

Benchmarking Analysis: Student Services

April 2019

In the following report, Hanover Research presents the results of a benchmarking analysis of student services offered by 10 institutions in North Carolina, with a focus on mental health and wellness services.



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Recommendations

Based on an analysis of student services at 10 institutions in North Carolina, Hanover Research recommends that institutions:

- 1 Include education and diagnostic resources in counseling resources.**

Adding these to counseling center offerings may contribute to greater mental health awareness and facilitate wellness conversations that address students' mental health, well-being, and stress.
- 2 Expand online mental health resources.**

Offering more mental health resources online increases students' ability to access resources at all times. Online resources aimed at improving students' mental well-being also have the potential to reduce the need for more costly treatment. Elon University's [Therapy Assistance Online \(TAO\)](#) is a potentially useful example of an online platform of behavioral health resources that includes interactive educational modules and practice tools to help students understand and manage how they feel, think, and act.
- 3 Consider offering "walk-in" appointments or "drop-in" office hours for most student services.**

One of the keys to improving student service effectiveness is to increase utilization. Institutions can lower barriers to accessing student services by offering students the ability to seek initial support without an appointment. While many services will ultimately require that students request a longer appointment, offering students the ability to have an initial walk-in consultation can encourage them to seek help when they need it.

Key Findings

Health Services are the most commonly offered type of student service, while multicultural services are less common.

All benchmarked institutions offer services that promote students' physical, emotional, and mental wellness. Multicultural services are less common, but it should be noted that some benchmarked institutions address multicultural supports through counselling and wellness programs.

Benchmarked institutions most commonly deliver student services through an office or division of student affairs.

More specialized units generally report to this office or division. Units delivering student services include health centers, residential life services, campus safety offices, and career centers. Academic advising is one service area that tends to be decentralized, and is most commonly offered by individual colleges or departments.

Counseling, substance abuse, crisis services, outreach, and referral services are the most common mental health services.

All reviewed institutions offer mental health and wellness services, with most resources focused on counseling services. Benchmarked institutions generally recognize the need to provide services that support students' physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

Reviewed institutions less commonly offer services and resources that emphasize preventative mental health care.

Fayetteville State University (FSU) is an example of an institution that provides a wide variety of counseling services, but also offers greater preventative care and education surrounding mental health. Rather than focusing all resources on treatment, FSU offers workshops, presentations, speaker series, and diagnostic evaluations to teach students how to prioritize their mental health and have conversations that will best support their wellness.

Research Questions and Methodology

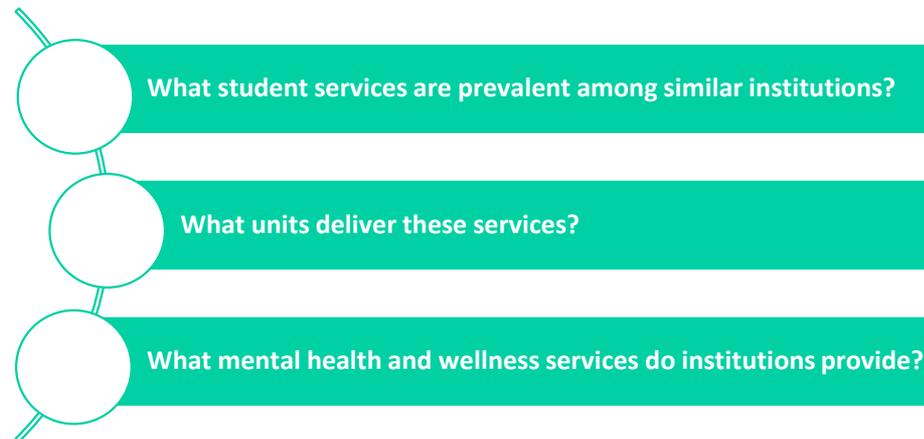
Benchmarking Analysis: Student Services

Methodology

To assist institutions in assessing and developing student services, Hanover conducted a benchmarking study identify what services, particularly those related to mental health and wellness, should be provided. The analysis aims to provide insight into what institutions offer in the way of student services, what units deliver these services, and what mental health and wellness services are offered.

