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October 6, 2021

Tommy G. Thompson  
President  
University of Wisconsin System  
1720 Van Hise Hall  
1220 Linden Drive  
Madison, WI 53706

Rebecca Blank  
Chancellor  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
163 Bascom Hall  
500 Lincoln Drive  
Madison, WI 53706

Dear President Thompson and Chancellor Blank:

I am an attorney with the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL), a non-profit law and policy center dedicated to enforcing the rule of law and protecting constitutional rights. As relevant here, WILL's Equality Under The Law Project engages in strategic litigation and provides policy solutions to ensure that all people are guaranteed equal treatment under law.

On September 9, 2021, the University of Wisconsin-Madison announced the hiring of nine new mental health counselors. According to the press release, "[t]hree of these providers will exclusively serve students of color, joining eight providers already in this role." See Attachment 1. Elsewhere, on a website labeled "students of color," UW lists the healthcare workers apparently assigned to non-white students. See Attachment 2.

Just to be perfectly clear, the University of Wisconsin has hired multiple state employees and assigned them to provide mental health services exclusively to non-white students.

The Wisconsin Constitution and the United States Constitution emphatically prohibit race discrimination by government entities like UW. Dissenting in the notorious *Plessy v. Ferguson*, Justice Harlan wrote that "our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens." The Wisconsin Constitution similarly guarantees equal treatment of "all people." These legal principles have been upheld and reaffirmed dozens of times in the 67 years since *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Numerous federal and state laws similarly prohibit race discrimination. A state agency that receives federal funding, such as UW, may not treat students differently based on race under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. At UW system schools, under state law, "no student may be denied . . . participation in or the benefits

of, or be discriminated against in any service, program, course or facility of the system or its institution because of the student's race." Wis. Stat. § 36.12. And Wisconsin state law also prohibits "preferential treatment" or the denial of "full and equal enjoyment" at any "clinic" or any other place where "services are available either for free or for a consideration." Wis. Stat. § 106.52.

I could go on. Obviously race discrimination is illegal and unconstitutional. Your own websites are full of nondiscrimination statements and descriptions of UW's full compliance with federal and state laws. Race discrimination is also profoundly immoral. There is no reason to treat students differently based on the color of their skin, especially those students brave enough to seek mental health assistance. UW cannot, and should not, deny, restrict, or set-aside any benefits, services, or opportunities based on race. Put another way, for the same reason that UW could not hire mental health professionals to serve exclusively white students, UW cannot hire mental health professionals to "exclusively serve students of color," as your press release touts.

This is a significant matter and impacts the fundamental notion of what it means to be an American citizen, a Wisconsin resident, and a UW student. As such, we are demanding that you revise your policy immediately, adjust relevant job descriptions and assignments, and reaffirm your own statements of nondiscrimination. Such blatant race discrimination has no place in a civil society.

Sincerely,

WISCONSIN INSTITUTE FOR LAW & LIBERTY

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Lennington". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Daniel P. Lennington  
Deputy Counsel  
Dan@will-law.org

**University Health Services (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/>)**

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# Nine new mental health providers join UHS Mental Health Services

Posted on September 9, 2021 (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/newprovidersfall2021/>)*Students accessing mental health services will find additional providers on staff this semester.*

In response to a need to improve access to mental health services, University Health Services ([UHS](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/) (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/>)) has hired nine new [mental health](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/mental-health/) (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/mental-health/>) providers. Three of these providers will exclusively serve students of color, joining eight providers already in this role. In addition to increasing access to services, the new providers will enhance programming across campus aimed to support BIPOC-identified students. Four new providers will serve as generalists which are counselors who see clients with a wide range of concerns rather than a specific population. Finally, the two additional new providers will serve as care managers, working closely with students who may need support in finding resources both at UHS and in the Madison community.

"I'm very excited to welcome this new group of providers to UHS. They come to our community with enthusiasm, experience, and the cultural awareness and humility to support our students as they pursue both academic success and personal growth," says [Sarah Nolan, PhD](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/nolan-sarah/) (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/nolan-sarah/>), director of Mental Health Services, (MHS) and a licensed psychologist.

The new providers represent a diverse mix of clinical social workers, counselors, and psychologists, each with a special interest in meeting the growing demand for mental health services on campus.

