

THE CREATION OF A MENTAL HEALTH BILL OF RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES AT VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

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Background

- growing recognition of the challenges in the area of mental health and well-being for our graduate student community
- stresses on the system had produced a series of challenges in the delivery of care and miscommunication between providers, students and the administration
- long-standing concerns around the perception of a heavily undergraduate focused care model
- an additional challenge (and ultimately opportunity) was associated with the legal separation of VU and VUMC
- town hall highlighted many of the challenges and revealed a growing lack of trust between students and administration
- was happening within the backdrop of some movements on campus focused on graduate student unionization



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The Process

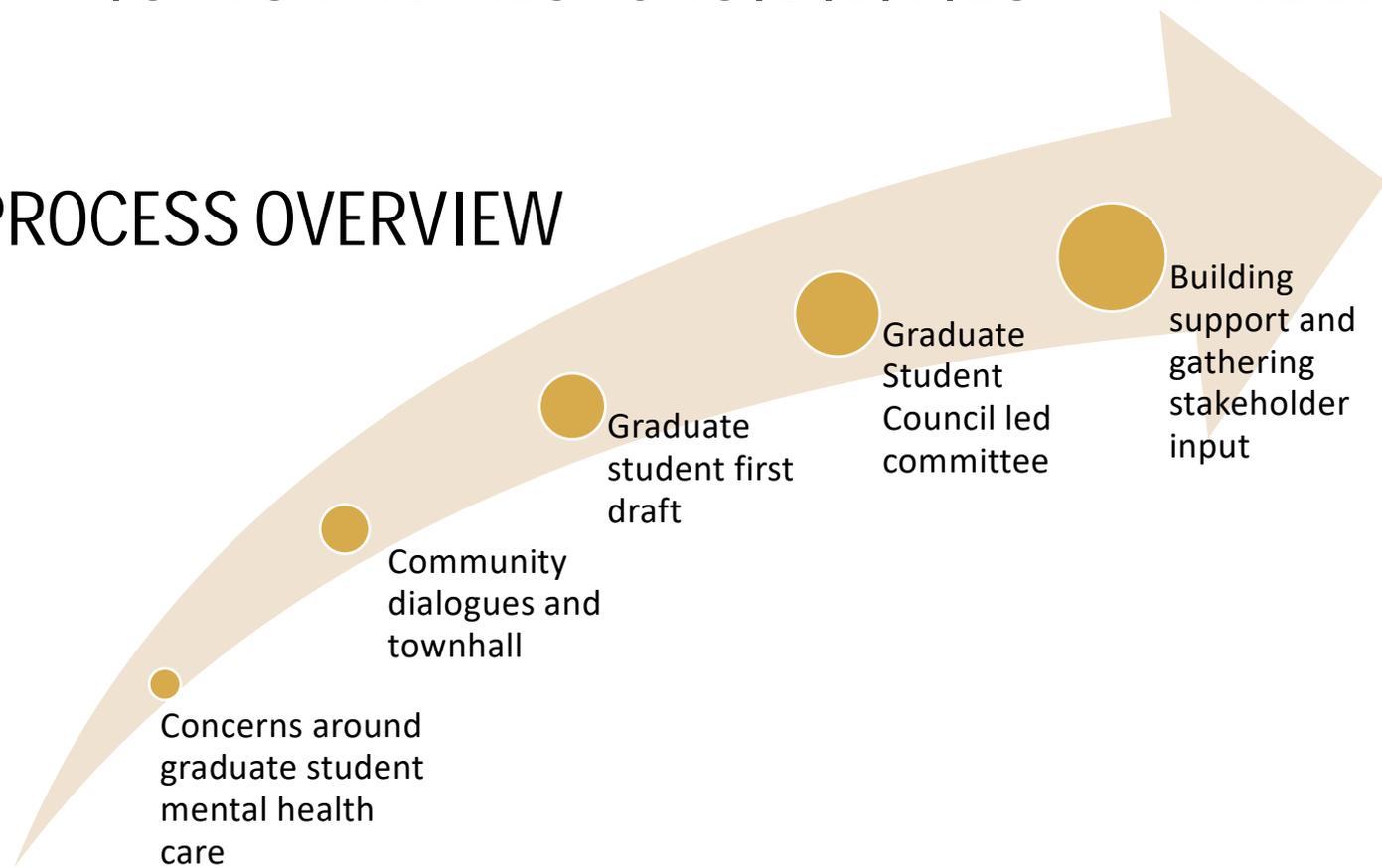
- Graduate Student Council (GSC) spearheaded efforts to develop a mental health bill of rights
- Modeled after documents from our Medical Center associated with patients rights
- Subcommittee of the GSC developed a draft document, which became the foundation for a series of conversations with a host of campus stakeholders, including but not limited to:
 - The Graduate School
 - Graduate Faculty Council
 - Dean of Students
 - Office of General Counsel
 - University Counseling Center (UCC)
 - Student Care Network
 - Office of the Provost
 - Office of the Chancellor
- Went through 10+ iterations of the document before final approval by OGC, Provost and Chancellor



