

University Counseling Service (UCS) Outreach Evaluation Fall 2012

Background: One of the core functions of the UCS is outreach to the campus community. UCS outreach serves multiple functions: psychoeducation, primary and secondary prevention, advertising of UCS services, collaboration with other campus agencies, etc. Each semester, UCS staff members present a variety of psychoeducational programs to student audiences on topics such as stress management, test anxiety, managing depression, relationship concerns, and UCS information.

Purpose: The purpose of this outreach evaluation project was to assess the effectiveness of UCS outreach presentation to a student audience on campus.

Outcomes: The following outcomes were identified as overarching goals for UCS outreach efforts. As a result of UCS outreach programs:

1. Students will increase their knowledge about the psychological topic being presented.
2. Students will increase their skills in the topic area of the presentation.
3. Students will increase their awareness about the range of services available at the UCS.
4. Students will increase their willingness to seek counseling if needed.

Method: UCS staff members administered a pre-post survey measure before and after topical outreach presentations. Aside from demographic information, such as year in school, age, and disability status, the survey assessed whether or not students had previously heard of the UCS (yes/no) as well as change on the following variables of interest: knowledge about the topic of the presentation, skills in the topic area of the presentation, awareness about range of UCS services, and willingness to seek counseling.

A representative sample of survey participants was obtained by surveys being given to more than 85% of the outreach presentations made by UCS in the Fall of 2012. There were 230 surveys returned for UCS staff member presentations, and 264 surveys returned for programs facilitated by practicum students who presented programs (supervised by UCS staff) for the SWAT series on campus (a series of programs put on by the Office of Retention to help students who are struggling with academic and life skills). Presenters returned completed survey to the UCS for analysis.

Results: Data for the SWAT programs and other UCS programs were analyzed separately due to the fact that demographic variables were not available for SWAT data.

For UCS staff programs, data were collected for six different programs for a total of 240 participants. The programs included time management, UCS information, stress management, study skills, and a communication program. 78% of the participants were traditional age undergraduates (18-22 years old), with 60% being women. The majority of programs addressed first year students (35%), with sophomore, junior, and senior students averaging about 15% of participants. There were 9% graduate students in the overall sample. 55% of the sample identified as European American/White, 25% as Asian or Asian American (due to programming for international students), 4.6% as Hispanic/Latino, 2.1% as multiracial, and 1.7% as African American. Almost a third (27%) of the sample were international students. In terms of living situation, 37% of students were living in residence halls, 10% were living in a sorority/fraternity house, and 50% were living off campus. 82.5% of the participants identified as heterosexual, with less than 2% identifying as gay and lesbian, 2.5% as bisexual, and 3.3% as "prefer not to answer". Presenter quality was rated as excellent by 65% of participants and as good by 29%. Program quality was rated as excellent by 49% and good by 44% of participants. 69% of participants were aware of UCS services.

There were four pre-post assessment questions rated by each participant (increased knowledge about the topic, increased skills in topic area, increased awareness of UCS services, and willingness to seek help). Results from paired sample t-tests (n=240) were statistically significant at the 0.01 level for all four questions and showed an increase between pre- and post-test measurement. Mean differences between pre-and post-assessment are listed below:

Pre-Assessment	Mean	Post-Assessment	Mean
Knowledge about topic area	2.83	Knowledge about topic area	4.26
Skills in topic area	2.67	Skills in topic area	4.24
Awareness about range of UCS services	2.85	Awareness about range of UCS services	3.93
Willingness to seek help	3.38	Willingness to seek help	4.07

For the SWAT programs, the same four pre-post assessment questions were rated by a total of 264 participants. Results from paired sample t-tests (n=264) were statistically significant at the 0.01 level for all four questions and showed an increase between pre- and post-test measurement. Mean differences between pre-and post-assessment are listed below:

Pre-Assessment	Mean	Post-Assessment	Mean
Knowledge about topic area	3.01	Knowledge about topic area	4.45
Skills in topic area	2.89	Skills in topic area	4.15
Awareness about range of UCS services	2.93	Awareness about range of UCS services	3.95
Willingness to seek help	3.44	Willingness to seek help	3.86

Discussion: It appears that UCS outreach presentations are helping students improve their knowledge and skills in the topic areas discussed and increase students' willingness to seek help. This is true for both the SWAT presentations facilitated by practicum students and for UCS staff member facilitated presentations. It is positive that 69% of students are aware of UCS services and that as a result of attending a UCS presentation, there was a significant increase in the awareness of the range of services we provide. Ideally, 100% of students should know about UCS services, so an aspirational goal would be to increase this percentage from 69% to 75% or higher as a first step. Knowledge about the topic areas, skills in those areas, and awareness of the range of our services were rated as average on a 1-5 points scale prior to the presentations and as higher than average post presentation. Client willingness to seek help was already higher than average pre-presentations and yet still increased after the presentations. There were a few presentations where students would self-select to attend, which would presumably imply a willingness to seek help, yet most of the presentations last fall were required for students. Thus, it is encouraging to see a higher than average willingness to seek counseling if needed in this population. Results between SWAT and UCS presentations were comparable, which speaks to the solid preparation and supervision of practicum students providing SWAT presentations.

Recommendations:

Continued work on campus should focus on:

- expanding the types of topics presented
- broadening the student groups reached with UCS outreach presentations
- expanding the number of staff members presenting to student audiences

Continued evaluation work should focus on:

- continued pre-post assessment of our services
- expanding the number of programs that get assessed
- paying particular attention to outcome evaluations for outreach programs for diverse student populations