HLC Accreditation 2016-2017

Evidence Document

Student Affairs

Counseling and Testing Center

Counseling and Testing Center Services

Additional information:
Wichita State University Counseling and Testing Center

The WSU Counseling and Testing Center provides mental health services and training to students, faculty, and staff in order to promote maximal academic achievement and development. In addition, the Center offers high quality testing and assessment services to all members of the University and larger community to contribute to academic and professional success.

Clinical Services

Counseling
Our professional staff provides a variety of mental health services to campus in individual, couples or group counseling. In addition, psychiatric evaluations and medication follow up is available to ongoing counseling clients. Clinicians at the Center treat a range of issues including:

- Difficulty with relationships
- Conflict resolution
- Anger management
- Stress and anxiety
- Issues with self-esteem or self-doubt
- Depression or general unhappiness
- Eating disorders
- Time management and study skills
- Alcohol and drug concerns
- Post-traumatic stress disorder

In addition to services at our main location, counseling and consultation services are available at a number of satellite locations throughout campus including:

- The Garvey Center for International Education and the Intensive English Program
- Student Health Services
- Veteran’s Center
- The Office of Diversity and Inclusion
- Housing & Residence Life

The Center currently employs six full time doctoral level licensed psychologists, two full time doctoral level licensed master’s psychologists, and two full time doctoral psychology interns also licensed at the master’s psychologist level as well as a part time psychiatrist and a part time nurse practitioner. The number of staff was increased by three full time positions in the 2014-15 academic year. In addition, there are typically 4-5 part time graduate level trainees practicing under supervision at any given time. From July 2009 through June 2014, the Counseling & Testing Center saw an average of 4104 clients per year. Table 1 provides figures on number of kept counseling sessions per twelve month academic year.
Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2010-11</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
<th>2013-14</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Kept Appts.</td>
<td>3727</td>
<td>3986</td>
<td>4675</td>
<td>4109</td>
<td>4025</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Psychological Testing**

The Center provides ADHD and Learning Disability testing services for students, faculty and staff, as well as community members. All testing is completed by either a licensed psychologist or by doctoral trainees who are supervised by a licensed psychologist. The Center typically gets between 55 and 65 requests for testing information and on average completes between 20 and 30 evaluations a year. Testing protocols that are considered “best practices” by the field of psychology are used and maintain training and knowledge of updated testing batteries on a regular basis. We provide testing services to our campus community at a fraction of the cost that they would pay in the community, giving our students a diagnosis and recommendations to assist in accessing formal disability accommodations or pharmacological treatment. Clinicians in the Counseling & Testing Center also offer personality testing that can help inform proper diagnosis and in the creation of a treatment plan for students, faculty, & staff that are seeking counseling services.

**Outreach and Consultation**

Staff are available to assist with concerns about students, co-workers and loved ones. In addition to our popular monthly seminar series, Words for Wellness, outreach services include presentations, information tables, workshops and seminars on a variety of mental health topics for classes, groups and departments. The following is a list of topics on which Center staff have presented:

- Stress Management
- Time Management and Beating Procrastination
- Helping Troubled Students/How to Help a Friend
- Conflict resolution and Communication Skills
- Eating Disorders, Healthy Eating, Body Image
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Suicide Prevention
- Effects of Drugs and Alcohol
- Perfectionism
- Resiliency
- Decision Making Skills
- Team Building
- Self-Care
- Mindfulness
- Sexual Assault and Sexual Violence
- Motivating Others or Self
- Test Taking and Study Skills
- Healthy Relationships and Boundaries
- Grieving and Loss
- Cultural Adjustment
Testing Services

Test Administration and Proctoring
The Center administers many institutional and national exams to prospective students, current students and community members. During weekday testing, we administer classroom exams to our students (make-up tests, retests, and distance exams) and distance exams to students who live and work in the Wichita area but are enrolled at other schools. We also administer tests used by Admissions (SAT and ACT) and departments/colleges (Nursing, Education, and International Education) to assess students for admittance to the University or to academic programs. Exams such as the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) that are taken by students and individuals in the community who need these exams to enter programs at other institutions are offered as well.

