

R. Barbara Gitenstein

Message to the Campus Community on the TCNJ Clinic

May 10, 2017

TCNJ Campus Community:

I write to update the community on matters regarding the TCNJ Clinic and as a follow up to the information session and open forum held last Thursday, May 4. As I stated that night and have said earlier, our communication on the decision to close the clinic has not been good. That night I also expressed my deep disappointment with the failure of the School of Education process to follow the kind of inclusivity and transparency that I expect in decision making at TCNJ. It is not just that I believe shared governance is an embedded value in our community, it is that I believe that broad based, informed, consultation is the most effective way to ensure solid decision making. I want to emphasize that such decision making never satisfies every stakeholder group's desires, but it does result in better decisions and when difficult decisions must be made, the rationale for the decision is commonly known.

History cannot be undone, nor can some of the actions already in place, but the College will respond to, and take action on, what we heard May 4 in a thoughtful, open and consultative fashion.

To that end, I have accepted Provost Taylor's recommendation that we implement the program review process for the Clinic that has been in standard use for periodic review of academic programs. Beginning immediately, that process will include a TCNJ Clinic self-assessment, an analysis of the Clinic as a clinical site by the Department of Counselor Education, and a thorough written report from the School of Education's Dean's office. An external consultant, selected in consultation not only with the program being assessed but also with the Counselor Education Department, will be engaged to review this material and conduct interviews. The goal is to assess the Clinic's effectiveness in serving the educational needs of our counseling graduate students, the mental health needs of our undergraduate students and mental health services for our community clients. Experts in mental health care delivery, especially professionals on the campus who are responsible for mental health services, will be part of this analysis. In addition, students in the counselor education programs as well as students from the general population who have accessed services from the Clinic will be invited to be part of the process. The new Dean of the School of Education will be provided the assessment material and the Provost will consult with her/him before making her recommendation to me. While we will move as expeditiously as possible, the analysis must be thoughtful, thorough and transparent, with a focus on best practice, data and analysis.

Until this process concludes, the decision for closure on the TCNJ Clinic will be held in abeyance and the Clinic will have a dotted line reporting structure to Student Affairs as well as

its current supervisory reporting line to the Dean of the School of Education. Largely due to the fact that contracts have already been finalized for next year for our counselor education students' clinical placements, counseling services at the Clinic may well be limited. However, services for student and community member clients currently being served at the clinic will continue.

In order to ensure we are providing appropriate options for our community, plans to finalize an agreement with CAVI Integrated Wellness Concepts (this includes Collegiate Services, Ambulatory Detox, Veterans wellness, and InFocus Urgent Care) and to lease space for local counselors will continue as previously announced.

The final decision with regard to the status of the TCNJ Clinic will be made no later than October 31, 2017.

On May 15, there will be a meeting of those who responded to the request to help process the recommendations to enhance our mental health services that were raised that evening. These recommendations and concerns include, but are not limited to, cost mitigation such as the use of a sliding scale, insurance implications, as well as the use and method of accessing the proposed emergency fund and the racial makeup of clinicians available to our students. In addition, we have already set up meetings to follow up with those community mental health care providers present that evening who expressed interest in partnering with us on community mental health care services.

Additional information and details regarding all of these plans will be addressed by the offices of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. I have tasked Ms. Heather Fehn, my chief of staff and a 1996 graduate of the Master's program in Counselor Education, with coordinating these several initiatives and responses.

I thank students for their advocacy; I thank TCNJ administrators and faculty for listening actively; I thank all those who attended the forum and particularly those who have offered to work with us to improve mental health care delivery on the campus and improve our relationships with community partners and community members.

Sincerely,
R. Barbara Gitenstein
President