The following analysis is based on a review of information drawn from institutional websites as well as publicly available data sources. Hanover benchmarked student service offerings at ten North Carolina institutions, including five Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Research Questions



Competitor Institution Characteristics

Institution	Location	Type	Programs
Appalachian State University	Boone, NC	---	Student Affairs
Campbell University	Buies Creek, NC	---	Student Success
Elizabeth City State University	Elizabeth City, MC	HBCU	Student Affairs
Elon University	Elon, NC	---	Student Life Departments
Fayetteville State University	Fayetteville, NC	HBCU	Student Services and Organizations
North Carolina A&T State University	Greensboro, NC	HBCU	Student Affairs
Shaw University	Raleigh, NC	HBCU	Students
University of North Carolina Pembroke	Pembroke, NC	---	Student Affairs
Western Carolina University	Cullowhee, NC	---	Student Life Services
Winston-Salem State University	Winston-Salem, NC	HBCU	Student Services

Supporting the Mental Health of Current and Incoming Students

Institutions should engage with students on a proactive basis in order to help students manage stress and other mental health challenges.

A recent [article](#) focusing on the “mental health crisis on U.S. college campuses” notes that an increasing number of current students need mental health services, but colleges are struggling to keep up with this demand. Many institutions are not equipped to adequately serve students given an overall scarcity of funds allocated towards mental health resources. Furthermore, at some institutions, it can be difficult to gain buy-in from the administration to focus on mental health services.

Despite financial and logistical difficulties, institutions can effectively address student mental health, well-being, and stress. The Director of the [University of Florida’s Counseling and Wellness Center](#), Sherry Benton, points to the importance of:

- ✓ Offering students useful online resources (e.g., quizzes, games, links to external resources)
- ✓ Providing training and resources to faculty (e.g., workshops that take faculty through different student mental health scenarios)
- ✓ Not waiting until the end of the semester to reach out to students
- ✓ Developing stress relief events (particularly at high-stress times of the semester, such as finals week)

Some institutions have developed additional innovative ways to support students’ mental health, as shown on the right.

Fast Facts



35%

Percentage of first-year college students who struggled with a mental illness (2018).



88%

Percentage of college counseling directors who reported seeing an increase in severe psychological problems over the previous five years (2015).

Source: [American Psychological Association](#), [Academic Psychiatry](#)

ORIENTATION SESSIONS

- Some institutions have started to proactively share mental health information with first-year students during face-to-face orientation sessions.
- Approaches may include traditional presentations, panel discussions, role plays, short videos, and student testimonials followed by small group discussions.
- Orientations can teach students how to recognize mental illness symptoms, where to find resources and support, and how to talk to friends who might be struggling.

FREE MENTAL HEALTH SCREENINGS

- Other institutions encourage students to monitor their mental health the way they would monitor their physical health.
- Institutions normalize mental health checkups by offering free and readily-accessible screenings to all students.
- Screenings can be done on a kiosk, where students answer questions on a private screen and then receive relevant resources and information.
- More formalized screening options can include more comprehensive, 15-minute online assessments to measure anxiety and depression.

CAMPUS CLUBS/ORGANIZATIONS

- Institutions can develop campus clubs and organizations dedicated to mental health awareness.
- Active Minds, for example, is a national organization that currently hosts more than 450 campus chapters, and facilitates conversations about mental health.
- Student-run efforts have been shown to be associated with increased awareness of mental health issues, reduced stigma, and better mental health attitudes.

Source: [University of California-Berkeley](#), [Washington Post](#)

Engagement Strategies

Counselors employ a variety of strategies to engage students in the advising process. Students may not fully understand the role of a college advisor, while others may have preconceived notions of what advising entails, thus affecting how they use relevant services (Walker et al.). To improve the advising experience and increase student usage of available resources, a few best practices for advising approaches are outlined below:



INTRUSIVE ADVISING

- Students most in need of advising may be the least likely to look for it. As a result, advisors proactively reach out to students, rather than waiting for them to seek guidance. This may involve direct phone calls or messages to the students, proactive study plans outlining student goals, and systems that track academic performance.



STUDENT SUCCESS COURSES

- Instruction and advising are integrated in a classroom setting, often during orientation sessions or at the beginning of the academic year. This may prove useful to institutions that do not have sufficient resources to provide students with as much one-on-one guidance sessions as is ideal.



DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

- Counselors are encouraged to think of advising as a teaching process, rather than just information provision. “Information dumping” may result in too much information imparted to students without the necessary tools to develop a cohesive plan.

Implementation of Strategies

When seeking to engage students, advisors should implement these strategies in the following ways:



Intrusive Advising

- ✓ Advisors should identify students who exhibit a lack of commitment to a particular major as early as possible.
- ✓ Even prior to the start of the school year, advisors should begin developing strategies to assist individual students, by reaching out and asking students to complete interest and career inventories.