Although some Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) programs (CLEP, DSST, and department exams) that allow students to demonstrate their mastery of college material are administered, our testing staff processes many more test scores that are submitted from other sources such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB). It is important to receive these scores and document the credit earned as quickly as possible and inform students about credit they have been awarded before they enroll in courses, so this activity is prioritized. We consult with advisors in the academic colleges to answer questions about PLA and to assist their advisees.

The volume of tests administered in the Center fluctuates based on the need/demand for tests and certifications. Some exams administered in the past have transitioned to company-owned testing centers in the community. In addition, our office has experienced a shift away from paper and pencil testing for academic exams while we have increased computerized testing services. We currently administer tests from four companies that provide certification exams in diverse fields such as toxic waste management, medical specialties, and personal training.

Table 2 provides figures on number of sessions and number of examinees tested in our office or on the campus in classrooms and computer labs as well as on the number for test preparation workshops. For some programs, we provide all services such as purchasing tests, selecting dates, registering examinees, confirming testing appointments, administering exams, advising on scores they receive, etc. For other tests, we work with departments or test companies to provide only test administration services. We constantly seek to expand the number and types of services we offer to assist faculty and the University, but just as important, we constantly evaluate and seek to improve our services for students and other individuals. We are one of 87 test centers in the U.S. that has earned NCTA Test Center Certification from the National College Testing Association.

Test Preparation Workshops
The Counseling & Testing Center offers test preparation for the ACT (some workshops cover the whole test and others focus on the math section only) and work cooperatively with the WSU Graduate School to offer a GRE informational workshop that is open to the public to
provide prep for the test, an exercise to learn how to manage the stress of test preparation and test taking, and also tips on how to successfully apply for graduate programs (provided by a staff member from the WSU Graduate School).

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Makeup Exams</td>
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<td>Distance Exams</td>
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<td>Certification Exams</td>
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<td>CLEP</td>
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<td>DANTES/DSST</td>
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<td>1,330</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCEES</td>
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<td>CLA (all other students)</td>
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<td>46</td>
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Training

Graduate Practicum Training Program
The Center offers 2-3 practicum training positions each year to students obtaining their master’s or doctorate degree in psychology or counseling. During the year trainees work 8
hours per week developing their clinical skills in a supervised environment and participate in case staffing with the clinical staff at the Counseling & Testing Center. Our practicum students have traditionally come from WSU’s Psychology Department’s Clinical Ph.D. program, but we have also had students from the Counseling, Educational Leadership, Educational and School Psychology (CLES) Master’s in Counseling program.

**Wichita Collaborative Psychology Internship Program**

The Center is one of five local mental health agencies in the Wichita Collaborative Psychology Internship Program (WCPIP). Other current agency members include the Kansas University School of Medicine-Wichita, Prairie View, Inc., COMCARE of Sedgwick County, and South Central Mental Health Counseling Center. The doctoral internship program has been accredited by the American Psychological Association since 1953 with the WSUCTC becoming a member in 1973. WCPIP was the first accredited psychology doctoral internship consortium in the United States. The administrative responsibility for WCPIP resides within a coordinating committee comprised of representatives from each member agency with the WSUCTC representative maintaining chairmanship of the board since 1978. The current Training Director is Dr. Jessica Provines of Wichita State. Interns of the program participate in a national matching program administered by National Matching Services and directed by the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC). The training program brings doctoral interns to WSU from all over the country from various accredited clinical/counseling psychology doctoral programs. There are currently 8 doctoral interns in the program as a whole. Two interns are employed by the university and gain clinical experience at the WSUCTC four days a week, while two additional interns come to the WSUCTC from another member agency one day a week to receive training in a university counseling center setting. Licensed staff psychologists of the WSUCTC provide clinical supervision and training to interns of the program. WCPIP is in our sixty-first year of operation, the longest continuously accredited consortia in the country. As of August 2014, over 430 psychologists will have completed their doctoral internships with WCPIP, most notably Dr. Albert Bandura of Stanford University. Link to WCPIP website: [http://webs.wichita.edu/?u=coutstctr1&p=/wcip](http://webs.wichita.edu/?u=coutstctr1&p=/wcip)

**Appendices**

GRE Test Preparation Flyer  
ACT Preparation Workshop Flyer, 2014-2015  
ITOEFL Registration Flyer, 2015  
CLA Engineering Student Assessment Test, 2015  
Counseling & Testing Center Brochure  
Words for Wellness Flyer  
Wichita Eagle Story on Counseling & Testing Center 2013
FREE FREE FREE

GRE Test Prep Workshop

Saturday, March 7, 2015
12:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Register online at:
www.registerblast.com/wsu
(location will be on registration receipt)

Pre-registration is REQUIRED!

