

*Wellness, prevention, early intervention and
case management support for graduate
students: Three models from across the
University of California system*

12th Annual American College Counseling Association Conference

San Diego, CA

February 8, 2019



Presenters:

- Ryan Sims, MA - Associate Director of Academic Services & Graduate Academic Counselor, UC Santa Barbara
- Phong Luong, Psy.D. - Graduate Academic Counselor, UC Irvine
- Armando Flores, ASW - Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Scholar Case Manager, UC Los Angeles

Why graduate students?

Bart: Look at me, I'm a grad student. I'm 30 years old and I made \$600 last year.

Marge: Bart, don't make fun of grad students. They've just made a terrible life choice.

—*The Simpsons*



Recent press:

- “Mental Health Crisis for Grad Students” - Flaherty, C. *Inside Higher ED* (06 March, 2018)
- “Graduate School Can Have Terrible Effects on People's Mental Health” - Wong, A. *The Atlantic* (27 November, 2018)
- “A Very Mixed Record on Grad Student Mental Health” - Flaherty, C. *Inside Higher ED* (06 December, 2018)

Graduate Division (not Student Affairs):

The Graduate Division facilitates and coordinates graduate education. We provide student services for all graduate academic and professional programs at the University of California, Santa Barbara. It is our goal to promote academic excellence in graduate degree programs; to foster a diverse and inclusive graduate community of domestic and international students; and to cultivate for all graduate students both an intellectually challenging and socially supportive academic environment. [Graduate Division] encourages the development and success of students through workshops, training activities, counseling, and initiatives which promote timely degree completion.

Graduate Division:

- Academic Services*
- Admissions, Outreach & Diversity Initiatives
- Financial Support
- Career & Professional Development

Academic Services:

- Processing petitions, committee nominations, advancement to candidacy
- Intake of theses and dissertations
- Conducting the degree checks to award all master's and doctoral degrees
- Graduate commencement registration
- Navigating academic performance and progress

Agenda:

1. Recent research on graduate mental health and well-being
2. The Graduate Counselor...a new position/approach to meeting the unique needs of graduate students
3. Evolution and expansion of the position at UCSB & UCLA (2016)
4. Interventions - prevention, early intervention, outreach & response
5. Q&A

Questions & Discussion:

- What changes in students have you noticed over the last few years?
- Are you seeing more serious issues?
- What are some of the unique stresses experienced by graduate students?

Vignette:

“Janet” is a fourth year Ph.D. student in a Biological Science program. She is a first generation student who identifies as Latina. She has passed all courses and advanced to candidacy her third year. She is currently in a lab with supportive senior students, but has a primary advisor who is “unpredictable and unclear about what is required” for her current project. The advisor has stated several times that if Janet cannot work more collaboratively and make fewer experimental mistakes, she will not allow Janet to continue in the lab. Janet also reports intensified anxiety, a limited social support network, and is considering mastering out of the program.

1. What questions still need to be clarified with the student?
2. Based on what you know, how would you advise the student?
3. What resources might help the student?

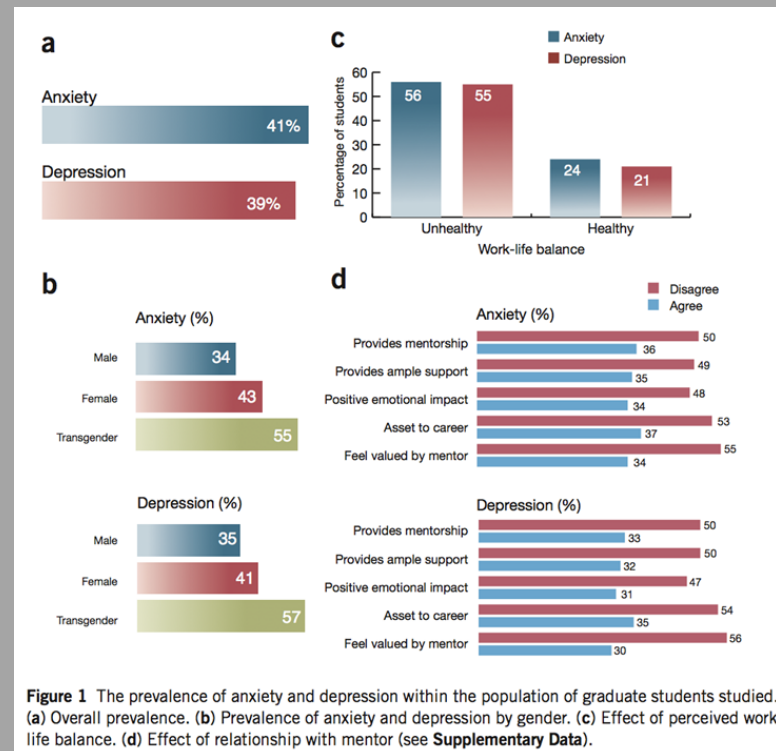
Work-life balance: Is it possible in graduate school?

