

August 20, 2018

Dear Trojan Family,

On behalf of USC Student Health, I would like to welcome you back to campus and share updates about our programs and services.

Earlier this month, I celebrated one year at USC. During this time, I have focused on improving both the care we provide as well as our ability to improve students' health and well-being so they can achieve their personal and professional goals. This summer's developments in the investigations of former gynecologist George Tyndall makes it imperative that this work continues in earnest. I also hope to communicate regularly about the progress we have made.

We are grateful to the former patients who have come forward with their stories; it shows profound courage to revisit painful past experiences so that others may never have such encounters. We are also deeply appreciative of current patients and their parents who have asked important questions, and have come to meet with us to learn about changes we have made as we begin a new era in outstanding student health.

Most importantly, the USC Student Health team wants to hear from any student who has concerns about care provided. Students can call or use the [online feedback form](#) on our website. Students also can contact the [Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX](#) or the [Office of Compliance](#) with concerns.

As the new academic year begins, I am pleased to inform you that three new highly regarded colleagues are joining our USC Student Health medical team:

- **Dr. Anne Michels** joined us this summer as a full-time, board-certified gynecologist in USC Student Health. Dr. Michels earned her M.D. from Columbia University College of Physicians & Surgeons, and completed her residency in obstetrics and gynecology from Columbia University-New York Presbyterian Hospital. In her previous role as a full-time physician with Southern California Permanente Medical Group, she served as the department lead for OB/GYN peer review and led the perinatal quality improvement team.
- **Dr. Deirdre Logan** joins us Oct. 1 as an additional full-time, board-certified gynecologist. Dr. Logan earned her M.D. from Keck Medicine of USC and completed her residency in obstetrics and gynecology at Martin Luther King, Jr./Drew Medical Center. She holds board certification from the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology, earned a master's degree in medical management from the USC Marshall School of Business, and is a certified lactation educator. She joins us from Watts Healthcare Corporation, where she was the founder and director of the teen clinic.
- **Dr. Erin Jones** joined us this summer as a full-time physician. Dr. Jones earned her M.D. from the Boston University School of Medicine and completed her residency in family medicine at the University of Maryland (Baltimore) Health System, where she was chief resident in her final year of the program. She also completed a fellowship in adolescent medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, where she joins us from the Department of Pediatrics.



As our [nationally renowned medical center Keck Medicine of USC](#) assumed responsibility for all clinical care provided by USC Student Health Services as of August 2017, all our health care providers are now faculty within the academic medical departments and undergo a rigorous credentialing process.

Our newly appointed executive director of Counseling and Mental Health Services, **Dr. Robert Mendola**, joined USC Student Health in September of 2017. He is board certified in adult psychiatry and has served as the director for psychiatric services at Cornell University's student counseling center for over two decades. He received his M.D. from SUNY Buffalo and completed his residency at the University of Massachusetts. He has over 25 years of experience treating students as well as conceptualizing and implementing care models for university counseling centers. Under his leadership, Counseling and Mental Health Services in USC Student Health is making expedited progress in optimizing services for student care.

In the past, student counseling services had focused on providing brief assessment with referral and crisis services to students. The brief assessment process followed best practices and a very structured process to identify students at risk of harm to self and other as well as students in crisis. While this screening process was robust, we recognize that it left many students feeling not cared for in the way that we would want. The referral off-campus that most students received was difficult for many students who needed to travel to distant locations and navigate the appointment process. Complicating this was the lack of appropriate options for mental health in our community, reflecting the lack of access to mental health services across the nation. Through the **addition of 10 therapists in 2018-19 and two therapists in 2019-20**, we will move toward providing initial care to nearly all students who seek counseling services, reducing the percentage of referred students from approximately 70% to a target of 20-30%.

USC Student Health also is working to develop even further resources within the Department of Psychiatry at Keck Medicine of USC to provide care for students with longer-term mental health needs.

Through the additional staffing, Counseling and Mental Health Services in FY18-19 will offer several well-researched, high-impact programs currently not provided. "Let's Talk" is based on a national model in which counselors are available across campus in various locations to provide informal drop-in consultation and conversation. An integrated behavioral health program will place a counselor within the medical clinic for immediate consultation and intervention. Studies have shown that many students, including international students, students of color, and male students, are more likely to access mental health services when provided in a medical clinic.

### **Accreditation and Review Processes**

As part of Keck Medicine of USC, any concerns about quality of care or physician behavior are immediately reviewed and evaluated by physician leadership at student health services, by the Office of Integrated Risk Management and are **subject to peer review** by the Integrated Executive Peer Review committee of the medical group.

USC Student Health is externally accredited by the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC). Both of our health care centers, Engemann and Eric Cohen, were reaccredited this spring. AAAHC standards include:

- Requirements for regular peer review.
- Routine patient satisfaction surveys
- A structured process for management of grievances and patient complaints

## **Patient Communications and Staff Training**

USC Student Health is strengthening our communications to students about their rights and responsibilities, as well as mechanisms for reporting concerns. New materials, including a [patient guide to sensitive medical exams](#), are available this academic year, as are a series of [informational videos](#). Parents of new students are encouraged to be partners in guiding a positive transition to college life, and a new [Parent Guide to a Successful Transition](#) is available in print and online. Plans are underway to translate key materials to better communicate essential care information to our international student community and first-generation parents whose primary communication is in a language other than English.

During sensitive medical exams, a medical assistant (the patient's preference of medical assistant gender will be respected) will be present in addition to the patient and the health care provider. For patients who would benefit from translation services, a live phone translation service is available in multiple languages.

Over the past year, the student health staff has received extensive training on complaint reporting, and will continue this training with additionally scheduled sessions to ensure that when concerning behavior and actions are observed, they are quickly reported and addressed.

## **Improved Infrastructure for Student Mental Health Promotion**

The Division of Student Affairs and USC Student Health are leading the JED campus initiative; The JED Foundation is a leading national nonprofit organization that provides expert guidance on protecting emotional health and preventing suicide among our nation's teens and young adults. The JED program provides a framework for mental health, substance abuse, and suicide prevention efforts; USC Student Health is assessing outreach, prevention and treatment for strengths and areas for improvement. As part of JED, this spring we completed the [Healthy Minds Survey](#) to get a deeper understanding of the needs of students and will begin implementing the JED Framework in fall of 2018.

Our outreach program will provide more campus trainings to help better identify those at risk, including increased bystander training.

As we move to implement these improvements, my team and I will be meeting with students on campus in open conversations and trainings. We look forward to hearing your thoughts and working in partnership with our entire USC community as we make continual improvements.

Our commitment to you is to provide excellent care to individuals, promote research-based public health policy and interventions in our community, and supporting our students to succeed in every way possible.

Sincerely,



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