Introduction

- The number of college students with serious mental health concerns has risen significantly in recent years (Mowbray et al., 2006).
- The primary disorders include depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation (Eisenberg et al., 2007; Furr et al., 2001).
- Mental health problems in college students negatively affect academic performance, retention, graduate rates, and can increase disruptive behaviors and suicide risk. Thus, serving the population is important (Harrar, Affspriung, & Long, 2010).
- Recent research has indicated that as many as 50% of students suffer from at least one mental health problem (Zivin, Eisenberg, Gollust, & Goberstein, 2009). Despite the large need and demand, a sizable percentage of students do not receive services, nor do they seek services (Harrar, Affspring, & Long, 2010).
- Students typically do not seek counseling due to perceived barriers such as:
  - They did not have information about the center or the counseling process. In addition to not having knowledge they preferred to speak with friends and family instead of a therapist (Eisenberg et al., 2007).
  - Group psychotherapy is very effective, but the fear of public disclosure has inhibited the use of group therapy at Universities (Hahn, 2009).
- Other restrictions to students are the fear of stigma, lack of availability, inability to have emergency appointments and severity of the issues (Mowbray et al., 2006).
- Additionally, counseling services struggle to meet demand due to budget cuts, limited resources, and difficulties in matching services to student needs (Dworkin & Lyddon, 1991).
- The purpose of this study was to work in conjunction with UWEC Counseling Services to collect data about the barriers preventing students from utilizing the services, the types of services that are most preferred as well as gender differences in preferences. The analyses can be used to inform decision making about the types of services to provide to students.

Methods

- The entire UWEC student body received an e-mail invitation to participate in an online survey regarding the UWEC Counseling Center.
- Students willing to participate accessed the survey through a link provided in the invitation e-mail.
- 1,836 participants completed the anonymous online survey (489 Male, 1,334 Female).

Discussion and Implications

- Our findings indicate that the majority of students at UWEC have never used Counseling Services.
- Aside from perceiving no need to utilize counseling services, the biggest barriers to seeking services were a concern about the stigma associated with seeking counseling, schedule conflicts, lack of awareness that the services are free, and a preference to see a different type of counselor than those available. Some of these expressed barriers are similar to those found in the literature (e.g., Eisenberg et al., 2007) and thus represent systemic barriers to many college students throughout the U.S.
- Both males and females reported that they are most likely to utilize individual counseling over other service delivery methods.
- A shocking finding is that almost half of our participants did not even know where Counseling Services was located.
- These findings suggest a need to raise awareness of the services offered by UWEC Counseling Services.
- Our findings will be used to inform potential changes to the type and style of services offered by UWEC’s Counseling Services in order to provide the services most desired by the students.

References Available Upon Request