Student Success Courses

- ✓ Institutions can aggregate resources across academic advising departments, career services, and services for specific populations into one advising session.
- ✓ Advisors can help students understand how their academic choices relate to their career goals, developing a more holistic approach to providing guidance. This will assist students who are unclear about their values or objectives.

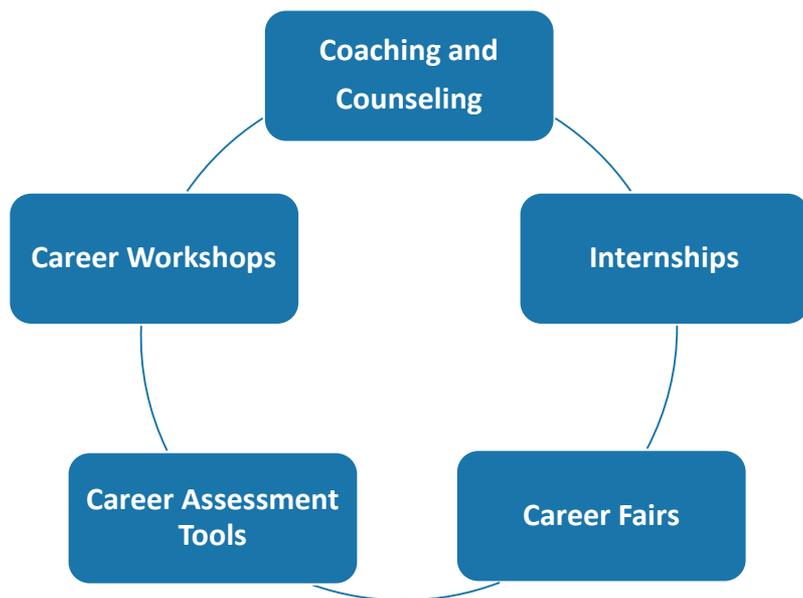
Developmental Approach

- ✓ Advisors can help students learn more about their values and goals before offering information on programs or careers. This can help advisors understand different student personality types and rationales for remaining undeclared.
- ✓ Advisors can facilitate sustained interaction with students, ideally through multiple meetings rather than one-off sessions.

Best Practices in Career Services

Career services have evolved over time to focus less on direct job placement.

Career services generally focus more on facilitating connections between students and employers. The chart below includes the five most common services offered in 2017-18 according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) 2017-18 [Career Services Benchmark Survey Report](#). Over 90 percent of all respondents offered these five services. Less common services include offering for-credit career services (37.4 percent of respondents), alumni outreach services (47.9 percent), and academic advising (19 percent).



Source: [NACE](#)

Career Services Key Components

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) regularly evaluates effective practices at member institutions.

[NACE](#) is the leading professional association for more than 8,100 college career services professionals representing 2,000 US colleges and universities. NACE provides regular reports and data that are widely used by offices of career services at colleges and universities across the US. For example, NACE produces an annual *Career Services Benchmark Survey* based on surveying 666 member institutions. The most recent [2017-18 survey](#) found that another annual NACE report, [The Professional Standards for College and University Career Services](#), is the second most used assessment resource by offices of career services after student assessment surveys.

NACE identifies six core focus areas of career services, listed below:



Source: [The Professional Standards for College and University Career Services 2016](#)

Service Learning

Service learning is a prominent feature of student experience services and is highlighted as a form of experiential learning by many career centers.

Since the 1970s, [service learning](#) has also grown as a popular form of experiential learning for students. Service learning has been found to benefit students, faculty, higher education institutions, and communities. [Five service learning models](#) have been identified and are listed below:

MODEL	DESCRIPTION
DISCIPLINE-BASED	Students are expected to have a presence in the community throughout the semester and reflect on their experiences regularly. In these reflections, they use course content as a basis for their analysis and understanding of the key theoretical, methodological, and applied issues at hand.
PROBLEM-BASED	Students relate to the community much as “consultants” working for a “client.” Students work with community members to understand a particular community problem or need. This model presumes that students have or will develop capacities to help communities solve a problem.
CAPSTONE COURSE	These courses are generally designed for majors and minors in a given discipline and are offered almost exclusively to students in their final year. Capstone courses ask students to draw upon the knowledge they have obtained throughout their coursework and apply it to relevant service work in the community.
SERVICE INTERNSHIP	This approach asks students to work as many as 10 to 20 hours a week in a community setting. As in traditional internships, students are charged with producing a body of work that is of value to the community or site. However, unlike traditional internships, service internships incorporate on-going faculty-guided reflection to challenge students to analyze their new experiences through the application of discipline-specific theories.
ACTION RESEARCH	Community-based action research is an independent study option for students who are highly experienced in community work. This approach can be effective with small classes or groups of students. In this model, students work closely with faculty members to learn research methodology while serving as advocates for communities.

