



The Minority Student Caucus mourns the passing of UNC students we have lost this weekend, earlier this semester, and throughout the years. The loss and grief that have permeated our campus community during the past few days are feelings that, unfortunately, we know all too well. In the midst of a pandemic, we have been expected to carry on with little to no support or acknowledgment from the University that we are worth more than our productivity. We cannot afford to continue operating as though everything is alright when it hasn't been for a very long time; **the lives and well-being of our classmates and ourselves are too important.**

In our classes at the nation's #1 public school of public health, we are taught that mental health is a public health issue and should be treated as such—yet our University's response in the wake of the recent losses does not reflect these values. Declaring Tuesday, October 12 a "wellness day" when many classes and meetings were *already* cancelled due to University Day is meaningless and a slap in the face to all of us trying to process the events of this weekend while also supporting each other and trying to stay afloat in an ongoing pandemic. It is clear that the University **does not** prioritize the well-being and mental health of students, staff, and faculty. If it did, University leadership would have cancelled classes and other engagements not only Tuesday but also Monday (October 11); would allocate more funding and resources to improving the effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of CAPS services; and, above all, would commit to fundamentally changing the toxic environment that it has created for students.

None of that has happened. Instead, time and time again, the burden of supporting and advocating for students has fallen on students themselves. We are tired. For example, at Gillings, TAs and students spent the weekend and Monday morning pushing for individual professors to cancel their classes on Monday, October 11 when this should have been a University-level decision. We acknowledge that individual kindness goes a long way and we appreciate the professors who have extended it, but this is still a short-term, reactionary solution: Moving forward, we demand **institutional change.**

The University, and Gillings to the extent of its purview, must:

- Expand mental health services. This includes increasing funding for CAPS; hiring more counselors, especially counselors with marginalized identities; consistently providing support groups that meet on weekends and outside of business hours; providing counseling resources to faculty and staff; providing mental health first aid and crisis training to all teaching staff, including TAs; and communicating more clearly about how to access mental health services.
- Develop an official protocol for handling situations like this past weekend (though we hope such situations do not happen again). We strongly recommend immediately cancelling classes and assignments for two days, which would allow time for teaching teams to adjust deadlines.
- **Pay all student workers a living wage.**

- Reinstatement of the Spring 2020 emergency grading accommodation policies for both undergraduate and graduate students. We are still in a pandemic.
- Require that instructors **never** penalize students on the basis of attendance. Again, we are in a deadly pandemic. No students should have to justify absences, being late, or keeping their camera off on Zoom.

Lastly, we reaffirm our support for and commitment to the health and well-being of all students at Gillings and across UNC, and we want to emphasize that our organization is in particular a safe space for BIPOC students of all backgrounds to convene, build community, and raise concerns. The Minority Student Caucus is holding a hybrid community support event for BIPOC students this **Thursday, October 14** to designate space for open conversation, collective healing, and sharing of resources and self-care practices. We are also holding a hybrid town hall for **students only** on **Thursday, November 4** to gather BIPOC students' concerns in a safe space; we will later share this feedback anonymously and directly with Gillings instructors and Gillings administration.

And with the help of our peers, we have collected the resources below to supplement those that the school has sent out. We stand with you, our fellow students, and we hope you are able to find space to grieve, rest, and heal.

Resources

[UNC Peer2Peer](#)

From website: *Peer2Peer is a student-led group that advocates for the mental well-being of the members within our community through peer support. We offer free one-to-one sessions to talk with a peer responder with the option of remaining anonymous. Our organization is open to any graduate and undergraduate students at UNC.*

[UNC Health National Helplines List](#)

- National Domestic Violence Hotline
 - 1 800-799-7233
- National Parent Helpline
 - 1 855-427-2736
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline
 - 1 800-273-8255
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline
 - 1 800-662-HELP (4357) - English and Spanish
- Hope4NC Helpline
 - 1-855-587-3463
- Hope4Healers
 - 919-226-2002

North Carolina Specific Lines

- National Alliance on Mental Illness NC Hotline (non-crisis)
 - 1-800-451-9682
- Orange County Rape Crisis Center 24-Hour Hotline
 - 919-967-7273

In addition, various student organizations and Centers at UNC are holding community space this week. Please check [Heel Life](#), email, and organizations' social media for more information.

[Open Path Collective](#)

From website: *Open Path Psychotherapy Collective is a non-profit nationwide network of mental health professionals dedicated to providing in-office and online mental health care—at a steeply reduced rate—to individuals, couples, children, and families in need.*

[BIPOC Behavioral Health Resources & Anti-Racist Actions for Allies](#)

This is a compilation of mental health and wellness resources that PsychHub created last year. Its contents include, among many resources:

Organizations and Resources Supporting BIPOC Mental Health

- [Specifically for the Black Community](#)
- [Specifically for the Asian American and Pacific Islander \(AAPI\) Community](#)
- [Specifically for the South Asian Community](#)
- [Specifically for the Native American and Indigenous Communities](#)
- [Specifically for the Hispanic/Latinx/Latine Community](#)

[Inclusive Therapists](#)

From website: *We center the needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. We honor the full neurodiversity spectrum and advocate for mental health care accessibility for people with disabilities / disabled people.*

[Radical Healing*](#)

From website: *An intentional, radically inclusive, LGBTQ+ and Black, Indigenous, People of Color centered, multicultural and multiracial campus for healing and wellness.*

*currently only one clinician is accepting new patients

[Therapy for Black Girls](#)


From website: *Therapy for Black Girls is an online space dedicated to encouraging the mental wellness of Black women and girls.*

Find a therapist: <https://providers.therapyforblackgirls.com/>

In solidarity,

Vanessa Amankwaa & Sophie To

Minority Student Caucus Co-Presidents 2021-2022



This statement is endorsed by the 2021-2022 Minority Student Caucus executive board.