

*ASLMU Senate at Loyola Marymount University*  
*A RESOLUTION ADDRESSING THE NEED FOR AN INCREASE IN PEER DRIVEN MENTAL  
HEALTH PROGRAMS*

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*RESOLUTION SR 17-02*

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Loyola Marymount University, in affirmation of its mission statement, encourages personal and community development of the following values: education of the whole person, the promotion of faith and justice in all aspects of life, and becoming men and women for others.

**WHEREAS**, ASLMU recognizes that mental illness is a growing national epidemic to which LMU is not excluded, we advocate for a peer counseling program to be implemented at LMU.

**WHEREAS**, a peer counseling program would consist of a group of qualified student counselors trained to address a broad range of topics by providing one-on-one, confidential support to students.

**WHEREAS**, ASLMU acknowledges that the suicide rate among people 15–24 years of age has tripled since the 1950's, and approximately 1,100 suicides occur at colleges every year in the United States alone.

**WHEREAS**, ASLMU acknowledges that a lack of support for students with mental illness can have tragic consequences. Two LMU students have lost their lives this past year due to mental health related issues.

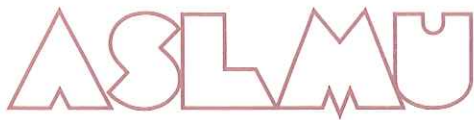
**WHEREAS**, LMU's student psychological services is a short-term program with limited availability. Students are forced to find outside resources, which can be a financial burden. This can bar them from attending LMU or being successful while at LMU.

**WHEREAS**, students with serious mental illness symptoms but are not necessarily having an 'emergency' can have to wait two weeks or more for an appointment with SPS. A peer counseling program could shrink the waiting time for these types of students so that they do not have to battle their symptoms alone.

**WHEREAS**, research about mental health in college students has shown that 80 % of college students who had committed suicide in the past year had no contact with counseling services (Kirsch et. al). When queried about where they would turn for help when experiencing suicidal thoughts, 77 % of students said they would turn to friends whereas only 20 % would turn to an adult school counselor (Kirsch et. al).

**WHEREAS**, colleges most affected by the tragedies associated with mental illness assembled task forces of professionals to develop the best comprehensive solutions. These task forces found that peer to peer counseling was one of the most effective methods for addressing the mental health issues on their campuses.

**WHEREAS**, a peer counselor would offer a more comfortable, more relatable, and less authoritative point of contact for students that are struggling. Students should at least have the option of whether they would like to consult a peer or adult.



**WHEREAS**, Bringing a peer counseling program to LMU would be both simple and cost effective. The peer counseling program could be an extension of either Student Psychological Services or the Community of Care.

**WHEREAS**, the Community of Care is a mode by which a peer counseling program can be implemented at LMU. Peer counselors could meet with the students referred either in lieu of faculty or in addition to meeting with faculty. This will allow the students to feel more comfortable and feel less like they are in trouble.

**WHEREAS**, another option to institute a peer-to-peer counseling program is to further develop the Wellness Educator program. This program trains students in different matters relating to mental health. They are a resource focus more on education, rather than support, of individual students with mental illness on campus. Although ASLMU believes this to be a valuable program, it has the potential to become life-saving. This would happen through more intensive training and education on counseling. Wellness Educators would work individually with students in order to assist them with mild mental health issues and also to be able to direct them to more intensive care.

**WHEREAS**, whichever avenue LMU chooses to use for the conception of a mental health ally program, the students will be chosen in an arduous application process, trained carefully, used in only mild mental health instances, and must keep information and the identity of each participant in the program completely confidential.

**WHEREAS** the key is to use peer-counseling in the appropriate situations, under the guidance and tutelage of an adult trained to handle the more serious issues. For example, you do not want peers counseling peers about suicide, rape, divorce, abuse, grieving, etc. However, with topics like conflict resolution, relationship building, confidence and self-esteem, study skills, academic motivation, and school attendance (among others), peer-counseling or mentoring can be highly successful.

**WHEREAS**, LMU is currently striving to be a more global school. LMU has the opportunity to join some of the top universities in the world that have already created peer to peer counseling programs, including: UCLA, UC Berkeley, UCSB, UC San Diego, University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, Yale University. Harvard University and Brown University to name a few.

**WHEREAS**, LMU aims to teach men and women to be with and for others. In accordance with LMU's mission, a peer counseling program would directly teach students how to empathize with and aid those around them. It would foster growth in both the peer counselor and the student seeking assistance that can only be achieved through real-life experiences.

**WHEREAS**, *cura personalis* is a hallmark of Ignatian spirituality. It suggests individualized attention to the needs of the other and a distinct respect for his or her unique circumstances and concerns. Implementing a peer counseling program would be elevating this part of LMU's tradition.

**WHEREAS**, ASLMU believes that LMU should do everything in its power to further their support of the undocumented Social Justice Scholars and other minorities on campus. A peer counseling program could greatly aid the unique and often difficult obstacles that these oppressed groups face.



**WHEREAS**, ASLMU recognizes that there is a national stigma against mental illness and that, as a school which is devoted to social justice, we have a role in combating this stigma on a local scale.

**WHEREAS**, hatred and bigotry towards minority communities runs rampant in the current state of our society. We must reach out to those communities, including those with mental illness, and be the light in the darkness. As Pope Francis once said, "The root of peace lies in the capacity to listen."

**BE IT RESOLVED**, ASLMU asks that a peer counseling program be implemented on LMU's campus.

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