Graduate students who have developed an approach for balance during their graduate school years are less likely to experience anxiety, depression, and impactful stress and more likely to increase their capacity for sustainable, high quality work than graduate students who have not.

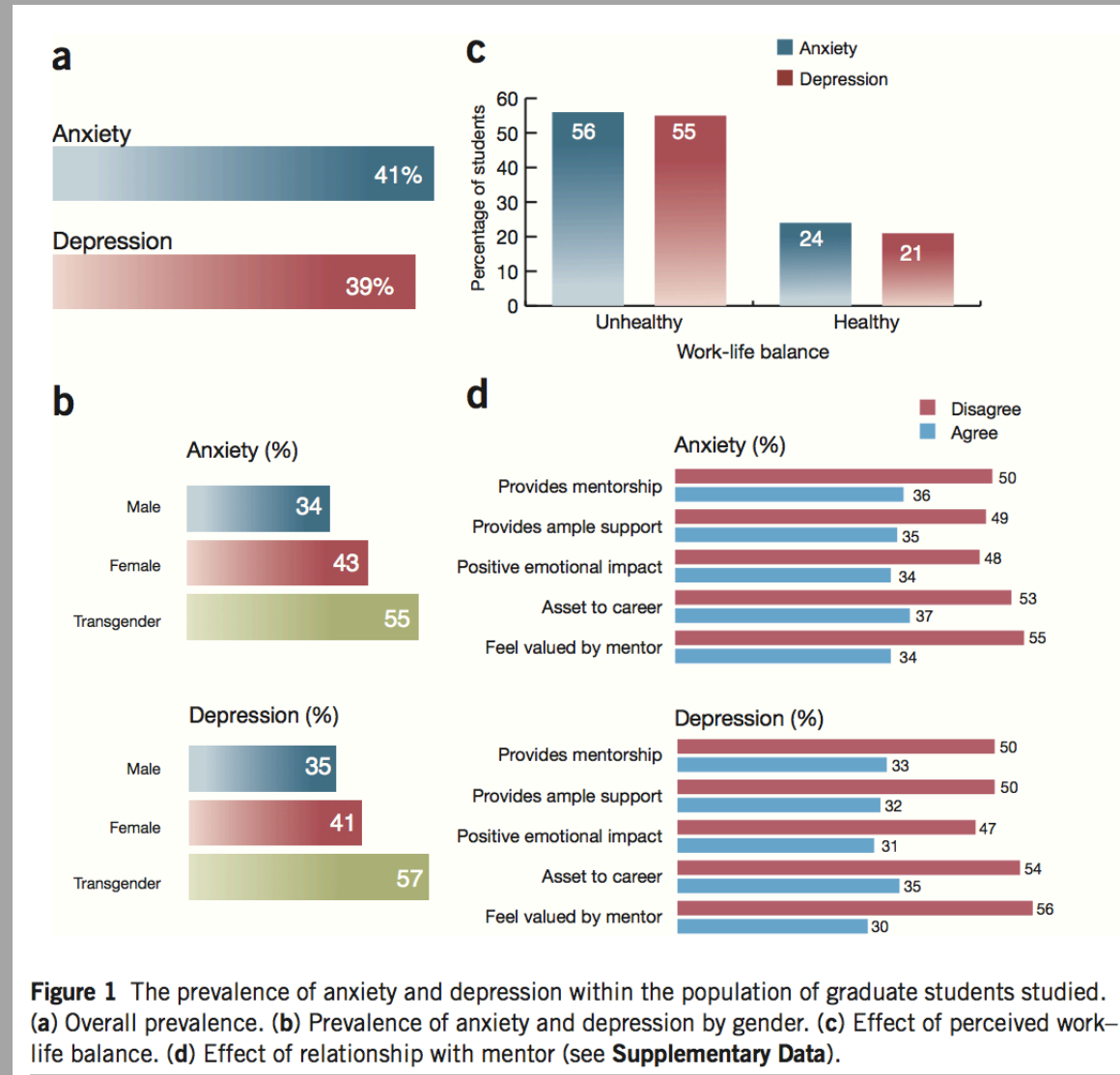
- Adapted from Graduate Student Happiness and Well-Being Report UC Berkeley (2014)

Recent study:

- “Evidence for a mental health crisis in graduate education” – T.M. Evans *et al. Nature Biotechnology* **36**, 282–284 (06 March, 2018)



Study results:



UC campus surveys:

- UC Berkeley Graduate Student Survey (2004)
 - Focus on mental health problems/services
 - Satisfaction with advisors
- UC Irvine Survey of Graduate Student's Mental Health (2008)
 - Service need, access, satisfaction, variation, preferences
- Graduate Student Happiness and Well-Being Report UC Berkeley (2014)
 - Life satisfaction
 - Financial confidence
 - Career prospects
 - Living conditions

Campus surveys (cont.):

The screenshot shows a PDF document titled "Graduate Student Happiness & Well-Being Report | Summary of Findings | 2014". The document is displayed in Adobe Reader. The main heading is "Top Predictors of Graduate Student Well-Being". Below this, there are three sections: "Top Predictors of Satisfaction With Life", "Top Predictors of Depression", and "Overall 10 Top Predictors".

