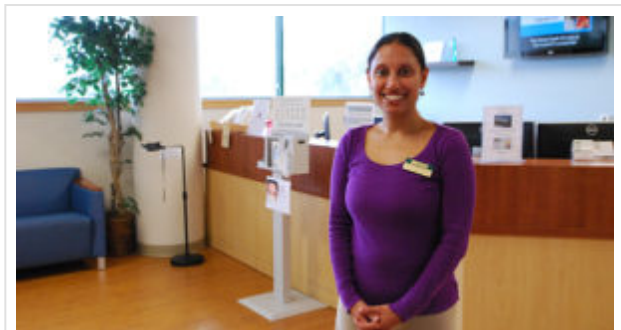


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## USFSP INITIATIVES SUPPORT STATE FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

The National Institute of Mental Health reports depression as the most common health challenge facing college students today. USF St. Petersburg is taking the issue to heart and exploring ways to expand its current mental health services to better serve students. These goals are in alignment with those set by the Florida Board of Governors, which seeks to increase state support for counseling services initiatives.



*Anita Sahgal, director of the USFSP Wellness Center*

The BOG recently reported that mental health centers at State University System institutions have experienced a 48 percent increase in student clients and a 67 percent increase in student client sessions for issues of anxiety, academic stress and depression over the past six years. Additionally, an increasing number of students are entering State University System institutions with mental health issues or previous diagnoses and are on medications.

“During the 2015-16 academic year, 5.6 percent of the total enrolled student population at USFSP utilized counseling services,” said Anita Sahgal, director of the Wellness Center and a psychologist who has been with USFSP since 2008. The Wellness Center offers a variety of services for mental health, medical care, health education, and victim advocacy. Individual and group counseling sessions are available to all students currently enrolled at USFSP.

A 2012 survey report by the National Alliance on Mental Health shows that more than 45 percent of surveyed students identified their reason for ceasing to attend college was because of mental health related reasons, such as depression, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder. The resulting decrease in enrollment impacts graduation rates, which are a significant component in college rankings by publications like *U.S. News & World Report*.

Sahgal said the USFSP Wellness Center surveys students who use its services to ask whether they think their visits to the Center—for mental health or other services—contribute to their academic success. More than 65 percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

“The students also answered another question about whether they think their visits contribute to their overall well-being, and 71.65 percent said they agreed or strongly agreed,” said Sahgal. “I think this correlates because these types of positive changes in students’ personal lives may impact their academic lives as well.”

Visit the [USFSP Wellness Center](#) website for more information about the center and its offerings.

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