Sponsored by:
WSU Counseling & Testing Center
and
WSU Graduate School

FREE FREE FREE
ACT Prep Workshops
*for all 4 sections of ACT

Wichita State University

September 20, 2014 (ACT Math Only)
*October 4, 2014
*November 15, 2014
*January 17, 2015
*March 7, 2015
March 28, 2015 (ACT Math Only)
*May 9, 2015
*August 1, 2015

Workshop dates are all on Saturdays
*ACT Prep: 8 A.M. – Noon
ACT Math: 9 A.M. – Noon
Fee: *$32 for ACT Prep / $25 for ACT Math

Registration can be done online at
www.registerblast.com/wsu
For paper registration, please call: (316) 978-3440
Institutional TOEFL

Wichita State University
Saturday, April 25, 2015
Time: 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Location: Jabara Hall

Registration Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 23, 2015 (Monday)</td>
<td>3:30 – 5:00 PM</td>
<td>Room 100A, Brennan Hall II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 24, 2015 (Tuesday)</td>
<td>11:00 – 1:00 PM</td>
<td>Room 100A, Brennan Hall II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 25, 2015 (Wednesday)</td>
<td>3:30 – 5:00 PM</td>
<td>Room 100A, Brennan Hall II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 26, 2015 (Thursday)</td>
<td>11:00 – 1:00 PM</td>
<td>Room 100A, Brennan Hall II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ENTER BRENNAN HALL II THROUGH THE SOUTHEAST DOOR

Bring your Shocker ID card to register for the test.

Registration Fee: $60.00 (cash, check, or credit card)
NO REFUNDS! NO EXCEPTIONS!
Attention Engineering Seniors: The CLA is coming to Wichita State!

The CLA is a 90-minute open-ended assessment that helps WSU measure how well they are teaching critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem-solving and writing skills. It is used by colleges and universities nationwide.

Why am I taking the CLA?

- It is used by the College of Engineering to assess its impact on teaching critical thinking, analytic reasoning, and problem-solving skills.
- It is required in your Engineering design class.
- Consider it practice for test-taking, graduate school entrance exams, e.g., GRE.
- You get to represent WSU in comparison to other schools.
- You will receive a score report that compares you to other students at colleges and universities nationwide and with other students here at WSU.
- This is your chance to influence teaching at WSU for years to come.

Who is eligible to take it?
All engineering students enrolled in engineering design courses.

When and where is it being administered? Social Science Research Lab, Room 429, Lindquist Hall

Monday, Feb. 2 – 2 p.m. B
Wednesday, Feb. 4 – 4 p.m. C
Thursday, Feb. 5 – 2 p.m. B, 3:30 p.m. B, and 5:00 p.m. B
Friday, Feb. 6 – 9:30 a.m. B, 11 a.m. B, 1:30 p.m. B
Monday, Feb. 9 – 2 p.m. B
Wednesday, Feb. 11 – 4 p.m. C
Thursday, Feb. 12 – 2 p.m. B, 3:30 p.m. B, and 5 p.m. B
Friday, Feb. 13 – 9:30 a.m. B, 11 a.m. B, and 3 p.m. B

How do I sign up?
Go to the following link www.registerblast.com/wsu. Click the link labeled Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) – Engineering. Follow instructions thereafter.

There is no testing fee. Don’t forget to bring your WSU ID with you!
We’re here for you.

From providing personal counseling and psychological assessments to offering national exams, the Counseling and Testing Center at Wichita State University provides a range of services designed to help students, faculty and staff succeed in their academic, work and personal lives.