Graduate Student Happiness & Well-Being Report | Summary of Findings | 2014

Top Predictors of Graduate Student Well-Being

Top Predictors of Satisfaction With Life <i>A common, validated measure of positive function, happiness and well-being.</i>	Living Conditions Career Prospects Financial Confidence
Top Predictors of Depression <i>A validated measure of negative function used in psychiatric epidemiology.</i>	Sleep Overall Health Academic Engagement
Overall 10 Top Predictors <i>By average standardized beta coefficient in Life Satisfaction & Depression models.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Career Prospects2. Overall Health3. Living Conditions4. Academic Engagement5. Social Support6. Financial Confidence7. Academic Progress & Preparation8. Sleep9. Feeling Valued & Included10. Advisor Relationship

"The largest source of anxiety for me is

"I live on my own for the first time and it

UC (system-wide) survey:

UC Graduate Student Well-Being Survey (2016)

- Well-being measures
 1. Life satisfaction
 2. Depression
 3. Mentorship and advising
 4. Financial confidence
 5. Food security
 6. Career prospects
- Factors influencing mental health and well-being
- Top priorities with regard to attention and resources



Photo: <http://diversity.universityofcalifornia.edu/programs/graduate.html>

UNIVERSITY
OF
CALIFORNIA

Major Findings from the UC Graduate Student Well-Being Survey

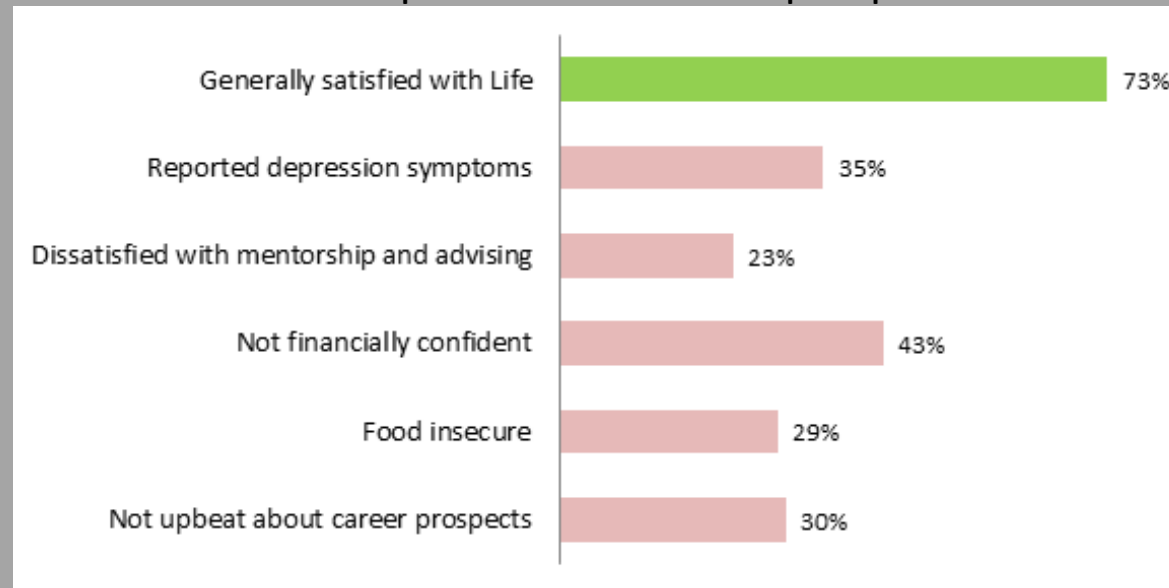
Institutional Research & Academic Planning at UCOP

November 10, 2016

Major findings: Well-being measures

Nearly three-quarters of graduate students are generally satisfied with life but challenges remain:

- **Over one-third** reported symptoms of clinical depression
- **Nearly one-quarter** dissatisfied with mentorship and advising
- **Over two-fifths** are not financially confident
- **Over one-quarter** experienced food insecurity
- **Almost one-third** not upbeat about career prospects



Major findings: Top predictors of life satisfaction and depression

Career prospects and overall health are the top two predictors of graduate students' life satisfaction.

Overall health and academic preparation are the top two predictors of graduate students' reporting depression symptoms.

Life Satisfaction

Career Prospects	1
Overall Health	2
Social Support	3
Financial Confidence	4
Living Conditions	5
Program Climate	6
Academic Progress	7
Academic Preparation	8
Mentorship and Advising	9
Skipped Meals	10
Sleep Hours	11

Depression

Overall Health	1
Academic Preparation	2
Career Prospects	3
Social Support	4
Sleep Hours	5
Skipped Meals	6
Program Climate	7
Academic Progress	8
Financial Confidence	9

Major findings: Top priorities with regard to attention and resources

Survey asked respondents to prioritize the top areas where they would like attention and resources

Mental health was the most frequently selected priority for attention and resources on campus, followed by financial resources/management and career development support.

