and power, an efficient system of communication is essential. Currently, an important weakness in the student approach to the university is ignorance with respect to what is occurring in other universities and only a blurry knowledge of the fundamental problems from which student disaffection arises. The grapevine and underground paper is pitted against professional meetings and journals. Mechanisms need to be built so students can exchange information, share resources, and develop new ideas that their representatives can introduce to the system.

A second form of nonrealistic conflict which seems viable and would complement a representational exchange is the evolution of safety-valve institutions that would serve to deflect hostile feelings into a socially approved activity. Many societies faced with the potential for violent behavior have legitimized the collective releases of tension which are not totally divorced from the conditions of the struggle, and, often, have beneficial consequences for the combatants; especially, the ordinary person who feels the effects of alienation, but who is either incapable of engagement or not disposed to actively engage in the battle. Examples from other cultures include the Mardi gras and ritual celebrations that commonly require physical and emotional exertion, along with some element of competition or judgment of performance, and that often involve an approved transgression of the norms which rigidly govern everyday behavior. In any case, an essential feature of the safety-valve institution is provision for a nonviolent catharsis or release of hostility and frustration. Students can then turn their energies toward more constructive pursuits.

College students and youth in the United States may be currently devising and initiating safety-valve institutions that could be legitimized. One example is the rock festival. Certainly events such as Woodstock bear a striking resemblance to those diverting

hostility in other societies. If one agreed to the desirability of this approach to the avoidance of violence, what would be required? First, a great deal of sociological imagination and empathy with the now generation, for surely the panty raids of yesteryear are hopelessly out of date. An effective public relations campaign would also be needed, since the general public's reaction to events such as rock festivals has indicated that the new safety-valve institutions are not fully in keeping with the traditional ethic of propriety that characterized social values in the United States.

#### *Student Withdrawal*

An important concern for many people is the number of students who drop out of higher education each year. A substantial proportion of dropouts leave for reasons other than failing grades. Dropouts not only represent a fiscal cost to the institution, but they represent a cost to society in disillusioned youth.

*Susie Smartsworth, Middletown High School's Honor Society President, ventured forth into the halls of knowledge at her friendly neighborhood college. Her glowing fantasies of fireside chats with professors, probing inquiries into the nature of truth and other eternal quandaries, and research--study with sister and brother students--soon faded. Susie's dreams were replaced with the corrosive routine of changing classes, hurriedly exchanged remarks with teachers, and withstanding the noisy dormitory barrage.*

*Susie was fed up. Then she happened upon Herbie Hirsute. Hiru, an appellation awarded by friends and disciples, was a local prophet who "enlightened" people through the miracles of drug chemistry. When Hiru turned Susie on to his colorful message, she quickly lost interest in the drudgery of university life. She "dropped out"...*

*I believe that youth have caught onto that great American hoax--the mythical fountain of knowledge which is the university. Our college system, more often than not, is a middle-class version of the juvenile detention home (after all, you have to keep the kids off the streets somehow). Students realize, upon ordering the "fruits of knowledge" from a restaurant with a one-course menu, that they really have no choices at all. Their real choices are to put up or shut up, and if not, then to leave or be kicked out. And so many do leave.*

*I term the phenomenon the "withdrawal syndrome." It seems to be an increasingly prevalent defense mechanism employed by students whose mental health is endangered by university life. Some journey forth on drug fantasies, others zealously chant "Hare Krishna" on city street corners. Whatever their escape routes, these students have left the system and accepted their irresponsibility, i.e., powerlessness. Of course, this fostering of irresponsibility began long ago in primary school and is only continued at the univ-*

ersity level. The administrators still retain their privileged responsibility for operating the university.

An important element of frustration to students is the university's grasp of power through the credentialing system. If students make all the right turns in the labyrinth of academic disciplines, they will eventually reach the plateau known as bachelor's degree. Higher up this academic ladder is a Ph.D. degree.

This leads me to the oft-debated question of whether students gain an education or merely a job ticket (and often not even that) in their journeys through academia. If students are shuffled through departmental sieves, will they and can they assume responsibility for their learning experience? I think the administrators (and legislators for public institutions) know the answer. Yes, when students are folded, stamped, spindled, and bent sufficiently, they will behave properly, do their homework, and dutifully participate in the great American economic circus. Faculties also know the answer--do your job or get a salary cut, particularly in state schools.

I submit, however, that these narrow fortresses of specialization do a great disservice to students, professors, the community, and "knowledge" in general. Specialization leads to fragmentation and loss of an overall perspective. There is little chance to learn, but much opportunity to memorize.