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PROCESS OVERVIEW



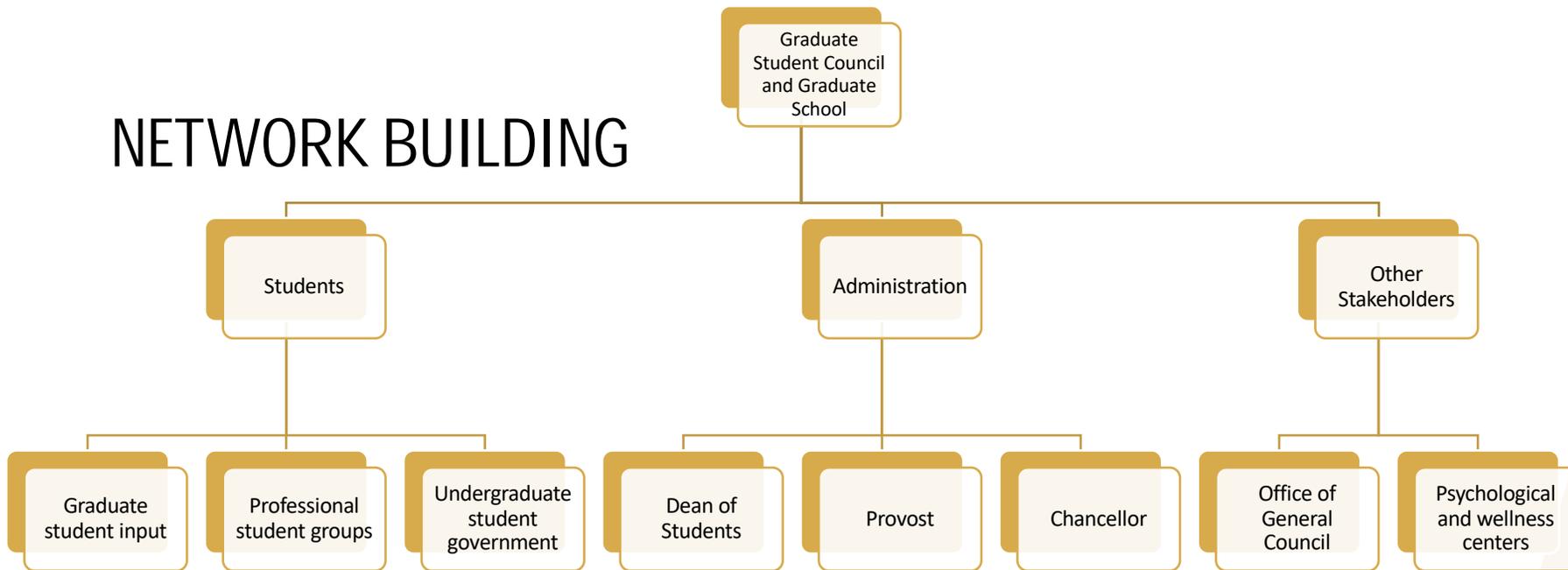
Launch!



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NETWORK BUILDING



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Key Issues and Challenges

- initial focus exclusively on rights evolved into including language concerning responsibilities as well
- concerns from the student community about the ‘non-binding’ nature of the document
- concerns from OGC about setting unreasonable expectations
- communicating MHBRR out to all relevant stakeholders