	1	2	3	All
Mental Health	925	594	588	2,107
Financial				
Resources/Management	842	604	534	1,980
Career Development	532	612	621	1,765
Housing	643	531	413	1,587
Academic Progress, Quality or Engagement	525	553	509	1,587
Health and Fitness	316	465	480	1,261
Faculty Advising	344	443	432	1,219
Campus Safety	293	264	228	785
Food quality or security	153	276	320	749
Graduate Program Climate and Belonging	159	240	327	726
Social Support	67	139	239	445
Campus Climate and Inclusion	86	122	154	362
Off-campus Safety	83	125	123	331

Conclusions

- *Most* students **satisfied with life**
- Concerning numbers of students with **depression symptoms, financial, food, and career** insecurities
- African American and Hispanic/Latino(a) students: *less favorable results* for **advising, financial confidence, and food security** (vs. some/all other ethnicities)
- Students in humanities and social sciences *not doing as well* on **life satisfaction, food security, and** (humanities only) **financial confidence.**
 - Also: *less favorable results* (within certain levels) for **depression symptoms** and **career prospects.**
- On all measures analyzed except advising, LGBTQ students report *less favorable results* than non-LGBTQ students.

Well-Being Measure	Estimated Number in Population
Generally satisfied with life	35,000
Reported depression symptoms	16,000
Dissatisfied with advising	11,000
Not financially confident	19,000
Food insecure	12,000
Not upbeat about career prospects	13,000
ALL STUDENTS ENROLLED WINTER/SPRING 2016	47,000

Note: The estimated numbers are based on the weights calculated for the stratified sample.

UC Irvine: The Graduate Division Counselor

The Graduate Division Counselor Phong Luong, Psy.D.

Phong Luong is here to support YOUR academic journey and can provide:

- Academic support
- Time management strategies
- Effective communication skills
- An ear when you feel stressed by your new academic environment
- Referrals to campus services

