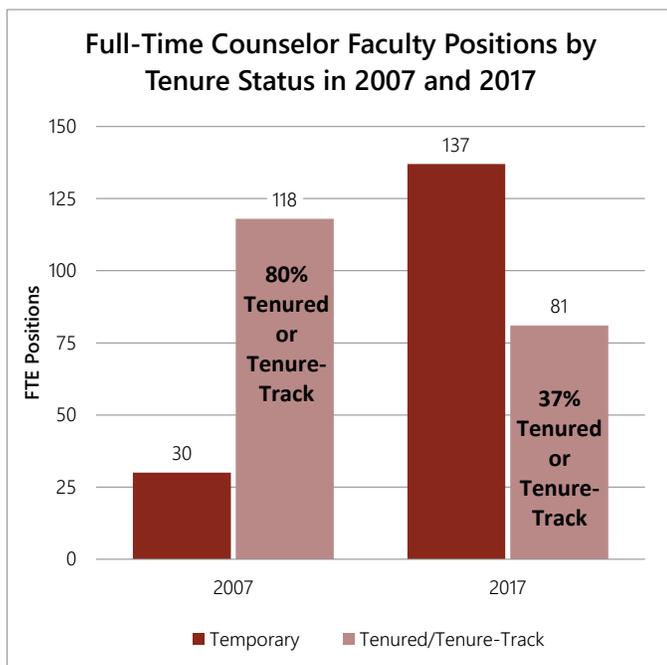
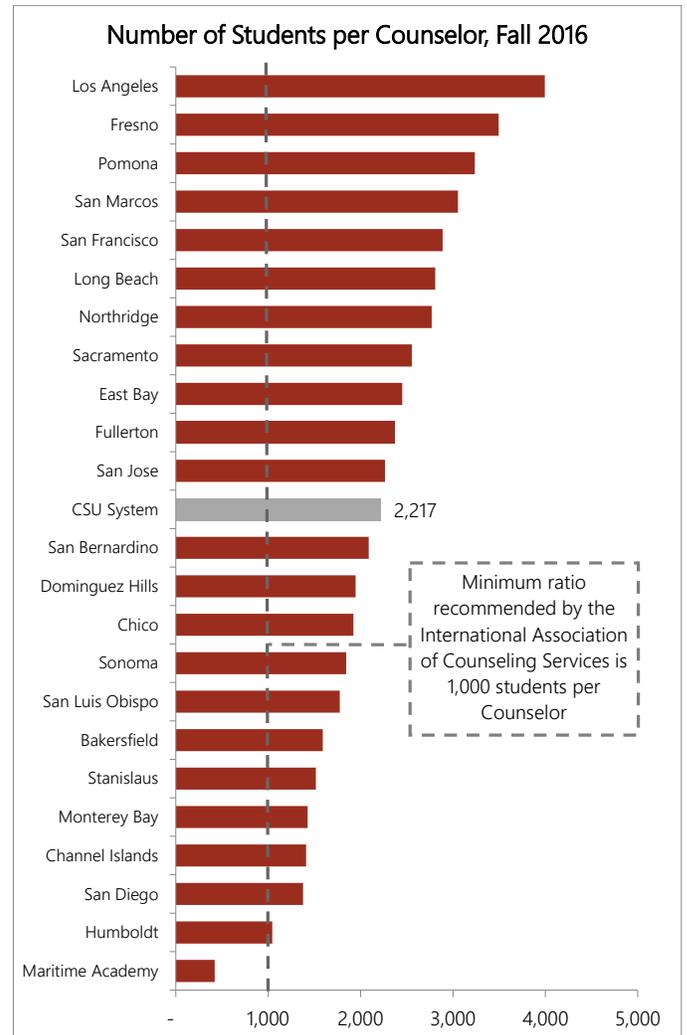


Counseling in the CSU: A Risky Underinvestment

“Growing crisis” is the phrase used by the American Psychological Association to describe the state of mental health on college campuses. The number of students seeking help for serious mental health problems has skyrocketed over the last decade. However, understaffed college counseling centers are often forced to turn students away from receiving crucial mental health support.¹

The International Association of Counseling Services (IACS), the accreditation body for college counseling centers, recommends a minimum ratio of 1,000 students for each full-time equivalent counselor on campus.² Unfortunately, most CSU campuses employ much less than one FTE counselor per 1,000 students. In fact, only two of the 23 CSU campuses meet the standard ratio of students per counselor. At Cal State LA, there are only 7 full-time counseling positions for over 28,000 students, and none of the Counselors have permanent positions. At CSU Sacramento, there are only 12 positions for nearly 31,000 students.³

Moreover, the number of CSU counselors is overestimated because not all faculty in these positions provide counseling services to students.



