

Briefs

METRO

School Aid Given in Record Amount

Albany—Schools in New York City and Long Island will receive hundreds of millions of dollars in new state school aid this fiscal year as part of a deal between Gov. David A. Paterson and state lawmakers that increased total school aid by a record \$1.75 billion.



MCT

Danger on NJ Transit Trains

Doors on New Jersey Transit trains have opened improperly at least five times in the past two months, far more frequently than on moving Metro-North or Long Island Rail Road trains. According to Richard Sarles, New Jersey Transit executive director, the railroad does not have systematic safety issues with doors and that no one was injured in the door-opening incidents this year.

NATIONAL



MCT

Flame Relay Tries to Escape Crowd

San Francisco—In order to avoid the messy chaos of the Olympic flame's recent trips to London and Paris, its stop in San Francisco, Calif. on April 9 had to be rerouted and quickly whisked away to the airport in a heavily guarded motorcade in order to leapfrog throngs of protesters and supporters.

New Mental Health Package in Light of VT

Virginia—Gov. Timothy M. Kaine signed into law a package of legislation intended to tighten the state's mental health system and improving campus security in response to last year's Virginia Tech shootings. The new laws, which go into effect in July, relax the standard for involuntary commitment to a mental health facility and allow better sharing of mental health records.

INTERNATIONAL

Al Qaeda Commander Believed Dead

Pakistan—A paramilitary commander for Al Qaeda, who American intelligence officials say was involved in the 2005 bombing of London's transit system and a foiled plot in 2006 to blow up commercial airliners flying over the Atlantic Ocean, is believed to have died December 2007 of Hepatitis in the tribal areas of Pakistan.

Brown Decides Not to Attend Olympic Ceremony

London—Prime Minister Gordon Brown said on April 9 that he would not attend the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games this summer. The prime minister has been under intense political pressure over the issue. Although the prime minister will not be present for the opening ceremony, officials say he will travel to China only once, for the Games' closing ceremony.



MCT

Compiled by Natasha Pascetta

Mental Illness in College Students Rises

Pressure to Succeed and Cultural Trends May Be To Blame

By CASEY FELDMAN
Asst. News Editor

More than ever before, college students are being diagnosed with and treated for mental illnesses, and the number of students who are prescribed psychiatric drugs has surged. The American Psychological Association reports that the number of students who sought help for depression doubled between 1990 and 2003. Even more alarming, according to the organization Mental Health America, suicide is the second leading cause of death in college-age students.



In light of these trends, the one-year anniversary of the Virginia Tech tragedy begs the question: how are these national developments reflected at Fordham College at Lincoln Center (FCLC)?

"There has been an increase in the number of students coming to CPS [FCLC's Counseling & Psychological Services center]...every year for the last five years," said Sarah Landew, a staff psychologist in CPS. Landew also acknowledged that this is a "general trend" in college counseling centers across the country. "It is mostly due to the destigmatization of mental health and the outreach efforts that are being made to reach students," Landew stated.

Landew said she also attributes the increase in students seeking psychiatric help in college to the success of recent innovations in psychology and psychopharmacology, which enable students with "significant histories of mental illness" to live normal lives, attend college and perform successfully. "There are more students who are coming to universities with a history of previous therapy and/or mental illness—therefore, they are seeking out more services [once they get to college]," she said.

Thomas Caffrey, a New York City psychologist who treats college-age individuals, said he believes that the increase in college students who seek help for mental health issues is partially attributable to "a greater expectation of a college student" in recent years. "There is a greater cost [for college], and pressure to earn, not just learn. There wasn't that pressure when I was in college. Now, [college students] have pressure to



CHARLES FOX/MCT

More students are coming to college with a history of mental illness.

go out and earn right away." Caffrey said he believes that this amplified level of stress has led to an increase in the number of college students with mental health issues—and, hence, a greater need for therapy or psychiatric drugs.

"College is this eye-opening experience to the adult world, and people find different ways of dealing with that," said Megan*, FCLC '10. "Many people become overwhelmed with being perfect at school and develop anxiety or depression." Megan, who takes Lexapro, an antidepressant medication, said that she has been depressed and also experienced "severe anxiety issues" earlier this year. "Suicide, at this age, is on a lot of people's minds," she said.

Amelio D'Onofrio, director of the FCLC psychological services institute, said that he has seen a recent increase in the number of college students who engage in self-destructive behavior, such as cutting, substance abuse and eating disorders. D'Onofrio said that instances of these issues have "increased dramatically and are more in the spotlight at the counseling center now."

D'Onofrio said that he feels many students are experiencing "an increased sense of pressure to succeed, even before high school...they look to soothe themselves in a number of ways. This can contribute to... mental illness," which can lead to self-destructive behavior, he stated.

Also, D'Onofrio said he feels that "certain socio-cultural trends" are contributing to increased mental health issues in college-age individuals. Considering that half of all American marriages end in divorce, there is the "breakup of more traditional family settings," he stated. "Children are left to their own devices...to solve their problems. There is a lack of belonging and support and closeness...students don't know how to handle the pain they experience."