Hours: Call or email for an appointment

Location: Aldrich Hall, Room 120

Email: pbluong@uci.edu

Phone: 949-824-0246

UCIRVINE
GRADUATE DIVISION

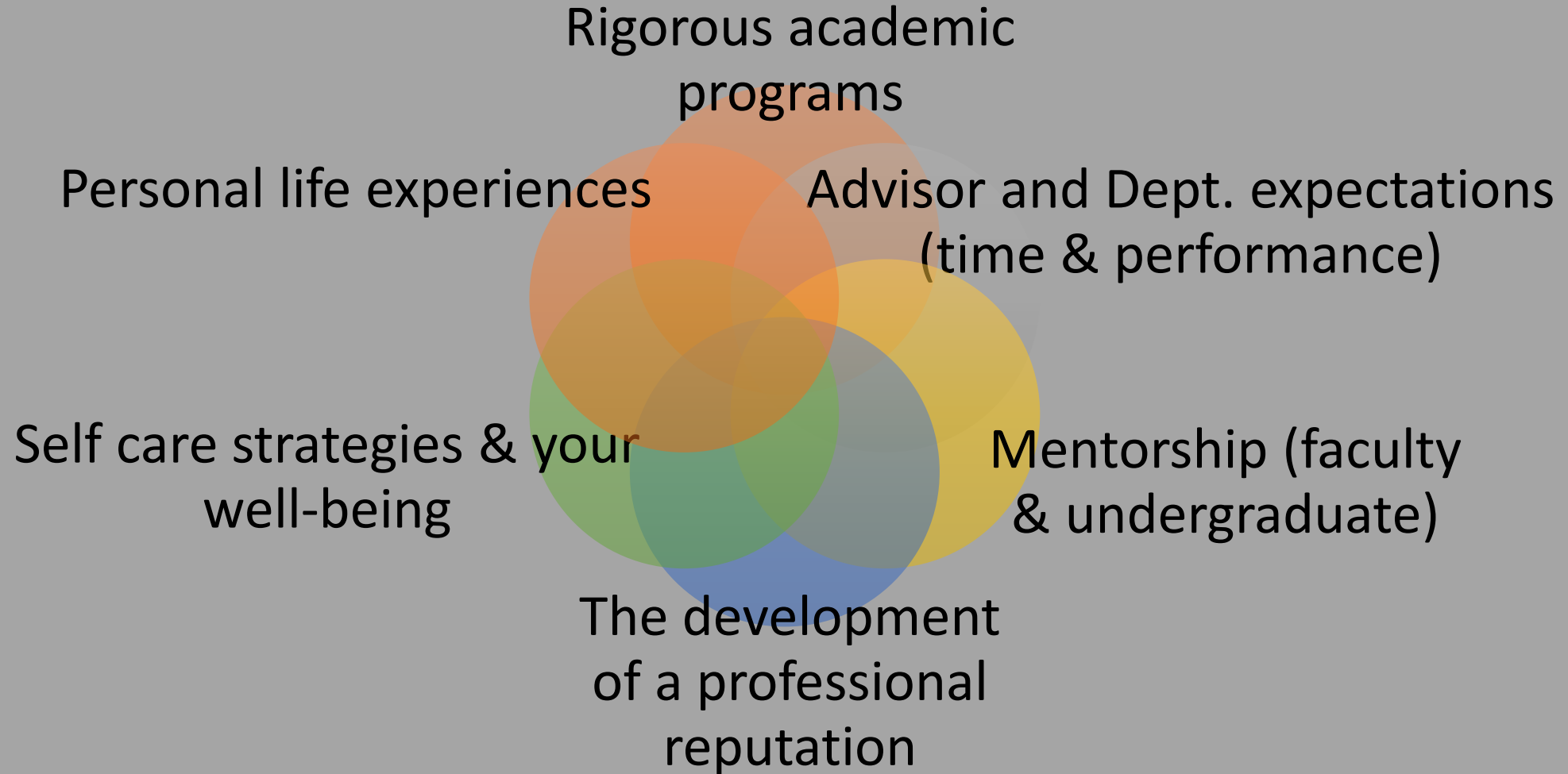


UC Irvine: Graduate Counselor Model



- Clinically trained counselor, but NOT working as a clinician
- A resource outside of student's academic program
- Provides link between service providers and academic units
- Can be accessed by students, faculty and staff alike
- Students referred by faculty, staff or self-referral
- Unlimited (free) sessions
- With tie to central academic unit, can mitigate impact of personal issues on academic profile

Graduate School: Lay of the Land



The IMs of Stress:

- Impostor Syndrome
- Money
- Mentors
- Moving Forward



Graduate Academic Counseling Services:

Communication skills

Time management skills

Confidence building strategies

Academic goal setting and planning

Balancing personal difficulties with academics

Campus mental health and other resource referrals

UC Santa Barbara:



Ryan Sims, M.A.
Graduate Division Academic Counselor

✉ Ryan.Sims@graddiv.ucsb.edu
☎ 805-893-2068
🏢 Cheadle Hall, 3rd Floor

Call or email for an appointment

Service Provided:

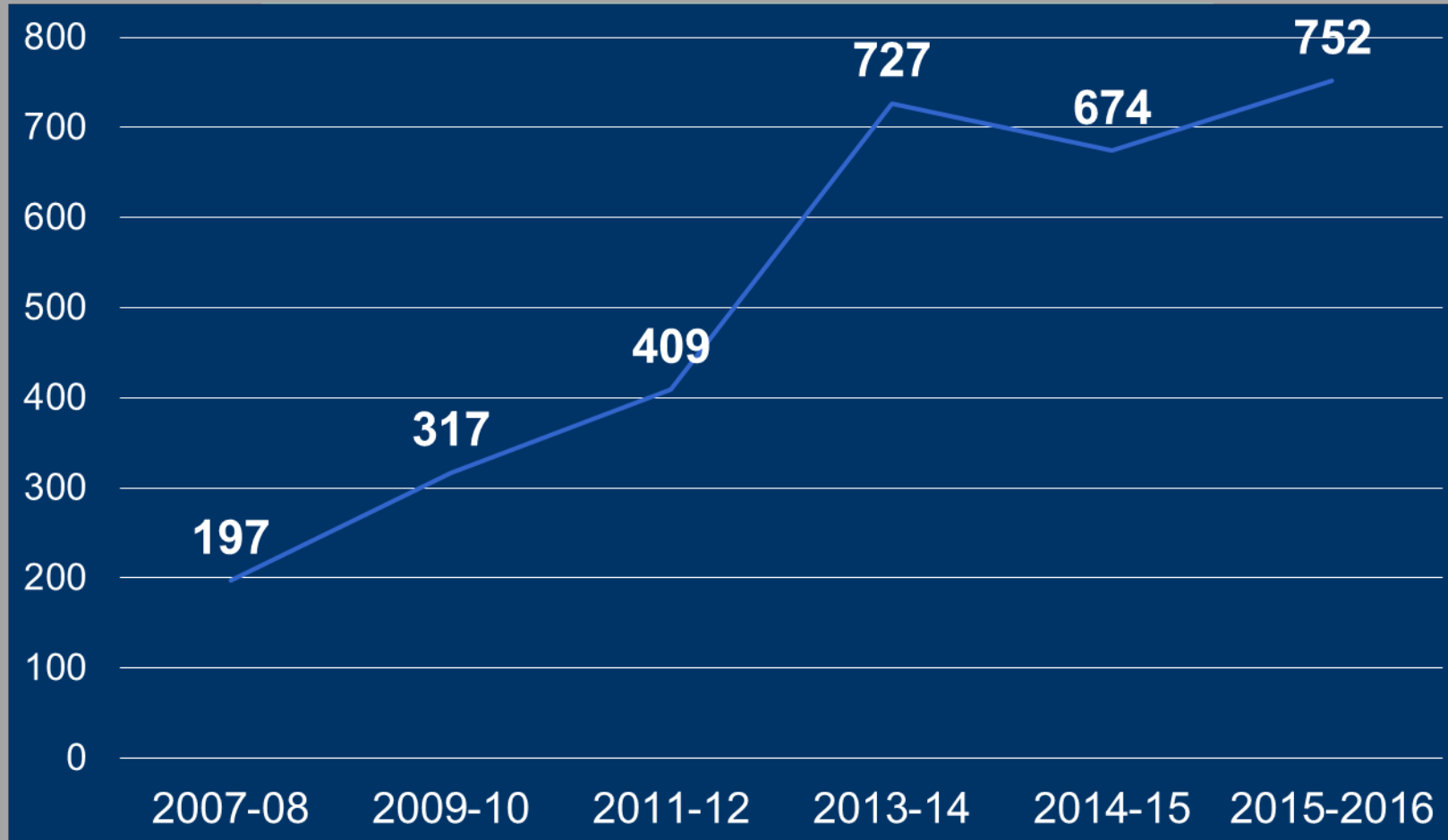
- Academic support
- Time management strategies
- Effective communication skills
- Referrals to campus services
- An ear when you feel stressed by your new academic environment