Office Hours

**Brennan Hall-2, rm. 100**
8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday, Thursday & Friday
8 a.m.–7 p.m. Tuesday & Wednesday

**Shocker Hall Lobby**
5 p.m.–7 p.m. Monday & Thursday
*Consultation and crisis services available.*
Our professional staff provides a wide variety of services to campus in individual, group, or couples counseling. We cover a range of issues including:

- Difficulty with relationships
- Conflict resolution
- Anger management
- Stress and anxiety
- Issues with self-esteem or self-doubt
- Depression or general unhappiness
- Eating disorders
- Time management and study skills
- Alcohol and drug concerns
- Post-traumatic stress disorder

Consultation and Outreach
Staff are available to assist with concerns about students, co-workers and loved ones. Outreach services include presentations, workshops and seminars on a variety of mental health topics for classes, groups and departments.

Medication
Psychiatric evaluations and medication follow-up is available. The consultation is coordinated through the individual counselor and is available only for current clients.

Learning Disability and ADHD Testing
Learning disability and ADHD testing is available for WSU students, faculty and staff. Counselors work with the Office of Disability Services to assess and assist students with learning difficulties.

Psychological Testing
We administer and interpret a wide range of interest, ability and personality assessments in conjunction with our counseling services.

Students
Faculty approved make-up tests are offered in our office. Students can also take exams for college credit, such as CLEP, DSST and department exams.

Prospective Students
Our office provides ACT and SAT testing and test-prep workshops for the ACT and GRE. In addition, our staff administers exams for admission into the WSU nursing program and the WSU College of Education.

Community Members
Online or distance education students can take proctored exams in our testing center. We also administer professional certification and licensure exams.

Our office evaluates test scores for WSU course credit from several different types of academic tests (see our website for additional information about credit by exam). Please call or come by our office to get the information you need, or you can email your testing questions to testingcenter@wichita.edu.

Tests We Administer:
- ACT
- SAT
- NBCC
- CLEP/DSST
- CBSE
- MAT
- TEAS
- CHES
- MPRE
- I-TOEFL
- LSAT

Testing workshops and some exams can be scheduled by visiting:

| REGISTERBLAST.COM/WSU |

Testing is available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and by appointment from 5 to 7 p.m. on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.
Diversity in all its forms can be a stumbling block to productivity and teamwork if handled poorly. When handled well, it provides opportunities to enhance and improve the quality of all facets of university life. This Words for Wellness discussion will provide tips and insights for all who wish to turn barriers into bridges, taking advantage of the diversity we have at WSU. As divisive discourse increases in the media and our society, we can choose instead to take advantage of diverse perspectives around us to become more productive and effective: Diversity can help us thrive!
Are you always waiting until the very last minute to complete a task? Come discuss the negative impact of procrastination and its connection with perfectionism. Also learn ways to get ahead and overcome procrastination.

Presented by Derek Rohleder, Psy.D.

Nov. 3 | 12 p.m. - 12:30 p.m. | RSC, RM 142

(light refreshments provided, open to campus)
Description: Holidays are usually a time of happiness and reuniting with loved ones. However, for many people, the holidays are not so joyful and are filled with feelings of sadness and depression. Does this sound like you? Join us for a conversation about managing depression during the holiday season.
Loss and change happens to everyone at some point in their lives. Join us to discuss how to help yourself or others manage expected or unexpected loss.

Presented by Christopher Leonard, Psy.D.

Feb. 2  |  12 p.m. - 12:30 p.m.  |  RSC, RM 142

🌐 light refreshments provided, open to campus
Managing Conflict: We avoid it, dislike it, and misunderstand it. Dr. Maureen Dasey-Morales will discuss ways to approach conflict to promote positive change, progress and healing.

Presented by Maureen Dasey-Morales, Ph.D.

Mar. 2 | 12 p.m. - 12:30 p.m. | RSC, RM 142

.nativeElement
Mindfulness has been gaining in popularity as a way to slow down and reflect, providing stress relief and mental clarity. Research shows it is effective in decreasing anxiety, depression, and stress. University life can be very stressful. Come learn how beginning your own mindfulness practice can reduce your stress and improve your university experience.

Presented by Jason Beyer, M.S.

Apr. 6 | 12 p.m. - 12:30 p.m. | RSC, RM 142

light refreshments provided, open to campus
Did you know some level of stress and anxiety is normal and can even be helpful for us? However, students often find themselves wondering, “Is it normal for me to feel this way?” Learn more about stress and anxiety, what is considered normal or abnormal, and how to better cope with any level of stress or anxiety.

