

## Accessing Augie's mental health services

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As mental health is becoming better acknowledged on campus, it is important to know how to access the many services Augustana offers.

Junior and one of the creators of Gray Matters- a mental health campaign, Haley DeGreve said there is a need for better communication within the Augustana community because students aren't educated on the resources available.

"I think that we do have many resources, but I think the way that Augustana falls short is that we aren't communicating those resources as best as we could," DeGreve said.

Augustana offers free services such as counseling, student-led groups and other support offices of campus. While the counseling services are an option to better student mental health, counseling may not be for everyone.

Junior Rebecca Garbe criticized her experience visiting a counselor who no longer works at Augustana.

"I wouldn't say it is the counselors but that they are not necessarily trained to counsel mental health. The counselor that I went to was a social worker, so she is trained to help people through bigger changes in their lives and things of that nature but what I went to her for was not something I feel she was able to help me with," Garbe said.

According to Augustana counselor Allison Mirell, all counselors must have a Masters or doctorate degree in counseling, psychology or social work, as well as having other qualifications.

"Counselors must hold a current clinical level license in their field. We currently have two licensed clinical social workers (LCSW) and one licensed clinical practical counselor (LCPC)," Mirell said in an email.

The counselors are required to have degrees that will help them best serve students. However, Garbe says this may act as a barrier between the student, counselor and the overarching issue they are trying to solve.

"While I appreciate the time and the resources that she gave to me, they were more like worksheet type things and the services did not seem thorough enough," Garbe said.

"There's not enough variety [in the counselor's qualifications], like someone who can be receptive to people who have experienced sexual assault or experienced large traumas in their lives," Garbe said.

According to the counselor's office, this

school year there have been 405 students that have used Augustana's counseling services. The counseling services currently provide individual counseling and psychoeducation covering various topics like stress or sleep. In the coming years, the counselors are hoping to add group counseling, consulting services and possibly brief or long term forms of therapy for students.

William Iavarone, the director of counseling services, elaborated on the next steps for improving the counseling system to provide a more beneficial experience.

"I was just hired in January. One of the main changes I wanted to institute was [other forms of therapy] because individual therapy is fantastic and it provides a lot of benefits, but it's not beneficial to everyone," Iavarone said.

"Some people might benefit from group therapy, and some people might benefit from brief therapy, so we want to add those services to treat everybody and provide the best counseling we can," Iavarone said.

Iavarone also spoke on how students can access this resource to improve their own mental health. Students can schedule an appointment by calling the counseling center or by walking into the office located on the second floor of Founders Hall.

As for what a counseling session looks like, it varies based on what a student needs. If notified of the issues beforehand, the counselors can match you with a counselor with the best knowledge.

Half-time licensed clinical social worker, Anne Oakes, works in the counseling office and described what a typical session entails: Counseling sessions usually consist of check-in, review of progress and discussing anything new that has happened as it relates to a student's mental health. New issues can be worked on through discussion, handouts and/or exercises or by learning and practicing skills that are personally created to aid in improving a student's mental health.

