



February 17, 2017

Dear Fellow Students --

Today, I am proud to announce the University Park Student Fee Board's decision to include funding for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) within next year's Student Fee. For years, students have dedicated themselves to raising awareness about mental health and to fighting against the stigma associated with mental illness. At the same time, though, we have embroiled ourselves into a pattern of encouraging our peers who suffer from various forms of mental illness to seek counseling in a system that, like too many others across the country, did not have the resources to support them. That pattern can now end.

Under the new student fee system, students will pay a "Student Fee," which will replace both the current Student Activity Fee and the Facilities Fee beginning in the 2017-2018 academic year. The UP Student Fee Board today approved a \$9.75 per student per semester allocation of the Student Fee to CAPS. Annually, this will generate more than \$804,000 in additional revenue for CAPS and will be used to hire additional counseling staff, provide for a 24/7 crisis hotline, and fund innovative treatment options like telehealth services, among other things.

Today's decision of the UP Student Fee Board does not create a new CAPS "fee," but rather allows for a portion of the Student Fee to be allocated to CAPS. In other words, of the total Student Fee amount each student will pay every semester, \$9.75 will be dedicated to CAPS. The total fee amount each student will pay per semester will remain undetermined until the final UP Student Fee Board meeting of the year, which will likely occur in late March or early April.

President Eric Barron has agreed to match our contributions up to a certain extent, as has already been publicized. In the 2017-2018 academic year, the UP Student Fee Board's contribution of more than \$804,000 will be matched by the President up to \$215,000 and up to \$415,000 for the 2018-2019 academic year. None of this considers the decision of the Commonwealth Campus Student Fee Board, which intends to decide how much it will provide to CAPS sometime very soon. While its contribution has yet to be determined, another several hundred thousand dollars could be coming from them to support CAPS at the many Commonwealth campuses. This amount, whatever it ends up being, will be matched by President Barron up to \$150,000 for the 2017-2018 academic year and up to \$290,000 in 2018-2019.

In summary, for the next academic year, a total of over \$1,019,000 will be available to support CAPS operations at University Park and \$150,000 plus whatever amount the Commonwealth Campus Student Fee Board chooses will be available to support CAPS operations across the campus system. There are shared services, like the 24/7 crisis hotline, that benefit students at all campuses and require financial support from both University Park and the Commonwealth campuses, but the figures above provide a good illustration of how this new money will be distributed.

I would be out of place if I did not mention the long-standing commitment on behalf of President Barron and Vice President Damon Sims to address this issue, long before we managed to come up with a plan of our own. While the President's funds are in many ways a "match" of what the UP and Commonwealth Campus Student Fee Boards have contributed or may contribute, respectively, this money from Dr. Barron's office would be coming regardless of the decision of either Board. The President and his administrative team have prioritized student needs once again and deserve much praise for their work.

As stewards of student resources, the members of the UP Student Fee Board are obligated to calculate the level of support we will offer for various campus programs and services in a manner that will optimize the value and minimize the cost to our fellow students. Considering the impact of President Barron's matching funds for the next academic year and, even more significantly, the following year, we concluded that \$9.75 was an appropriate number for all students to pay each semester. We will continue to work diligently in order to ensure that the total amount students will pay for the Student Fee next year will not constitute too much of an increase over what students pay this year under the current, but soon to be eliminated, fee system. We are confident that we will be able to find savings in other areas of the Student Fee budget, particularly in facilities, that will allow us to minimize the impact on individual student fee-payers, even with this new expenditure on CAPS.

Our collective ability to promote the welfare of Penn State and her students would be nonexistent if it were not for the generations of students who were, and remain, passionate about this issue. The mental healthcare funding crisis may be over, but our efforts to promote awareness and change the perceptions surrounding mental health do not end here. Only through continued and persistent advocacy can we ensure that all who call Penn State home are cared for, supported, and never forgotten.

For the Glory --

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry Ford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Terry Ford

Student Body President
University Park Undergraduate Association