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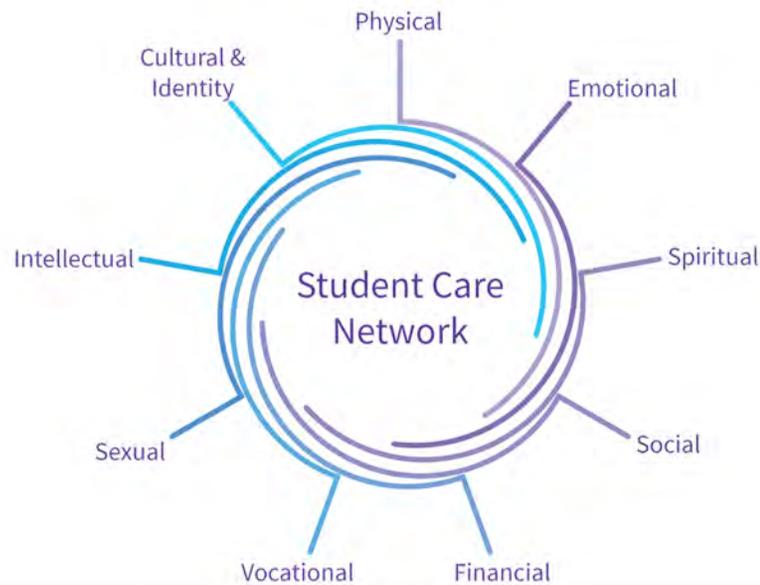
The Benefits

- empowered the students around issues concerning their mental health and well-being – promoting a greater sense of agency
- greater transparency in what students can expect from the care network and its providers
- strong tool in building trust and greater dialogue between students, administration and care providers
- was adopted by a number of student communities on campus, including the undergraduate student body
- catalyzed creation of a new position within the Graduate School (Graduate Life Coach)



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IMPROVED RESOURCES



Graduate Life Coach
Stacey Satchell



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MENTAL HEALTH BILL OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR STUDENTS OF VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

The Mental Health Bill of Rights and Responsibilities (MHBoR&R) outlines the Vanderbilt University community's ideals and aspirations for providing mental health care to its students, as well as student responsibilities in the mental health care process and system. Students are encouraged to use the MHBoR&R in conversation with their Student Care Network providers when discussing their mental health needs and expectations. The MHBoR&R is not binding for any parties, but rather reflects Vanderbilt's commitment to provide quality mental health care for its students.

The MHBoR&R was developed through an in-depth collaboration between the Graduate Student Council, the Graduate School, the Office of the Dean of Students, the [University Counseling Center](#), the [Student Care Network](#), the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Chancellor, and other University community members. It is intended to be a living document, and any future changes should undergo a robust process of discussions with relevant stakeholders, including those listed above.



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MENTAL HEALTH BILL OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR STUDENTS OF VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

- 1.** Vanderbilt University sees the mental health of its students as a priority and undertakes to protect student access to quality, affordable, professional, and comprehensive mental health care.
- 2.** Vanderbilt University is committed to combat stigma surrounding mental health, to provide an environment of mental health care that is inviting and inclusive for all students, and to proactively encourage and guide students to be good stewards of their mental health.
- 3.** In caring for the mental health of all of its students, Vanderbilt University commits to consider and support the unique needs of its students, including but not limited to: students of color, international students, LGBTQI students, students with disabilities, military veterans, students who are first-generation college students, survivors of trauma, and students from underrepresented religious and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- 4.** Vanderbilt University commits to protecting the privacy of its students with regards to their mental health care and to providing maximum information and transparency for students regarding their privacy rights, including protection for treatment records.



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5. Vanderbilt University undertakes to provide mental health services to its students in accordance with the following guidelines:

- a. An individual Care Coordinator shall be designated as the primary point of contact for each student upon [intake into the Vanderbilt Student Care Network](#). The Care Coordinator shall assist the student in understanding, navigating, and accessing the resources within the network, and shall support the referral of the student to a provider outside of the primary Student Care Network, hereby referred to as an “outside provider.”
- b. For non-urgent mental health concerns, students shall have a right to their choice of an in-person or phone assessment by a qualified mental health trained clinician within a reasonable time after contacting the Vanderbilt Student Care Network. For urgent concerns during normal operating hours and during nights and weekends, students shall have access to an on-call provider for assessment; the on-call provider may refer the student to emergency services if the student’s condition necessitates immediate attention, or may initiate scheduling of an assessment within a reasonable time. A “reasonable time” shall be determined on an individual basis by a qualified mental health trained clinician.
- c. Individual services shall be accessible to every student at no more than a reasonable cost until a mental health clinical review panel determines that a standard of care is reached, or that such standard of care would be better facilitated by an outside provider in accordance with 5 (d).
- d. The Student Care Network shall not terminate services without first providing due notice, and shall continue providing care until the commencement of treatment with an outside provider. A readily available list of outside providers who accept the student insurance option shall be maintained by the Student Care Network. Student inability to pay out-of-pocket expenses, ease of access to off-campus services, specific student identities (see item 3), and other personal student needs associated with referral to an outside provider shall be considered during the clinical review process.
- e. The Student Care Network shall strive to create a mental health care plan that meets the needs of the student and shall engage in a collaborative referral process with the student to secure appropriate services outside the primary Student Care Network. The student shall also have the ability to request a secondary review of their mental health care plan with members of the clinical review panel or another Student Care Network provider. This request should be facilitated by the student's Care Coordinator.