(This can also be adapted to focus on just stress or just anxiety.)
Wichita State counselors seek to help students cope with growing stress

• By ROY WENZL
• The Wichita Eagle
• Published Saturday, Feb. 23, 2013, at 6:20 p.m

How to help

• Learn about risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems. Isolation and changes in sleep, appetite, mood, decision making and concentration are some signs to look for.

• Don’t be reluctant to help a friend or loved one. Offer hope and provide a referral.

• Everyone struggles. Remind yourself or others that seeking mental health care is a sign of strength, not weakness.

• Early intervention is important and can prevent more severe problems later.

Free online screening

Wichita State University offers free online screening at: http://webs.wichita.edu/?u=coutstctr1&p=/MentalHealthScreenings.

It also offers counseling for WSU students. For help, contact WSU Counseling and Testing Center, 318 Wilkie Hall, 316-978-3440, www.wichita.edu/counselingtesting.

Source: Maureen Dasey-Morales, Wichita State University

It is no surprise to Ciera Dockter that many students at Wichita State University feel depressed and near emotional collapse from overwork, as WSU mental health professionals are reporting these days.

Dockter has not sought the counselors’ help.

But she says she cries sometimes, has come near falling asleep at the car wheel — and recently hallucinated on a drive home in the dark. “Several crazed little kids were trying to attack me with axes,” she said.

Dockter is the sort of student who worries WSU’s director of counseling and testing, who says many students are suffering emotional strain from overwork and juggling jobs and family challenges with classes.

Maureen Dasey-Morales, the director, said the current generation of young people probably faces more stress than any previous. In addition to pressures they endure from today’s technological and social media world, many can’t get through college without working part time or full time, or piling up student loan or credit card debt. Many are caregivers to family members, she said. Many are well aware that the economy is weak and that they might struggle to find a job after they graduate.

Dockter, a junior, takes 15 hours of classes at WSU and works 35 hours a week at a store — the 4 p.m. to midnight shift. She maintains a 4.0 grade point average, she says. She’s vice president of her sorority.
Dockter may be a high achiever, Dasey-Morales said, but there are thousands like her on the WSU campus, struggling to achieve, but struggling also to stay emotionally stable.

Carla Rivera, for example, says she will be the first in her extended family to graduate from college, but she got pregnant at 17 and has faced a grueling uphill effort since then, juggling full-time classwork with a full-time job and motherhood.

Hollie Weatherburn, a member of the WSU women's golf team, studies for classes or practices all her waking hours, while feeling lonely and separated from her family in England.

The stereotype of emotionally troubled students “is that they are unbalanced or unstable,” Dasey-Morales said. “But the truth is that most students who are suffering here are, in fact, highly functioning students. If we can get them through this period in their lives, they are all going to be awesome contributors as human beings.”

Thousands of students at WSU are as driven and as fully scheduled as Dockter, Rivera and Weatherburn, Dasey-Morales said. She worries about all of them.

The pressures on them are growing, Dasey-Morales said. Her staff, from this past July to February, has seen 300 more client appointments than in the same time period a year before.

She thinks the pressures of personal finances have become burdensome, as state support for universities has declined and as tuition and other costs for students have risen.

She can't talk about individual cases because of confidentiality requirements but says she and WSU’s other counselors are seeing 90 to 95 students a week. They’ve recorded more than 4,700 appointments from July 2011 to July 2012.

And in a 2012 survey of WSU students, 83 percent of those surveyed answered “yes” when asked whether they had felt “overwhelmed” in the past 12 months. The survey was sent to all fall students, Dasey-Morales said; 1,596, or about 10 percent of students enrolled, responded, from a good cross section.

Seven percent of those surveyed said they’d seriously considered suicide in that time.

“That's a lot of students,” Dasey-Morales said.

Of the 1,596 students surveyed, 12 percent were diagnosed with or treated for anxiety in the previous 12 months; 12 percent for depression; 7 percent for panic attacks; and 5 percent for insomnia.

More than 20 percent of WSU students reported that they’d driven vehicles after drinking in the previous month. That number worries Dasey-Morales, though in one way, it was good news. A similar survey of WSU students from 2010 showed 27 percent driving after drinking.

