

CENTRAL COUNCIL OF THE STUDENT ASSEMBLY

RESOLUTION 21-1

Monday, February 8th, 2021

21-1: Mental Health and COVID-19¹

Introduced by: SA President Saphire Ruiz '22, SA Vice President Kavya Crasta '21, Rep. Adina Mujica '24, Rep. Dewayne Martin '24, Rep. Dorothy Poucher '21, Rep. Dylan Morse '22, Rep. Olivia Chandler '23

With Additional Data Collection, Proposals, and Drafting From: the Mental Health and COVID-19 Student Task Force, members including all sponsors and former SA President and Vice President Eric Kopp '22, Rep. Mariam Saied '23, Erin Bryant '21, Kelly Elugardo '21, Abigail Moone '23, Dianne-Lee Ferguson '22, Nick Ng '23, and Khuslen "T" Tulga '23, with aid from non-member advisor Rep. Jiin Jeong '21, and Vice President-Elect and Task Force Secretary & Parliamentarian Eric Stenzel '23

Recommending measures to support and improve student mental health in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ARTICLE I Mental Health Needs of the Student Body

WHEREAS this resolution is passed unanimously; and

WHEREAS the COVID-19 global pandemic has deeply harmed and taken the lives of millions of everyday people across the world, including family, friends, and community members of the Hamilton College community, and this body mourns continuously for such tragic losses; and

¹ Resolutions are intended to respond to any events or circumstances directly affecting the student body. They shall provide plans for addressing said events or circumstances, and shall be read as a commitment on behalf of the current Assembly and future Assemblies. Their force derives from an implicit or explicit ethical commitment to the ideas expressed as well as from an explicit ethical commitment to any measures Proposed. Article VIII, Section 2, Subpoint A of the SA Constitution. Inclusion of footnote constitutionally required.



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WHEREAS the then-President-elect and Vice Presidents-elect of the Central Council formed the Mental Health and COVID-19 Student Task Force during the extended winter break, which included members of the Central Council, representatives of the International student community, and numerous student mental health advocates and experts; and

WHEREAS the Task Force conducted a student body survey on the subject matter of this resolution, with almost one-third of students participating and is reference multiple times in this resolution;² and

WHEREAS an early draft of these recommendations was produced on the basis of this survey and circulated amongst over two-dozen members of different departments and offices, in addition to multiple faculty members, for suggestion and comment; and

WHEREAS the Task Force voted on every single suggestion made by said individuals; and

WHEREAS the global pandemic has caused a global financial and unemployment crisis, placing an untold number of students and their families in precarious situations without savings or steady income; and

WHEREAS the United States of America faces a national racial reckoning, embodied by the 2020 Black Lives Matter uprisings and the January 6th, 2021 white supremacist attack on the Capitol to overturn the results of a democratically-decided presidential election, Black, Indigenous, and other students of color are facing extreme external mental health stressors rooted in this nation's enduring history of white supremacy; and

² Mental Health and COVID-19 Survey. To be published on Student Assembly website no later than 2/6/2021.



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WHEREAS the Central Council of the Student Assembly of Hamilton College unequivocally, without hesitation, and in perpetuity believes, asserts, and *demands* that Black Lives Matter; and

WHEREAS the looming threat of the exponentially increasing climate crisis leaves students with fear of living in a world of a far lower quality of life than their parents, and their institution continually refuses to abide by its fiduciary and ethical obligations to them to divest from fossil fuels and associated climate-change-causing industries; and

WHEREAS one of the top issues for both tickets in the December 2020 Student Assembly President/Vice President election was COVID-19 and mental health; and,

WHEREAS students ought to be empowered to speak up loudly for their collective interests, particularly on matters of physical and emotional well-being,

WHEREAS students deserve a seat at the table,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The Central Council of the Student Assembly calls upon students, faculty, and staff to show care, concern, mutual understanding, and love for the members of this community, and therefore be conscious that our expectations of one another held prior to the pandemic will rarely be possible to meet.
2. The Central Council requests that in all future decisions regarding COVID-19 regulations and programs, an intentional effort is made to actively include widespread participation from students, faculty, and staff in the decision-making process.
 - a. In particular, the Central Council advocates that the Campus Leadership Group (operated in Fall '20; a body containing faculty, staff, and student governance representatives) be consulted in major decisions regarding COVID operations, especially when influencing said groups.