These heightened stress factors increase the pressure of what has always been a complicated time: the start of college. A 2008 American Psychological Association press release quotes David Kahn of New York Presbyterian Hospital and Columbia University Medical Center: "College can be a difficult transition with new independence, responsibilities and expectations arriving just as a student's previous support system of family and friends are often not readily available. To add to the problem, the late teen years are often when biologically-based illnesses, such as depression and bipolar disorder, begin to manifest themselves."

Cally Speed, FCLC '08, said that she sought help at CPS in order to deal with the death of a friend. "The reason I attended therapy was not school-related," she said, "but I do believe that, for many [students], [school] could be the reason [for

seeking therapy]. There is definitely a lot of pressure on students, and that, mixed with being more independent than ever before [at college], could make students feel very isolated and alone."

D'Onofrio said he attributes the rise of college-age individuals who take psychiatric medications to a combination of less judicious prescribing on the part of psychiatrists and a society that is more accepting of psychiatry.

"It is a national trend," said D'Onofrio. "[Drugs] are more widely accepted...it tends to be a shortcut to dealing with problems. Medication does help people manage their lives, and for many people, it is necessary. But medications alone do not resolve our problems or address the reasons why we may be depressed. A combination of medication and psychotherapy is most helpful."

Speed said, "I think that people are more comfortable talking about issues than they used to be. Our generation seems to be one that turns toward medication more quickly than in the past. Psychiatric medications are advertised on TV now, so I assume that people are just more open to the whole idea."

Natalie Mauro, FCLC '08, has sought counseling at both the Rose Hill and Lincoln Center campuses and said that she does not take psychiatric medication. "I do know a lot of students...who are in therapy, have been in therapy or are on some kind of psychiatric medication for anything from anxiety to depression. I feel that it's really common nowadays."

Mental illnesses in college students may be a recent epidemic, but one thing hasn't changed, according to Caffrey—college-age individuals' lack of willingness to seek help. "The [college-age individuals] that I have treated, in my experience, have not been that eager for treatment at all. They are not ready to reflect about their lives... [they don't have] much initiative to seek help on their own. People begin to seek therapy, generally, at about 28 years old—in college, you are not yet psychologically an adult, even though you are treated like one."

Megan said, "I know about 10 friends who seek therapy, and only a few on [psychiatric] medication. I think more of my friends should seek therapy, to be honest."

Overcoming the Counseling Stigma

Why Some Students Are Afraid To Seek Help

By ASHLEY TEDESCO
Staff Writer

It's a long hallway that separates the second-floor entrance to McMahon Hall and the door to Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) at Fordham College at Lincoln Center (FCLC). For many students, the trek down this hallway is one they are not willing to take. "No matter what anyone says, yes, there is [a stigma]," said Ponnu Varghese, FCLC '11. "No one wants their friends or peers to know that they need or want to go to the counseling center. When people think of such a facility, it's never in a positive light."

It's not just FCLC students who experience the stigma of seeking counseling. The Jed Foundation, a national mental health organization, focuses its efforts upon promoting mental health on college campuses. According to an article on its Web site, mental health services on college campuses have been trying to find their place since the first one opened on Princeton University's campus in 1910.

A study released by MTV in 2006 reported that "stigma is both

external and internal, as many voice a fear of embarrassment if others were to find out they needed help, while there is also personal horror that comes from the idea of actually admitting you have a problem (despite recognition it should be addressed)." In fact, 72 percent of students polled in the study cited embarrassment as a reason for refusing to seek help.

Sarah Landew, a staff psychologist in CPS, said, "It is normal to feel nervous about starting counseling for the first time. We help these students to explore and understand their concerns so that they may decide if counseling is best for them and, if it is, to proceed in a way that feels comfortable."

Varghese said she thinks the stigma surrounds the specific word 'counseling.' "[The term 'counseling'] immediately leads to questions about one's mental stability or why the person needs to go to the counseling center. My dad is a pastoral counselor, and whenever I tell my friends that, I generally get a negative reaction."

Not all students, however, feel the same weight of the stigma. Ju-

liet Ben-Ami, FCLC '11, said she has used the center and was pleased with the results. "I'm aware that there are

Many voice a fear of embarrassment if others were to find out they needed help, while there is also personal horror that comes from the idea of admitting you have a problem.

students who think the counseling center is only for crybabies and people with serious mental problems. I know that this is not true, but I am aware that people have this opinion. The counselors are there for you whether you have a bad day, a good day or you just want to talk to someone. The point is that they are there for you."

One way college counseling centers are trying to reverse the stigma, according to both the Jed Foundation and Landew, is to publicize the fact that no one knows a student's reason for going to the counseling center. Students often go for worries about a friend, or to pick up pamphlets and information.

Another effort to reverse the stigma includes attempting to show students that there's nothing wrong with seeking help. Programs are being introduced at orientation, for example, and throughout the school year to reach out to students.

"We are constantly expanding our outreach efforts to students at Fordham," Landew said. "We have recently updated our Web site that offers anonymous online screenings, information and resources. We offer workshops on a wide range of topics, such as stress management and relaxation, eating and body image, depression and wellness, and [we] have many initiatives planned for spring." She went on to say that, outside of promoting general visibility, CPS is planning new therapy groups and anxiety awareness events for April.