One "solution" is to have students research areas of knowledge regardless of departmental fences. They would collaborate with professors as co-researchers. The advantage is that students wouldn't be engaged in repetitive, mickey-mouse exercises. Instead they would be gaining firsthand experience as participant observers in the exploratory process of education. Learning "how to learn" would better enable students to make their own decisions, rather than mouthing overworked platitudes.

As for students' escape mechanisms, what happens? What I loosely term the drug culture redeems its "fallen" through such endeavors as drug rehabilitation centers, communes, and homes offering free food and a place to crash. Usually ex-heads, who've gotten themselves "straightened out," initiate and run these centers. The important point here is that former heads have assumed responsibility for getting themselves together and are willing to help others do the same. They've channeled their energies into an area where much needs to be done and where, more often than not, they are more "expert" than the medical psychological experts. Also they are able to collaborate with professionals (such as doctors and nurses) instead of being subservient to them. These activities help to reinforce their ego identification and self-confidence, thus fostering good mental health.

These drug rehabilitation/counseling centers can provide models for related areas. Since I assume that the university should

*foster self-knowledge and the search for basic knowledge, universities could provide an opportunity for experimenting in new twentieth-century living patterns. For instance, communes that include students, teachers, and staff and are entirely run by those involved could operate on campus in various ways, depending upon the group's interests. The university could foster student independence and responsibility by turning student unions over to students. The university could add to our knowledge by funding minority students to research their cultural heritages and allowing minorities to experiment with new learning techniques that incorporate their cultural elements into the curricula and life of the campus. Then the campus might become an interesting, exciting place to be rather than an experience from which to flee.*

*--Shari Capra*

As these thoughts about Susie Smartsworth's plight suggest, there is need on campus for many new designs. A basic element of these designs would be multilevel student participation. The concept "multilevel" recognizes the fact that all aspects of the student's life are important, and that students should be responsibly involved in all of them. The concept "participation" recognizes that students share power and authority with faculty and administrators. Multilevel student participation, therefore, recognizes that students are adults and able to engage meaningfully in university decisions from budgetary considerations to what speakers will be invited on campus.

To achieve multilevel student participation will necessitate a basic attitudinal change on the part of many students, staff, faculty, and administrators. Although token student participation at some levels of campus activity has become a popular response to student demands, the examples of real shared participation and authority are few. The feeling persists that only professionals know what is best for students. As the following model will detail, it takes time and a commitment to participation to try out various kinds of participatory models in order for multilevel student participation to become a reality.

*As a person interested in the mental health of our students on campus my concern lies in the prevention of institutional problems which generate alienation, frustration, anxiety, and hostility among students. I am convinced that primary responsibility for preventing these mental health problems rests with individual departments and department heads.*

*My analysis is that the nature of our modern academic institutions is archaic bureaucracy, and the philosophy is arrogance. The bureaucracy, of course, is a function of the intellectual arrogance of faculty members and administrators. We have build undergraduate programs on the assumption that every student will, in*

fact, go to graduate school. And we hire staff not on the basis of any real evaluation of their teaching interests or abilities, but rather on the basis of their contributions to the department at the graduate level.

The interesting point is that no one asks the student, "Who are the good teachers?" or "What kind of courses and content should be presented?" I have found, if students are asked these questions and allowed to participate, that they respond in a very positive manner and are capable of rational discussion concerning administrative decisions and problems. However, the road to their participation is not a simple one.

The first route I followed was to open all staff meetings to students, giving them a vote and the opportunity to participate in departmental affairs. The students seldom knew what was being discussed and seldom participated, and ultimately seldom attended.

I then proposed that an advisory council of representative students majoring in psychology be formed. This advisory council would be advisory directly to me as head of the psychology department and not to the staff. The logic behind this relationship was that students threatened staff and staff threatened students.

A council was elected and met. I explained that the council could serve as the voice of the majors on all department matters without fear of reprisals. I proposed that they accept the challenge to redesign our curriculum, set up a system of evaluation for departmental teaching, and make recommendations concerning campus policies which I could take on to appropriate levels.

The advisory group met enthusiastically in two weeks, less enthusiastically two weeks later, and after two more weeks only a few students showed up. With me leading the group and calling the meetings, the students viewed the council as simply an extension of my position. After discussing the situation with an interested student, I turned over the advisory council to the students. Through hard work the students reorganized, reelected, and reconvened the council. I spoke to the council again, giving them the same assurances, but walked away with the understanding that they would meet on their own schedule to work on problems that they felt were significant and would call me when they were ready to tell me what they wanted.

The results were fantastic. The council met a total of seven times within two weeks working on curriculum revision. Their final product was accepted with only minor revisions, which were discussed with and accepted by the council.