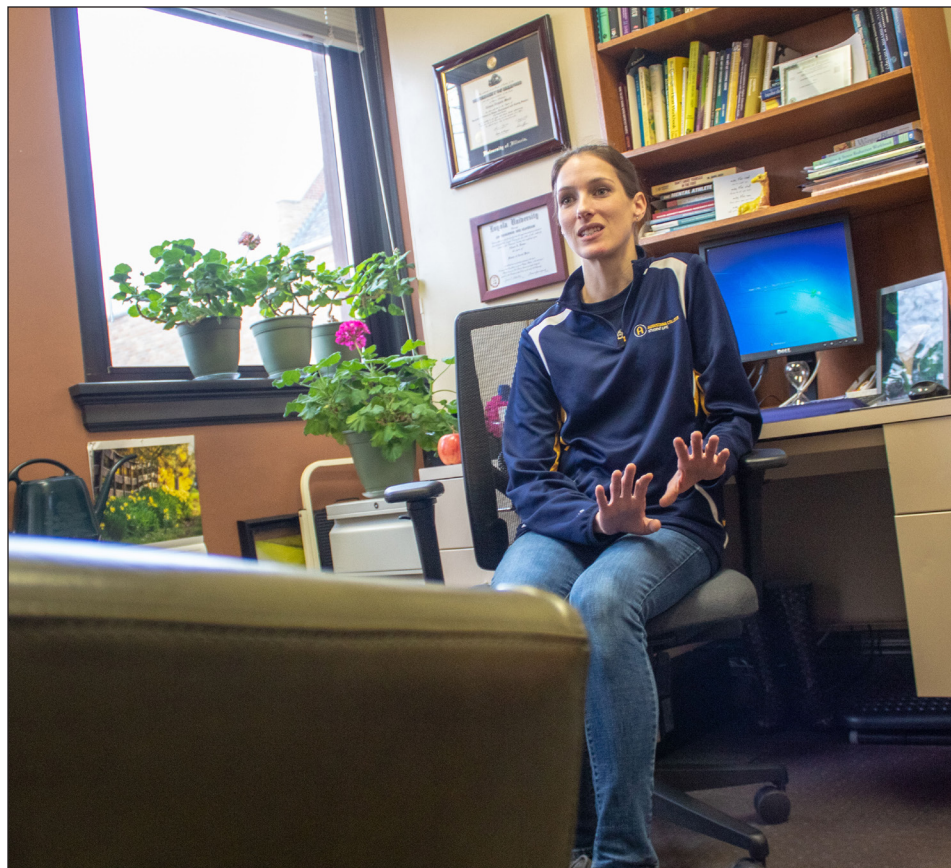
While it may sound daunting to seek help, the counselors know that there is a stigma surrounding mental health.

"I think it's very intimidating; it's a very hard thing to come up and be like 'Alright, I can't do this on my own,'" Iavarone said.

"Coming here [to counseling] has been construed as defeat and, obviously, it's not a defeat. There are some people who are so self-critical or caught up in their dysfunctional thinking that they just can't see the truth and so they see counseling as a threat," Iavarone said.

DeGreve commented on the stigma around using the counseling services.

"I think a lot of people are afraid to go to



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Augustana counselor, Allison Mirell, discusses the counseling process and future goals of the Augustana Counseling Services, including the addition of consultants and different types of therapy.

counseling because people think that it will make them look weak and that ideology really has messed with our generation," DeGreve said.

As well as counseling, there are also other resources offered on campus regarding mental health.

Yen Dao, Director of Student Success Services, helps students with disabilities make sure they get accommodations in the classroom along with providing students with access to tutoring and study skills.

"I teach a sort of well-balanced approach to college. In order for you to be successful in college, you have to manage your mental health as well as your physical health. You can't do well in college and not feel well emotionally or physically," Dao said.

Dao discussed the difficulties she commonly hears from students.

"A lot of our students say they struggle with managing time, whether it is procrastination or motivation issues or maybe getting started or prioritizing," Dao said.

Students can take advantage of the student success services by using the Student Success Services website, making appointments by emailing Dao, stopping in her office or by using the Starfish website.

Student support groups can also be a good resource for students who feel that

the school provided resources are not as helpful or in addition to them.

DeGreve spoke about mental health groups on campus as important resources.

"I think counseling is really an important thing, but I understand that people also aren't always comfortable going to them," DeGreve said.

One of these resources DeGreve spoke of was NAMI (National Alliance for Mental Illness) which aims to improve the well-being and mental health of students.

DeGreve said, "I think it is a fantastic support group for anyone who maybe isn't comfortable going to counseling or maybe doesn't even want to talk about their mental health problems, but needs a group there that recognizes the struggle they are going through."

Dao further encourages the importance of taking care of yourself mentally and physically as it is an important aspect of student wellness. There are different ways on campus to address mental health.

"I think it is important that we address mental health, whether homesickness, stress, depression or anxiety. I think those are things that greatly affect us and how we function on a day-to-day basis. If you're not functioning well, it would be difficult to succeed in college," Dao said.