Health services coming to campus

Ed Day

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Students will have another way to access health care starting Fall Semester 2016.

Federal law requires universities to offer some form of health services to students. In order to comply with the law, Metropolitan State University has chosen Fairview as its health service provider. Fairview’s proposal combines in-person consultations with telemedicine, which an advisory committee deemed to be most convenient for students.

“This model made the most sense from a logistical perspective and a cost perspective,” said Herbert King, dean of Students at Metro State. The limited infrastructure will help keep costs lower; students will pay a $2.50 fee per credit.

A health care adviser from Fairview will be based on the St. Paul campus and will serve as a primary point of contact with students. This adviser, called a “Health Care Navigator,” will be accessible in person or through the internet, King said.

Students can consult the navigator for information about symptoms such as back pain, flu, eczema, preventive care, medication refills and other primary care types of services, King said.

In a way, the service is a bit like an initial office visit. The navigator will show students how to access referrals and pharmacies that are compatible with a student’s current health insurance.

“What we’re paying for is basically the copay,” King said.

Specific services are still being negotiated. However, the plan is flexible and subject to change at prescribed times to meet the needs and preferences of Metro State students, King said.

The telemedicine, which the navigator can teach students to use, will allow students to go to a website and get a diagnosis. King said this is important for a school with multiple campuses.

Wellness initiatives are also part of the package, according to King. The health navigator from Fairview will conduct trainings on various topics related to healthy lifestyles and maintaining a work-life balance. “They’re going to engage student to determine those topics,” King said, noting that the timing is fortuitous with the opening of the fitness center in the new Student Center.

“We’re excited about the opportunity,” King said.

Creating a full-service clinic on campus like some other universities would not be cost effective or practical for Metro State, which, aside from not even have residence halls, draws students “with mortgages and families who live in 12 different counties,” said Tom Cook, special assistant to the president in September.

In addition to primary campuses at Dayton’s Bluff and Midway, students take classes online and at 15 partnering two-year colleges throughout the Twin Cities area each semester. Most of that space is leased. “For the majority of our students it wouldn’t be convenient,” Cook said.

The services will be phased in over the summer and should be up and running by this fall.