The council then chose to work on teaching evaluations, and I told them one-third of the staff salary raises would be based upon their recommendations. As they struggled with evaluations they began looking pretty haggard. However, their final recommendations

and the justification for them were as sophisticated and as responsible as could be expected from the most wise administrator. Naturally, half the staff applauded this procedure and half opposed it.

The majority of council members kept their constituent students informed of council actions and the results of these actions. They elected a representative to attend all departmental staff meetings. Copies of department head directives, and university and departmental memorandums were sent to council members. Over time council members have initiated seminars, special classes and courses, tutoring systems, and psychology projects.

One of the council's recommendations was that something had to be done concerning the academic advising system. They felt the majority of staff did not know much about the registration system, courses taught, and instructors. They believed that upperclassmen, having gone through the system and being knowledgeable about courses and instructors, could better serve as academic advisors to the freshmen. A council subcommittee developed with me a student-run advising system for freshmen planning to major in psychology.

A crucial aspect of the development of our student participation was giving students authority along with decision-making responsibilities. An equally important aspect was perceiving the reality that students can make contributions without supervision or direction.

--Arthur McDonald

### *The Celebration of Differences*

Higher education has promoted through its teaching, curricula, research, operations, and living mode the majority culture's values and norms. Great faith was given to the belief that all groups would become uniformly socialized in the melting pot and that higher education was an important stage in the process. But turbulent events arising out of recent ethnic movements have put the process under critical scrutiny.

Little or no attention, until recent times, has been paid to the value dilemma of socializing people to act as if they were members of another racial group. Among racial minorities there has been an intensive search for effective means of preventing psychological problems and promoting psychological soundness through the use of racial awareness, identity, and pride. From this perspective, much of social science information is under attack because the findings are at variance with the reevaluation of social perceptions on the part of racial minorities. These perceptions compel a virtual about-face in the orientation of the entrenched ethos which holds to the melting pot myth and the singularity of

social norms. Holistic or monolithic dogma interact to determine psychological, social, and cultural norms which not only dominate racial minorities but perpetuate sociopolitical enslavement of such groups and cripple the enslavers.

Thus, when one questions the virtue of ethnicity as a system for developing social competence, the basic network of meanings, functions, and authority positions of the larger society must be examined critically. The national consensus does not suggest acceptance of cultural differences or diversity but rather promotes a translation of these which implies operational deviance and inferiority as well. Functionally, this majority cultural translation gets implemented in less than human treatment for non-whites. For those who "make it," the mainstream requirements compel them to think and to act as if they were members of the dominant group. Criteria of behavior and social competence, become based upon the denial or rejection of values peculiar to ethnic cultures.

The struggle to gain and maintain an authentic sense of self through ethnicity does have a basis in fact in the American ideal. A significant part of the positive aspects of the power of this nation derives from the diversity of its people. Unfortunately, however, the assertion and celebration of differences has been the right and privilege of whites only. Tensions have developed between the social expectations of particular ethnic groups and the inability of the dominant members of society to accept the options of cultural plurality.

Self-appraisal is a reflection of organized social experience. For this reason individuals of the same socioeconomic status tend to have more homogeneous self-concepts. In this regard, age and social class membership surface as significant determinants of self-feelings. It is also important to note that these factors influence cognitive development and social roles. Of no less importance are the differential social systems based upon age, sex, race, and socioeconomic status.

Feelings of adequacy not only reduce the variance between perceived and ideal self but facilitate levels of aspiration that are positively related to mastery in performance. Poor insight regarding self-concept and objective reality tends to be reflected in maladaptive behavior. Defensive behavior is related to the nature of self-appraisal. In short, how one sees oneself affects the way one behaves. Ideal self-concepts are useful in understanding optimal adjustment. Whether one has a feeling of "fitting in" with a particular group can be determined by the relationship between perceived and ideal self-concepts. This information is especially useful because of its implications for professional services or programs for various groups that are nonwhite.

A campus environment of negative experiences promotes the incorporation of defeating personality traits which are instrumental

in depressing the ability to function adequately. What is desirable is that higher education and the practice of psychology reflect knowledge and methods which presents cultural diversity as a positive good. This growing recognition of the need to reconceptualize, understand, and use ethnicity as a paradigm is a recent occurrence.

Systems of service delivery, including higher education and campus mental health facilities, have too long operated under the illusion that there is but one acceptable standard or social norm for behavior. Open systems have to be developed which will eliminate present professional territories that are based upon outworn assumptions and misinformation about the national ethos. What is needed now is an honest evaluation of values which are being perpetuated and a moral commitment to promoting a celebration of differences for all the people.