"In this role, as a provider focusing on students of color and other aspects of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice, I hope to support students in having a fulfilling and successful college career," says [Rianna Bailey, MSW, LCSW](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/bailey-rianna/) (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/bailey-rianna/>). "I want to make sure students have a good experience with therapy and their therapist so that they feel safe seeking services in the future if needed."

In addition to individual counseling, MHS—which has 55 providers on staff—offers [group counseling](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/mental-health/group-counseling/) (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/mental-health/group-counseling/>) and [outreach programming](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/mental-health/outreach-services/) (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/mental-health/outreach-services/>) to the student community, in addition to a [training program](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/about/training-opportunities/) (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/about/training-opportunities/>). During the 2020-2021 academic year, MHS had more than 25,000 patient visits.

New students of color-focused providers:

- [Rianna Bailey](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/bailey-rianna/) (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/bailey-rianna/>)

- Serena Cisneros
- [Melanie Daovannary \(https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/daovannary-melanie/\)](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/daovannary-melanie/)

New generalist providers:

- [Blake Bettis \(https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/bettis-blake/\)](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/bettis-blake/)
- [Geetanjali Deole \(https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/deole-geetanjali/\)](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/deole-geetanjali/)
- [Leya Moore \(https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/moore-leya/\)](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/moore-leya/)
- [Tommy Wild \(https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/wild-tommy/\)](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/wild-tommy/)

New care manager providers

- [Corinne Werner \(https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/werner-corinne/\)](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/werner-corinne/)
- Andie Schwabe

“Working in college health is deeply rewarding because it may be a student’s first time coming to see a provider and so there is immense trust that goes into developing a therapeutic relationship and navigating challenges together. There is an opportunity to advocate for students in ways that can make meaningful differences in their lives,” says [Tommy Wild, PhD \(https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/wild-tommy/\)](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/wild-tommy/).

Following a national search, [Ellen Marks \(https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/marks-ellen/\)](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/marks-ellen/), who has been with MHS since 2018, was appointed Associate Director of Clinical Services.

“The addition of these providers—including the providers who serve specific populations—strengthens our ability as an organization to better serve the whole student,” adds Nolan.

To get started with Mental Health Services, call 608-265-5600 (option 2) or log in to MyUHS to schedule an [Access Appointment \(https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/mental-health/getting-started/\)](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/mental-health/getting-started/).

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« [Flu shots for students and employees are now available! \(https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/flushots2021announcement/\)](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/flushots2021announcement/)

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[Emergency Contraception \(https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/emergency-contraception/\)](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/emergency-contraception/)

[HIV Post-Exposure Prevention \(https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/hiv-post-exposure-prevention/\)](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/hiv-post-exposure-prevention/)

[Sexual Assault \(https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/survivor-services/sexual-assault/\)](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/survivor-services/sexual-assault/)

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(<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/wellness/>)[HOME \(https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/\)](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/)[STUDENTS OF COLOR](#)

## Students of Color

**Bailey, Rianna (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/bailey-rianna/>)**

Rianna Bailey is a mental health provider with a focus on serving students of color.

**Daovannary, Melanie (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/daovannary-melanie/>)**

Melanie Daovannary's professional interests include group therapy, individual and couples therapy, and interacting with students in the outreach setting.

**Montañez-Tyler, Josie (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/montanez-tyler-josie/>)****Eggen, Kayla (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/eggen-kayla/>)****Lavell, Beatriz (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/beatriz-lavell/>)**

Medical

**Perez, Margarita (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/perez-margarita/>)**

Perez works in the Gynecology Clinic.

**Steele, J. Corey (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/steele-corey/>)**

Steele values the work and contact that he has had with many students from diverse backgrounds, and is particularly excited about working with students who identify with underserved

**Marte, Claudia (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/marte-claudia/>)**

Marte has a particular passion for supporting students of color and provides services in both English and Spanish

**Avalos, Dezarae (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/staff/avalos-dezarae/>)**

Avalos is interested in supporting students of color, and she has a concentration in Latino/a mental health.

**EMERGENCY SERVICES**Emergency Rooms & Urgent Care (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/emergency-room-urgent-care/>)

✕ Safety Exit