In addition to there being too few counselors to serve CSU students, the last decade has shown a marked drop in the number of permanent, tenure-line counselors.

As shown in the graph, between 2007 and 2017, the number of full-time, tenure-line counseling positions decreased by 30%, while temporary counselor positions increased by more than 350%.

Tenure-line counselors have permanent positions and perform many important functions that counselors with temporary contracts are simply not paid to do.

Tenure-line counselors build connections with other faculty and provide expert advice regarding students. They also respond to crises after hours and perform

crucial outreach functions, such as classroom visits and guest lectures. The expansion in numbers of Counselors with temporary contracts means less continuity for students who require support. Simply put, the CSU's shift toward the use of temporary appointments flouts the role of student health in academic success, undermining the CSU's ability to create campuses which truly promote student success.

The CSU serves an incredibly diverse student body composed of many students of color and first-generation college students. In fact, CSU campuses grant more than half of all undergraduate degrees earned by California's Latino, African-American, and Native-American students.

It is a bitter irony that the university system which educates the most black and brown students greatly underfunds student mental health support, staffing counselors below professional standards and University of California (UC) campuses. The student-to-counselor ratio for the UC system was well within compliance with the professional standard recommended by the IACS.⁴ CSU students deserve the same level of support.

Students per Counselor by UC Campus*

Campus	Student-to-Counselor Ratios
UC Berkeley	1,295
UC Davis	1,272
UC Irvine	1,363
UC Los Angeles	1,196
UC Merced	1,254
UC Riverside	3,596
UC San Diego	1,228
UC San Francisco	634
UC Santa Barbara	1,152
UC Santa Cruz	1,051
UC Systemwide	1,290
CSU Systemwide	2,217

*data for UC are from 2014; CSU from 2017

Benefits of Counseling²

- > **Lower attrition.** *Students placed on a wait list for mental health services are more likely to drop out than students who obtain timely counseling.*
- > **Improved academic performance.** *A majority of student clients report improved academic performance after counseling.*
- > **Reduced legal liability for campuses.** *Counseling centers are required to adhere to the "standards of the profession." If they don't and something goes wrong, they may face legal consequences.*

References

¹ American Psychological Association, "The State of Mental Health on College Campuses: A Growing Crisis," September 2011, <http://www.apa.org/about/gr/education/news/2011/college-campuses.aspx>.

² International Association of Counseling Services, Inc., "Statement Regarding Recommended Staff to Student Ratios," viewed on September 14, 2015 at <http://www.iacsinc.org/staff-to-student-ratios.html>.

³ Ratios were calculated by dividing the number of FTE counselors by student enrollment, or the number of students enrolled, not FTE students. This is the same methodology employed by IACS. Student enrollment figures were obtained from the CSU's annual fall term enrollment summaries and exclude students in international programs and CalStateTEACH. Enrollment summaries can be obtained at: <http://www.calstate.edu/AS/stats.shtml>. FTE counselor figures were obtained from the November Personnel Information Management System (PIMS) snapshots. The number of CSU counselor positions is overestimated, since not all faculty with counselor classifications perform counseling services.

⁴ Ratios for the University of California were calculated by dividing the number of counseling staff by student enrollment. Counseling staff were counted off each campus's Counseling and Psychological Services websites as of October 2015. All clinical staff and post-doctoral fellows were counted; interns and directors, even those who counsel part-time, were not counted. Note that time-bases were not available, but phone conversions with center directors confirmed that counseling staff are employed full-time. Student enrollment figures were obtained using the UC's Fall Enrollment at a Glance online tool, and exclude health sciences residents. Enrollment summaries can be obtained at: <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter/fall-enrollment-glance>.