#### *An Open Mental Health Delivery System*

In the current campus design, mental health facilities are generally a closed system because the service handles individual problems and seldom relates these problems to environmental sources or community issues. But the facility's case load is indicative of two things: first, that there are many high-stress points within the higher education environment producing casualties and second, that the present mental health delivery system is in need of some redesigning to handle the stress upon it.

A more open mental health delivery system could address both problems. Through the promotion of community participation and programming, it could assist the system in achieving new designs that would prevent system stress and decrease system casualties. The mental health delivery system would still find itself under stress. But the current stress associated with treating individual casualties would shift to a stress associated with the creation of new designs and hence it would be more beneficial to higher education and serve a greater number of people than the present delivery system is capable of doing.

Campus community needs differ from school to school, and thus the type of community programming conducted by mental health facilities will differ. However, the urgent need for services to become involved in the prevention of educational casualties and the promotion of educational growth is increasing on all campuses. The following self-analysis quiz was designed to help administrators and mental health personnel determine how great a role the service has taken in fulfilling this urgent campus need.

PREVENTION OF EDUCATIONAL CASUALTY AND THE  
PROMOTION OF EDUCATIONAL GROWTH

A Self-Analysis Quiz  
for  
Campus Mental Health Services

General Questions Regarding Campus Community

1. What does your service know about the campus community?
  - A. What are the objectives within the community?
  - B. What are the designs to reach these objectives?
  - C. What are the reward systems implied in current designs?
  - D. What power sources perpetuate the current reward systems?
2. What role does your service play in the community?
  - A. Is the service involved in setting objectives?
  - B. Is the service involved in designing policies and programs to reach the objectives?
  - C. Is the service involved in developing reward systems?
  - D. Is the service involved with or within power sources?

SCORING: To the extent the answers to these questions are "don't know" or "not involved," the campus mental health service is seen by the task force as not playing as significant a role as it could in the prevention of educational casualty and the promotion of educational growth.

Specific Questions for Campus Mental Health Services

1. Does the service see as its primary responsibility the treatment of individuals and their intrapsychic pathology?
2. Does the service rely upon the traditional-individual role of analysis to explain individual distress (illness)?
3. Does the service have an orientation towards treatment rather than prevention or enhancement?
4. Does the service have only limited participation in the formation of administrative policies and procedures?
5. Does the service have limited review and comment upon curriculum or faculty practicum?

6. Does the service employ only mental health professionals?
7. Does the service operate without significant consumer input in the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs?

SCORING: To the extent the answers to these questions are "yes," the mental health service is seen by the task force as not playing as significant a role as it could in the prevention of educational casualty and the promotion of educational growth.

#### Questions for Further Programming Analysis

1. Does your service have a list of objectives or goals? How do these goals or objectives relate to community issues? How do these goals or objectives relate to the issue of prevention and promotion?
2. How are your service's program efforts distributed? What portion of these efforts relate to prevention and promotion?
3. How are your service's money resources distributed? What portion of these resources relate to prevention and promotion?
4. By what methods and criteria are your current prevention and promotion efforts judged to be successful or unsuccessful?
5. By what methods and criteria will the need for future prevention and promotion be determined?

SCORING: Detailed responses to these questions should provide a profile on the type of prevention and promotion programming the campus mental health service provides. To the extent that prevention and promotion are not linked to community issues and not included in program efforts, objectives, and goals and to the extent that the community does not participate in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of services, the service is seen by the task force as not playing as significant a role as it could in the prevention of educational casualty and the promotion of educational growth.

#### *Summary*

The campus can employ many methods to prevent educational casualties and to promote educational growth. But many preventive

methods are of a stop-gap nature. In the short run, they will prevent campus stress from bursting through the system's seams. In the long run, a more lasting and beneficial prevention is the promotion of new system designs that will reduce campus stress.

The monolithic higher education system causes many undue stresses. By redesigning the system to promote student power and safety-valves, these stresses can be prevented and educational growth enhanced. The high incidence of student withdrawal can be prevented by system design changes that promote student responsibility and multilevel participation. The extraordinary stress imposed upon minority campus members can be prevented through system designs that recognize plurality and give positive value to ethnicity.

System design is a complex undertaking. System change or redesign can be an even more complex challenge. Certainly the campus has the human resources and knowledge to take up the challenge. Campus mental health facilities must number among the contributors for new system designs. An effective approach would be redesigning the delivery system to promote community programming. Through these efforts, mental health services can become active in assisting higher education in the prevention of educational casualties and the promotion of educational growth.

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