Benchmarking Analysis: Services Overview

Benchmarking Analysis: Student Services

Student Services Offered

Student services offerings at reviewed institutions cluster around six key service areas: academic services, campus services, career services, holistic health services, multicultural services, and student experience services.

Four of the ten benchmarked institutions report offering student services in four of these six categories, while the remaining six offer all six categories of student services. Academic, campus, and multicultural services do not appear to be offered by all reviewed institutions. Multicultural supports and services are among the least commonly-offered student services. Multicultural supports and services focus on the inclusion of all students, diversity education, and the development of diverse students.

Holistic Health services are the most common type of student services offered by reviewed institutions on an institution-wide basis.

Holistic Health encompasses all health services, including: counseling, psychological, pharmacy, wellness, medical, health, substance abuse, laboratory, and sexual health services. All selected institutions include a counseling center or set of counseling services to address students' holistic health, emotional, mental, and physical health.

While all reviewed institutions offer academic advising services, many do so through individual colleges or departments.

It is relatively common for competitors to concentrate academic advising services at the college or departmental level, with some offering incoming students who have not yet declared a major advising services through a university college. It is less common for competitors to offer centralized academic advising services.

Reviewed institutions offer a wide variety of individual services within the broader categories of campus, career, student life, academic, and multicultural services.

Other services include: campus services (residential, housing, and safety services), career services (development and planning), multicultural services (diversity and inclusion, organizations devoted to diverse and underrepresented students), and academic services (testing and disability services, mentoring, support, etc.).

No reviewed institutions appear to offer “walk-in” appointments or “drop-in” office hours in any of the six service areas, though institutions may wish to consider this practice.

Student utilization is the intended outcome for any provided student service. To ensure increased student usage of provided services, availability and accessibility of services should be considered. A [policy report](#) focused on the experience of low-income women with college support services identified significant barriers that limit access to supports such as career services including: inability to schedule appointments, hurdles with keeping appointments, and long wait times when students can come to career services. While appointment slots provide specialized individual time, students may perceive the need to make an appointment as an obstacle to seeking help, especially when there are numerous other demands on their time. Offering drop-in or walk-in services can make it easier for students to seek help.

Source: Institutional Websites

Benchmarking Analysis: HBCU Student Services

Benchmarking Analysis: Student Services

Student Services

Student services at HBCUs mirror student services at other universities in North Carolina with some additional supports.

Many HBCUs allocate greater resources to student development, engagement, and leadership experiences outside the classroom. North Carolina A&T State University, for example, offers Student Development, Student Activities, a Multicultural Student Center, Student University Activities Board, and other on-campus engagement opportunities through its student services.

Some HBCU institutions have specified centers and organizations dedicated to education, outreach, or advocacy of all genders, races, and ethnicities.



Elizabeth City State University (ECSU) created the [PACE Center](#), committed to decreasing violence on campus through outreach and advocacy. The PACE Center works to promote awareness of cultural factors that support violence and to combat these factors in efforts to change cultural norms on campus related to sexual assault, relationship violence, domestic violence, and stalking.



Fayetteville State University (FSU) houses the Center for Personal Development, a counseling and mental health support service focused on enhancing student experiences and educational processes. The primary mission of the Center for Personal Development is to provide programs and outreach services that promote student engagement, and to assist in the development of students with diverse backgrounds.



Shaw University (SU) received a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) to create a more survivor-centered campus. The mission of OVW's Campus Program is to develop effective programming that builds upon strong campus and community partnerships with the goals of strengthening services for victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking and promoting multifaceted prevention.

Source: Institutional Websites

TRIO Program

The federal TRIO program is an integral component of three benchmarked HBCU's student services offerings.

Reviewed competitors commonly offer TRIO's Student Support Services, with some others offering Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math-Science, or Talent Search. The eight programs included in the Federal TRIO Programs include:



Source: [Federal TRIO Programs](#)

Benchmarking Analysis: Mental Health and Wellness Services

Benchmarking Analysis: Student Services

Offered Services

Benchmarked mental health and wellness services most commonly include counseling, substance abuse programs, crisis services, outreach, and referral services.