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6. Vanderbilt University shall consider the coverage for mental health care, including, but not limited to, therapy, medication, emergency services, surgery, in-patient mental health treatment, and substance abuse treatment, in selecting a student health insurance option. Vanderbilt University shall consider the fiscal limitations of its students in selecting student insurance options.

7. Vanderbilt University shall strive to provide mental health care within an evidence-based framework, and to ensure that each student shall have the opportunity to:

- a.** Remain apprised of the structure, policies, and practices of mental health care services for students by Vanderbilt University, through elected liaisons in student government bodies;
- b.** Provide input to Vanderbilt University regarding the structure, policies, and practices of mental health services for students, through elected liaisons in student government bodies;
- c.** Consider and comment on any proposed changes to the structure, policies, and practices of mental health services for students, through a mechanism determined by the student government bodies in consultation with the Student Care Network, and to have their comments entered into the record and duly considered before proposed changes may be adopted;
- d.** Receive detailed, transparent notice of changes following their adoption and prior to their implementation; and
- e.** Access metrics and actuarial data regarding mental health care provided by Vanderbilt to its students, or underlying all decisions to alter or discontinue mental health services.



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- 8.** Students desiring mental health services should proactively contact a Care Coordinator. Vanderbilt University cannot provide care for cases of which it is unaware.
- 9.** Students shall have a responsibility to notify Vanderbilt University of serious and imminent concerns regarding the mental health of their colleagues, students, and other members of the Vanderbilt community.
- 10.** Students within the Vanderbilt network of care shall have the following responsibilities:
 - a.** To consent to be treated and to accept the privacy policy for care;
 - b.** To provide accurate information regarding medical history, medications, symptoms, and other matters relating to their mental and physical health;
 - c.** To proactively communicate expectations, needs, questions, and concerns;
 - d.** To make a good faith effort to keep appointments, to be on time for appointments, and to communicate if conflicts emerge;
 - e.** To abide by facility rules and act in a manner that is respectful to other patients, staff, and facility property; and
 - f.** To actively participate in decisions regarding their mental health care.
 - g.** To inform the Student Care Network when their mental health care plan no longer meets their individual needs.



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11. Students within the Vanderbilt network of care are encouraged to do the following:
- a. To follow treatment and care plans;
 - b. To report any concerns or changes in condition to their health care provider;
 - c. To alert staff to any privacy concerns; and
 - d. To consider consequences before refusing treatment.



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Some additional resources:

- Nature, 30 August 2019
- Inside Higher Ed, October 29, 2019
- upcoming NAS panel

The screenshot shows the Inside Higher Ed website. The main article is titled "Mental Health Challenges Require Urgent Response" and is dated October 29, 2019. The article text discusses the mental health challenges of college students, mentioning that suicidal thinking and self-harm are significant issues. It also notes that the number of students with a previous diagnosis of depression has increased from about 1 in 10 to over 25 percent in 2015. The article is written by Todd Mitchell and Suzanne Ortega. The website header includes navigation links for News & Views, Careers, Events, Reports & Data, Admissions, Digital Learning, and Fund-Raising Diversity. There are also social media icons and a search bar.

The screenshot shows a Career News article titled "A better future for graduate-student mental health" dated 30 August 2019. The article discusses a consortium of US universities aiming to examine how best to help a vulnerable population affected by anxiety and depression. The article is written by Chris Weinman. The website header includes navigation links for News & Views, Careers, Events, Reports & Data, Admissions, Digital Learning, and Fund-Raising Diversity. There are also social media icons and a search bar. The article text mentions an ambitious research project aimed at assessing the state of mental health resources and support for graduate students, involving the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and the Jed Foundation. It also mentions a road map for moving forward, created by Suzanne Ortega, CGS president and principal investigator of the project, called Supporting Mental Health and Wellness of Graduate Students.



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