In the 2012 survey, 4 percent reported they’d hurt themselves deliberately in the previous year by cutting, head-banging, bruising or burning themselves. Fifteen percent said they “felt things were hopeless” in the previous two weeks. Forty-four percent reported feeling things were “hopeless” during the last 12 months.
Dasey-Morales said other questions the WSU students answered in the survey give some hints about underlying causes. Forty-one percent of students surveyed cited finances as a traumatic problem faced in the last 12 months. Seventeen percent cited a health problem of a family member as a trauma in the previous 12 months. “Death of a family member or friend”: 16 percent. Personal health issue: 19 percent. Sleep difficulties: 27 percent. Academics: 38 percent. Intimate relationships: 29 percent.

One other statistic stuck out to Dasey-Morales. Half the students surveyed said they’d felt “very lonely” in the previous 12 months.

All of these issues are a problem not only here, but nationally, Dasey-Morales said. A survey done in the spring of 2012 by the American College Health Association/National College Health Assessment turned up data similar to hers at WSU. Across the country, she said, students are battling debt, juggling school with jobs, family obligations and stress.

The national numbers regarding depression, loss of sleep and many other categories are roughly equivalent to what the WSU student survey found, with finances being significant. For example, where 41 percent of WSU students cited their finances as a “traumatic” emotional challenge, 34 percent of students nationally said the same. Twelve percent of students nationally said they’d been treated in the previous year for anxiety, 11 percent for depression – numbers almost identical to WSU’s.

The Virginia Tech massacre in 2007 prompted many schools, WSU included, to look more closely at mental health on campuses, Dasey-Morales said. She and her staff spend a lot of time talking, “telling people we exist,” putting up posters, coaxing people, as much as they can, to help themselves – and look out for each other. Often, when they speak at a gathering of students, one or two more students come forward with a story to tell and a request for help.

WSU also works closely with Comcare, the Sedgwick County agency that promotes good mental health locally. And the students themselves, through their student government association, have provided money for her office to work on prevention, she said.

There’s a strategy about much that WSU does, Dasey-Morales said. A 2010 survey showed 27 percent of students driving after drinking, with 4 percent reporting that they drove after binge drinking. Seeing that, Dasey-Morales and her staff focused on that problem, spreading the word about safety and getting everyone from students to law enforcement engaged in talking about binge drinking and drunk driving. She thinks that focus is at least partly responsible for reducing the driving-after-drinking number to 20.6 percent, and the driving-after-binge-drinking number to 2 percent.

Dockter, the high-achieving junior, knows many other students suffer from stress.

Weatherburn, a senior, is a full scholarship student, but as a member of the WSU women’s golf team, she knows a scholarship must be earned. If the golf game goes away, so does everything else. She earns it with a schedule that at times has reduced her to tears: golf for several hours a day, including 6 a.m. workouts three times a week. She takes 12 hours of classes, and studies four or five hours a day. If she travels to all the available tournaments in March, she’ll be on campus only 10 days that month.

“Lots of tears at times,” she said. “Especially in the beginning I felt homesickness, culture shock. I felt strong feelings and didn’t know why ... started to dislike (American) culture,” she said. “I’m a little more used to it now, and see the positives. But it can be hard.”
A native of Manchester, England, she’s close to her parents and younger brother. So four years of separation left her at times feeling depressed. “I’ve changed a lot,” she said. She’s more independent, after solving problems by herself, but she’s a solitary person now.

None of the three women in this story has much of a social life; it’s all work.

After Rivera got pregnant at 17, her son’s father married her and helps her constantly, she said. But taking 13 hours of classes and working 40 hours at a local catalog company can take a toll. She makes meals also, reads to her son – and shuts herself in a closet once in a while to cry.

Sometimes, Rivera said, when her son sees her looking stressed or sad, he begins to pick up things to clean the house, although his idea of putting things away involves throwing everything in a pile in a corner.

But sometimes, she said, when he sees her looking stressed, he comes to her with a notebook.

“It’s OK,” she says he tells her. “I will help you.”

Then he scrawls some 4-year-old scribbles and hands the paper to her.

“You can turn this in for homework,” he says.

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