All benchmarked institutions offer counseling for individuals and groups. Six benchmarked institutions offer substance abuse programs, five offer crisis services, and four offer outreach and referral services.

While all benchmarked competitors provide a range of counseling services, few offer more preventative wellness services. Counseling and other mental health care are vital on-campus services, but they emphasize treatment. More preventative services emphasize education and wellness practices that help students maintain positive mental health. Other unique mental health and wellness services are listed below:

Appalachian State University

Consultations and Referrals

Wellness & Prevention Services

Campbell University

Crisis Intervention

Sexual Assault & Interpersonal Violence

Elizabeth City State University

Mental Health Screenings

Testing and Disability Services

Elon University

Therapy Assistance Online

Psychiatric Care and Outreach Program

Fayetteville State University

Psychological, Social, General Diagnostic Evaluations

Presentations & Speaker Series

NC A&T State University

Training & Supervision

Psychological Testing

Shaw University

Student Disability Services

Workshops & Seminars

UNC Pembroke

Psychotherapy Groups

Prevention Education Programs

Western Carolina University

Psychiatric Medication Evaluation

Outreach Program

Winston-Salem State University

Psychological Problems

Family Issues

Wellness & Prevention Services – Appalachian State University

Events as well as individual and group services are targeted to maintaining students' wellness. Program topics include nutrition, sexual health, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, stress, & sleep.



CARE Team – University of North Carolina Pembroke

Committed to caring for student success, the team is made up of several individuals from various campus departments. Classroom performance, physical and mental wellness, residence life, and financial needs are all considered to ensure students' wellbeing.

Program Benchmarking

Benchmarking Analysis: Student Services

Student Services by Institution

Institution	HBCU	Reporting Departments and Units	Student Services	Mental Health and Wellness Services
Appalachian State University		<p>Academic Resources Computing and Campus Resources Campus Life and Student Activities Career Development Office of Student Affairs Office of the Dean of Students Student Media & Entertainment Wellness, Health, and Safety Beyond Campus Finances</p>	<p>Career Development Center Child Development Center Counseling & Psychological Services Electronic Student Services Multicultural Student Development Off-Campus Student Services Office of Student Services Parent and Family Services Student Engagements and Leadership Student Health Services Student Legal Services University Housing University Recreation Wellness & Prevention Services</p>	<p>M.S. Shook Student Health Services: evaluation by clinician, initial treatment by nurse</p> <p>Counseling & Psychological Services: short-term individual counseling, group counseling, short-term couples/family counseling, workshops, emergency services, initial consultation assessments, referrals, consultations</p> <p>Wellness & Prevention Services: holistic approach to wellness encompassing emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, and spiritual dimensions</p>
Campbell University		Student Success	<p>Academic Support Services Career Services Disability Services First-Year Experience Counseling Services</p>	<p>Counseling Services: Individual Therapy, Group Therapy, Substance Use & Addictive Behaviors Assessment & Counseling, Crisis Intervention, Sexual Assault & Interpersonal Violence, Alcohol & Other Drug Education & Resources</p>
Elizabeth City State University	X	<p>Division of Student Affairs: Career Development Center Counseling and Testing The Office of the Dean of Students Student Conduct Student Health Services Student Engagement Student Orientation Housing and Residence Life PACE Center</p>	<p>Career Services Counseling Services Testing and Disability Services Health Services Orientation Safety Services Sexual Assault and Violence Services Housing Services Academic Advising (administered at college or departmental level)</p>	<p>Counseling & Testing Services: Counseling Services, Mental Health Screenings, Alcohol Abuse Prevention and Education Program, Self Help Disability Services</p>

Source: Institutional Websites (See Hyperlinks)