UC SANTA BARBARA
Graduate Division

A photograph of a building on the UC Santa Barbara campus, likely Cheadle Hall, with a body of water in the foreground.

Graduate Division

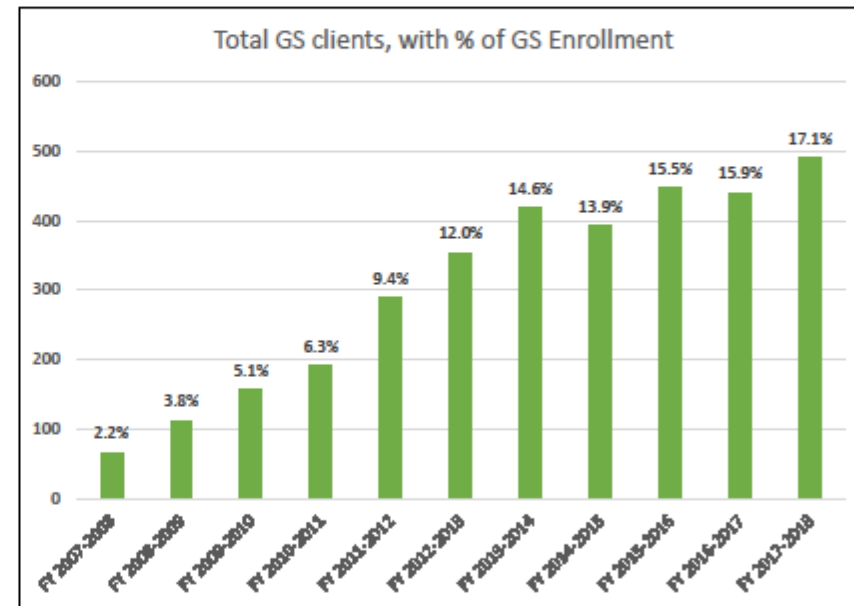
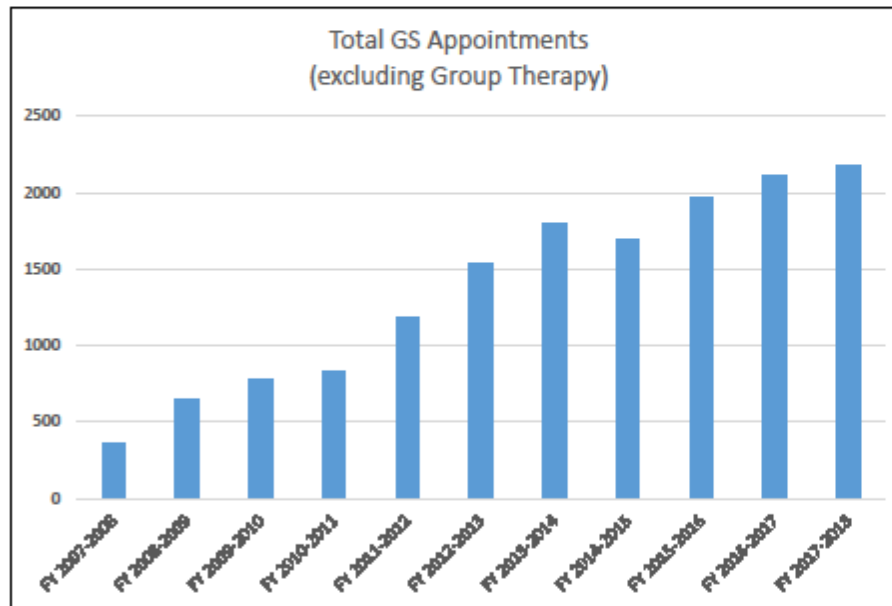
UC Santa Barbara: Referrals to SMHCS



