



University of Pittsburgh

*Graduate and Professional Student Government
Office of the President*

Justin A. Saver
President

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 20, 2016

Dear Pitt Graduate and Professional students:

As some of you may be aware, the University Counseling Center and the Division of Student Affairs have been extensively searching for replacements for two psychiatrist position vacancies; however, no suitable candidates have yet been identified. We understand there may have been a potential miscommunication about this search and would like to assure you that there has been a nationwide search for qualified psychiatrists since May 2016 after being informed of one of the psychiatrists' plan to retire. Because both of these positions will be vacant next week, the University Counseling Center is now working to make arrangements in the community for students in order to prevent lapses in care and access to medication.

The Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG) understands that this will affect many students receiving mental health care through the Counseling Center and that the lack of psychiatric care is therefore a cause of great concern. It is our paramount interest to advocate for student interests which includes high standards of mental health care.

Regarding concerns about the limitations of 8 individual counseling sessions each academic year to be supplemented by the unlimited group sessions, we understand your concerns and would like clarify the motivation behind this. This policy was created to minimize the wait between appointments for students seeking immediate care and ultimately allow the Counseling Center to provide care for more students. Walk-in appointments are now possible for students seeking urgent care, and these students are typically able to see a clinician within 1 hour. These changes have allowed the Counseling Center to provide the immediate mental health care that is so important to ensuring that students have the support they need.

GPSG is committed to advocating for improved access to the University Counseling Center resources for graduate and professional students throughout the year. As such, we have recently appointed two graduate students to serve on the Mental Health Task Force, with the point of contact being GPSG's Vice President of Committees, Aliyah Weinstein. These students have been tasked with the goal of increasing awareness of current Counseling Center resources and ensuring that new or changed policies affecting access to mental health resources, including counseling and psychiatric care, are to the benefit of graduate and professional students.

We invite you to share your concerns about the vacant psychiatrist positions and any other questions regarding mental health care at the University with our Vice President of Committees, Aliyah Weinstein, at committees.gpsg@pitt.edu as well as the Director of the University Counseling Center, Dr. Ed Michaels at edmichaels@pitt.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin A. Saver".

Justin A. Saver
President, Graduate and Professional Student Government