

# Mental Notes

A Monthly Newsletter

Volume I, Issue 11, November 2007



## COUNSELING SERVICES RESPONDS TO VA TECH CONCERNS



by Adrian Péré, MSW, MA, GSW

In the aftermath of the Virginia Tech shootings, inquiries and investigations into the events of the day and those preceding it were numerous. The governor of Virginia commissioned a panel to investigate the matter and make recommendations. The university conducted its own investigation, as did various university departments with which the gunman had been in contact. The response to the tragedy extended far beyond VA Tech and the state of Virginia, however, as institutions of higher learning around the country scrutinized, clarified, and, in many cases, revised policies and procedures for dealing with “troubled students.”

These investigations and the reports resulting from them answered some questions and raised others. Among the many questions asked were several relating to prevention, especially in light of the fact that the gunman had been “on the radar” of VA Tech faculty and staff for quite some time.

For many of these questions raised by the April 16th massacre, there were/are no simple answers. Issues related to privacy, confidentiality, freedom of expression, and basic civil rights seem, at times, to conflict with consideration for greater good and protec-

tion of human life. When does quirky behavior become troubled behavior? At what point does confidential communication become a matter for public concern? When and how are decisions to violate confidentiality made? Can mental health professionals “predict” violent behavior?

The answer to the last question is actually rather simple. Research overwhelmingly suggests that mental health professional *cannot* predict if and/or when someone will become violent. However, forensic behavioral scientists who specialize in such matters can and have developed profiles of potential and actual perpetrators. (A theoretical profile of Seung Hui Cho, the VA Tech gunman, is included in official [report](#) from the Virginia panel.)

Answers to the other questions are far more complex and require the expertise of professionals from the fields of law, medicine, mental health, and various other disciplines. So what is your average lay person (faculty, staff, fellow student) to do when confronted with potentially threatening behavior?

In response to this question, UNO Counseling Services has prepared two documents to be used as resources when concerns about student behavior arise. These documents, available on the [UNOCS website](#), include “[Information Regarding Concerns about Student Behavior](#)” and “[Red Flags, Warning Signs, and Indicators](#).”



### RELAXATION SESSIONS

All stressed out and nowhere...

**WAIT! Somewhere to go!**

by Rosamond Myers, PhD

Are you feeling pulled in all different directions, with no time for any of it? The end of the semester brings many stressors...exams to take or grade, papers to or grade, projects to complete or grade, etc.

Whether you are student, faculty, or staff (feeling overworked, doing multiple jobs) this time of year stretches many of us to the limit. While we all know that a little bit of stress is a good thing (it keeps us sharp and alert), too much can have a negative effect on our minds and bodies. For example, it can cause concentration problems, physical and mental fatigue, teeth grinding, stomach and/or bowel difficulties, headaches, burn-out, irritability...and the list goes on.

UNOCS is well aware of the impact stress can have and we can help. **FREE Relaxation Sessions** are offered on a regular basis each semester. These provide an opportunity for the mind and body to wind down in a comfortable setting. The lights are turned off as you experience a progressive muscle relaxation exercise followed by a soothing guided imagery. Many times the participants fall asleep, which is the ultimate relaxation! We invite you to attend (no advance registration necessary) any of the 50 minute sessions.

### Couples & Finances Workshop

Thurs. Nov. 6

2:15-3:15 PM Kirschman Hall 301

\*For disability related accommodations, please contact Adrian Péré at 280-6683.

### Relaxation Sessions

Thurs. Nov. 1, 15, 29

Thurs. Dec. 6

2:00-3:00 PM Kirschman Hall 301

\*For disability related accommodations, please contact Adrian Péré at 280-6683.