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STATE GRANT AWARDED TO INCREASE CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

INNOVATIVE PILOT PROGRAM SEEKS TO EXPAND STUDENT CARE WHILE SUPPORTING THE MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE PIPELINE.

by [Kelley McGee](#) | November 11, 2022

Read time: about 1 min

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), in consultation with the Virginia Health Care Foundation (VHCF), has awarded a grant to Christopher Newport to expand mental healthcare services for students.

The Higher Education Mental Health Workforce Pilot grant will underwrite the salary and benefits of two onsite Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) or Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) candidates for two years. Christopher Newport will hire, train, and supervise the LCSW/LPC candidates to work at our on-campus mental health care facilities until they are licensed.

This unique pilot program will serve the dual purpose of expanding mental health services for students, while simultaneously increasing the mental health workforce pipeline by offering supervised clinical hours for candidates seeking to become a LCSW or LPC.

Christopher Newport is the only Tidewater area school to be awarded this grant. In addition to the grant, a University match will allow the clinic to hire a third counselor.

The grant is the result of the General Assembly responding to the critical need for mental health care for students attending Virginia's institutions of higher education. Earlier this year, legislators appropriated \$500,000 annually for the next two years to support this mental health workforce pilot, which will be conducted at six selected public

four-year institutions.

“We are excited to support the Commonwealth’s effort to increase the mental health workforce pipeline, and honored to be selected by SCHEV to participate in this pilot program,” said Kevin Hughes, Christopher Newport University Vice President of Student Affairs. “We look forward to working with talented clinicians as they help our students navigate the various challenges they face.”

Those mental health care challenges are complex, according to a 2021 study by [Health Minds](#), which revealed 40 percent of surveyed postsecondary students nationwide report having a mental health disorder. Compounding this is the fact that over 70 percent of Virginia is designated as a Mental Health Professional Shortage Area. This pilot program is a step in addressing the shortage of licensed mental-health therapists while meeting the mental health needs of students.

“This pilot represents another example of innovation in the Commonwealth to address complex and urgent problems,” said SCHEV Director Peter Blake.

SCHEV is the state’s coordinating agency for higher education. [With Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education](#), SCHEV is dedicated to making Virginia the best state for education by 2030.