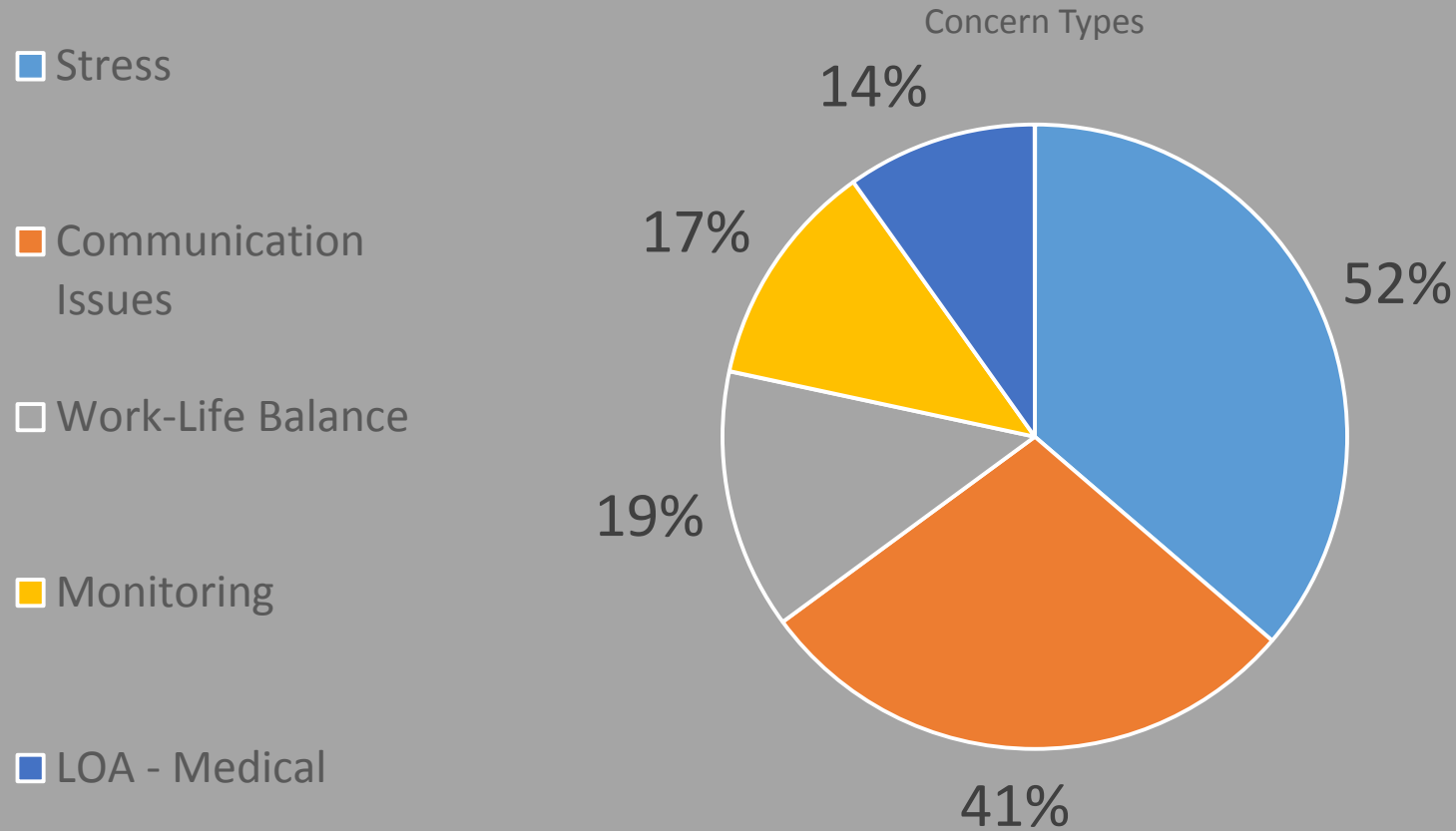
UC Santa Barbara: Utilization of CAPS



Graduate Student (GS) Utilization



Academic Counseling: Concern Types



Academic Counseling: Departments

Department	% of their students with a care report
CHST	30.77%
CLIT	29.63%
THTDA	25.00%
POLS	22.45%
EEMB	20.73%
GLOBL	18.92%
SP&PT	16.00%
FEMST	15.79%
FLMST	15.38%
ME	15.29%

Academic Counseling: Caseload


- 287 students have Care Reports (average caseload per year)
- 55% of Care Reports in the system are for female students, even though females make up only 45% of our graduate population.
- Underrepresented students have more Care Reports, by percentage, than non-URM students.
 - 14% of URM students have a Care Report, compared to 8% of non-URM students
- 86% of the Care Reports are for doctoral students

The UCSB Model: Prevention, Early Intervention, & Outreach

- Get in their spaces and make yourself known
- Remove barriers for accessing resources
- Utilize data to be proactive and for prevention purposes
- When/where resources allow, bring in other experts (use their resources to help your students)




UC Los Angeles:



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Got Questions?