Program Benchmarking

Benchmarking Analysis: Student Services

Student Services by Institution

Institution	HBCU	Reporting Departments and Units	Student Services	Mental Health and Wellness Services
Elon University		<p>Student Life Departments: Counseling Services Center for Race Ethnicity, and Diversity Education (CREDE) Dean of Students Health Promotion Gender and LGBTQIA Center Kernodle Center for Service Learning and Engagement Campus Recreation and Wellness Center for Leadership Moseley Campus Center New Student & Transition Programs Residence Life Student Conduct Student Concerns Student Health Services Student Involvement Fraternity and Sorority Life Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life Koenigsberger Learning Center</p>	<p>Counseling Services SMART Mentoring Program Student Diversity Education Support Mental, Physical, Sexual Health Services Substance Education Aromatherapy Health Promotion Programs Gender & LGBTQIA Inclusion Services Service Learning & Community Engagement Student Wellness Programs Experiential Learning Programs Campus Services First-Year Experience Programming Sophomore Experience Programming Parent & Family Services Residence Services Student Concerns Outreach Health Services Spiritual Services Academic Advising</p>	<p>Counseling Services: Initial Appointment, Therapy Assistance Online (TAO), Group Counseling, Individual Counseling, Crisis Services, Workshops, Consultation, Psychiatric Care, Outreach Programming, Referrals</p>
Fayetteville State University	X	<p>Career Services Center for Personal Development Clubs & Organizations Fraternity & Sorority Life Health & Wellness Intramural & Recreational Sports Service & Leadership Spiritual Enrichment</p>	<p>Inclusion and Diversity Organizations Career Services Counseling Services Students with Disabilities Services Substance Abuse Prevention Men's and Women's Health STI Counseling, Screening, & Treatment Laboratory Services Family Planning Pharmacy Services Health Promotion and Education – Bronco Wellness Sports Physicals Academic Advising (administered at college or departmental level)</p>	<p>Center for Personal Development: individual counseling, couples counseling, small group counseling, workshops & other trainings, presentations & speaker series, psychological, social, & general diagnostic evaluations, after hours services, accommodation for students with disabilities, on-campus substance use counseling and referral services</p>

Source: Institutional Websites (See Hyperlinks)

Program Benchmarking

Benchmarking Analysis: Student Services

Student Services by Institution

Institution	HBCU	Reporting Departments and Units	Student Services	Mental Health and Wellness Services
North Carolina A & T State University	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campus Recreation Center Career Services Counseling Services Dean of Students Graduate Student Council Greek Life Health Services Housing & Residence Life Intramural Sports Marching Machine Band Multicultural Student Center Student Activities Student Center Student Development Student Government Association Student Support Services Student University Activities Board University Events Center Upward Bound Program Veteran & Military Affairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports and Activities Program Career Services Counseling Services Health Services Housing and Residence Life Services Multicultural Student Services Trio Student Support Services Veterans & Military Affairs Academic Advising (administered at college or departmental level) 	<p>Counseling Services: individual and group counseling, outreach and consultation, training and supervision, teaching, psychological testing, and research</p> <p>Student Health Center: health and wellness education</p>
Shaw University	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residence Life Student Activities Career Development Student Health Counseling Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counseling Services Medical and Health Services Career Services Experiential Learning Services Housing Services Academic Advising (administered at college or departmental level) 	<p>Counseling Services: individual counseling, support groups, student disability services, workshops/seminars. Substance abuse counseling, hospitalization</p>

Program Benchmarking

Benchmarking Analysis: Student Services

Student Services by Institution

Institution	HBCU	Reporting Departments and Units	Student Services	Mental Health and Wellness Services
University of North Carolina Pembroke		Community & Civic Engagement Campus Recreation Counseling & Psychological Services Student Conduct Care Team Housing & Residence Life Police & Public Safety Diversity & Inclusion University Center and Programs Campus Engagement & Leadership Student Health Services Career Center	Service-learning Opportunities Physical Activity Services Counseling Services Psychological Services Consultation, Advocacy, Resources, and Education Services Housing and Residence Services Safety Services Diversity and Inclusion Health Services Career Services Academic Advising (administered at college or departmental level)	Counseling and Psychological Services: counseling groups, psychotherapy groups, individual counseling, triage, advocacy, crisis services, psychiatric medication, prevention education programs
Western Carolina University		Campus Life Services Greek Student Engagement Intercultural Affairs Health Services Counseling, Psychological, & Career Services	Counseling & Psychological Services Health Services Health & Wellness Education Career Services Parent and Family Services International Programs and Services Academic Advising (administered at college or departmental level)	Counseling & Psychological Services: individual counseling, crisis services, group counseling medication evaluation Health Services: primary care, urgent care, women's care, medication management, laboratory services, prescription pharmacy services, nutritional services, injection services, over-the-counter pharmacy
Winston-Salem State University	X	The Office of the Dean of Students Office of Career Development Services Disability Services Information Wellness Center Office of Scholarships & Financial Aid Housing and Residence Life University Recreation Student Activities Student Governance Student Centers Computing on Campus	Career Planning and Placement Disability Services Counseling Services Pharmacy Services Student Health Services Financial Services Housing Services Fitness Programs Academic Advising (administered at college or departmental level)	University Counseling Center: psychological problems, relationship, family issues, emergencies and crisis situations

Source: Institutional Websites (See Hyperlinks)

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