

From: Amy Gutmann president@UPENN.EDU
Subject: A Message to the Penn Community
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A Message to the Penn Community

from
Amy Gutmann, President
Wendell Pritchett, Provost
Valarie Swain-Cade McCoullum, Vice Provost for University Life

This year, we have seen a vibrantly energized culture of wellness at Penn. In October, we held a [Campus Conversation](#) to discuss how we can best take care of ourselves and others. We followed this Conversation in November by launching a [Campaign for Wellness](#) and announcing increased staffing and an operational review at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). Since that time, we have continued to advance wellness at Penn through such initiatives as a new [Wellness at Penn](#) website, a second Campus Conversation about wellness, and a huge increase in participation in our invaluable [Take Your Professor to Lunch](#) program.

We are writing to update you on our next steps to advance the wellness of the Penn community. First, we have established a new position of **Chief Wellness Officer**. This campus leader will be responsible for furthering all aspects of wellness at Penn, including the combined oversight of CAPS, the Student Health Service, and the Office of Alcohol and Other Drug Program Initiatives, which will together be called Student Wellness Services. The search for the person to fill this new position will be separate from the search for a new Executive Director of CAPS, and we expect to complete both searches during the fall semester.

Second, as a result of the CAPS operational review, we will introduce an integrated set of improvements to student wellness services, including the services offered by CAPS. The overall goal of these measures will be to create faster access to care, for more students, across a wider range of options. We will aim to increase capacity at CAPS; decrease the time between a first CAPS consultation and a first counseling appointment; better distinguish short-term care, long-term care, and other kinds of wellness care; expand the use of phone, video, and app-based technologies that can be accessed anywhere, at any time; and expand the availability of texting to find additional means of support for students in crisis.

Provost Pritchett will oversee implementation of these improvements, in collaboration with Vice Provost McCoullum and other partners across the University, to ensure a unified and comprehensive approach to wellness at Penn.

We are grateful to the distinguished campus leaders who conducted this review of CAPS: Dr. Jody Foster, Chair, Department of Psychiatry, Pennsylvania Hospital; Thomas Gakis, Chief Operating Officer, Department of Medicine; Monica Heuer, Director of Change Management, Penn Medicine; Beth Johnston, Executive Director, Clinical Practices; Dr. Caryn Lerman, Vice Dean of PSOM and John H. Glick Professor of Psychiatry; Roy Rosin, Chief Innovation Officer, Penn Medicine; and Maureen Rush, Vice President for Public Safety. We are equally indebted to the exemplary service of CAPS Executive Director Bill Alexander, who has dedicated himself for almost two decades to providing outstanding care for our Penn students and their families.

We thank everyone in our community for helping us to sustain the most healthy and supportive campus environment, one in which every member of our community can thrive. We look forward to updating you again in the fall about our continuing efforts to advance wellness at Penn.

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