**ARMANDO
FLORES**
Case Manager,
Grad Students
and Postdoctoral
Scholars

Armando serves the UCLA Community by consulting about the available resources for graduate students in distress, supporting students who are experiencing barriers to their academic success, and helping students, staff, and faculty navigate how to respond to a crisis.

Stop by during his office hours!

Wednesdays, 3-5pm
@ GSRC, SAC B-11!

Can't make it? Contact Armando for an appointment at:
afloresgrad.ucla.edu

DROP-IN HOURS

UC Los Angeles:



- Supporting graduate students that are experiencing significant personal barriers to their academic success

- Academic Difficulty
- Financial Stress
- Health and Wellness concerns
- Interpersonal conflicts



- Referrals to campus and community resources
- Facilitating communication with multiple campus entities
- Consultation regarding individuals who are in distress, disruptive to the campus community, and/or exhibiting concern behaviors

Evolution of the Role of Case Manager:

- Overall theme of supporting graduate students holistically with a lens towards academics and policy.
- Working in collaboration with the campus response teams to help guide coordinated responses towards students in crisis.
- Each campus needs and goals are unique, but building towards a model of prevention, support and accessibility of resources are key themes.



Supporting Students, Staff and Faculty:

- Many campus support services are geared towards undergraduate students.
- Staff turnover, inconsistent staff/faculty onboarding, time to degree concerns, and varied mentoring practices all contribute to a need for focused support for graduate students.
- Graduate student experiences present unique challenges when facing issues such as isolation, career prospects, professional development and dual roles as employees & students.



Peeking into a faculty panel speaking to the admits, the grad student ruefully chuckles at their wildly cheerful overview of the program.

Responding to Students in Crisis:

- UCLA Consultation and Response Team
 - <https://www.studentincrisis.ucla.edu/>
 - Dean of Students/Office of Student Conduct, CAPS, Case Management Services, Office of Residential Life, UCPD, Student Health Center, Academic Counseling
- UCLA Economic Crisis Response Team
 - <https://www.studentincrisis.ucla.edu/Economic-Crisis-Response>
 - Financial Aid, Community Programs Office, Cal-Fresh Campus Support, Student Loans and Collections
- UCLA Behavioral Intervention Team
 - <https://www.chr.ucla.edu/behavioral-intervention-team>
 - Labor Relations, Human Resources, Staff and Faculty Counseling, Campus Counsel, & Insurance and Risk Management



Getting ready to take a shower, the grad student identifies one place where he can conceal his tears.

Prevention & Workshop Offerings:

- Responding to Distressed and Distressing Students
- Imposter Syndrome
- Practicing Self-Care in Graduate School
- Postdoctoral Scholar Orientation Events
- Life-Skills Course for Grads & Postdocs

Other campus outreach efforts:

- Graduate department orientation(s)
- Graduate student welcome events
- Graduate Division special fellowships and diversity initiatives
- Drop-In Hours at GSRC



Running into a paywall for yet another article, the grad student is pummeled anew by the academic-industrial complex.

Integral Campus Partners:

- Career & Professional Development Resources
- Campus mental health services/providers
- Fellowship and funding support services
- Childcare resources and information
- Campus accessibility office
- International student support services
- Opportunities for interpersonal connection (inside and outside home dept)



*Other UC Graduate Specialists:

- Karen Diaz (2012) @UCSB – CAPS satellite office, graduate housing
- Larissa Charnsangavej (2016) @UCB – Graduate student life specialist/coordinator, Student Affairs administrator working in the Graduate Division
- Amy Honigman (2018) @UCB – Clinical specialists, CAPS (w/satellite office in the Graduate Assembly Wellness Center)
- UC Irvine hires post-doc Student Assistant (2018)
- UC Merced (2019?) – collaborating with UC Graduate Deans (2018)
- 2nd Graduate Case Manager at UCLA in 2019 (hiring in progress)

Recommendations:

- Continue to expand and promote mental health services and prevention efforts
- Increase training for advisors and faculty on how to recognize and respond appropriately to warning signs of distress, mentoring students from diverse backgrounds, etc.
- Expand opportunities for graduate students – especially doctoral students – to learn about career opportunities outside academia through information sharing, experiential learning, and professional development opportunities
- Help students manage finances and promote housing/food security

Recommendations:

- Help empower students to maximize mentoring relationships by employing effective strategies in managing advisee/advisor relationships
- Encourage students to seek connection outside of their home department and build a diverse network of support
- Recommend students maintain structure & structured support (as needed)
- Make sure students schedule downtime to help improve motivation, coping skills, and W-L balance

Questions?