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3. The Central Council commits to collaborate with other campus offices to develop a comprehensive resource list, especially regarding mental health and community care.
4. The Central Council requests that the counseling center send out an email at the start of the semester, and regularly throughout, detailing all the available mental health resources on the comprehensive resource list, and in doing so, create more awareness of alternative mental health resources available to students, such as BetterMynds, the WellTrack App, and other activities of the Community of Care initiative.
5. The Central Council encourages further use of Care Contacts for students who do not require psychotherapy, but still desire active listening; students are encouraged to contact the Chaplaincy to learn more.
6. The Central Council recognizes the incongruity between the presence of lists of mental health resources on the Hamilton website and the widespread student feeling that they are not accessible, and the Council commits to narrowing this gap through the actions outlined in this resolution.
7. The Central Council commits to further understanding student needs regarding wait times for counseling appointments, as the Director of the Counseling Center expressed these have been drastically reduced, and shall address this issue by requesting the Counseling Center to track and make publicly available wait times for appointments, both overall and by each respective counselor, so students can make a more informed decision about what resources to utilize.
8. The Central Council urges the college to increase and/or relocate funds for resource-based mental health programming.
 - a. The Central Council designates the Student Assembly President, Vice President, and Committee Chairs to further work with Student Activities and/or Counseling Center and/or other relevant departments on identifying specific potentials for increasing resource-based mental health programming.
9. The Central Council encourages the Counseling Center to provide a therapy group for students dealing with eating disorders both during and after the pandemic.



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10. The Central Council encourages Student Activities to include programming to develop personal mental health coping, resiliency, self-advocacy, and positive self-talk skills, to work in conjunction with other mental health resources.
11. The Central Council encourages students to look to Jeff McArn and the Chaplaincy as an additional resource for mental health and wellness support, particularly for students who do not require psychotherapy, but active listening.
12. The Central Council requests sports coaches and the Counseling Center initiate and maintain consistent collaboration and communication in order to develop methods to maintain the mental health of student-athletes.
13. The Central Council requests collaboration occur between the Office of Opportunity Programs and sports coaches to specifically support BIPOC student-athletes.
14. The Central Council urges the College to provide more on-campus activities so students become discouraged to leave campus. Activities may include food trucks, ice skating, inviting local artisans on virtual platforms, virtual concerts, care packages for remote students, and more.
15. The Central Council urges increased student inclusion in future calendar planning, in order to better incorporate student mental health needs, and encourages the Central Council to take further action.

ARTICLE II Academics

WHEREAS over 98% of 503 on-campus student mental health survey respondents indicated a preference for mental health days and breaks; and

WHEREAS over 36% of 503 on-campus student mental health survey respondents described their workload in the Fall 2020 Semester as closer to “Not at all manageable” than “Very manageable”; and



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WHEREAS the New York State Board of Regents requires that colleges and universities meet a standard number of contact hours per semester; and

WHEREAS the Mental Health and COVID-19 Student Task Force has concluded that one of the most effective ways to reduce student stress this semester is to reduce the academic burdens placed on students,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The Central Council reminds the student body to recognize and be cognizant of the fact that many faculty members are themselves experiencing significant mental health duress due to the pandemic.
2. The Central Council recommends with strong sentiments that faculty take part in the “Light Week” starting March 22nd, 2021, in line with requests from faculty governance; faculty are further requested to generally reduce workload where possible in line with curricula and to be generous with granting requests for extensions.
3. The Central Council urges faculty to not host programming, particularly required programming, on Wellness Days.
4. The Central Council urges faculty to avoid placing exam and paper due dates on the day following a Wellness Day.
5. The Central Council encourages faculty members to implement “catch-up” days throughout the semester where students will have less content/material expected of them, and will instead be incentivized to catch-up on any work they already have.
6. The Central Council strongly encourages faculty members to be in regular communication with their students regarding their mental health, and to share information, suitably anonymized, about mental health and workload, for further coordination among departments and programs.
 - a. The Central Council recommends anonymous surveys to be used to this end.
 - b. The Central Council shall design a sample survey for sharing with faculty.



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- c. The Central Council requests that anonymized results be shared with it so as to inform and enable better advocacy for students by their elected representatives.
7. The Student Assembly President, Vice President, and Central Council Committee Chairs shall be tasked with developing and implementing a plan to encourage students to further extend the requests of this Article and general mental health needs to their own professors.

ARTICLE III Social Life and Extracurriculars

WHEREAS surveys conducted by Minds for Change, the Mental Health and COVID-19 Task Force of Student Assembly, and Student Activities found that more than half of respondents were struggling to make social connections and friends; and

WHEREAS students voiced in surveys conducted by the Mental Health and COVID-19 Task Force of Student Assembly and Student Activities the need for further aid in developing positive mental health skills and navigating mental health programming and facilities; and

WHEREAS students expressed in surveys conducted by the Mental Health and COVID-19 Student Task Force of Student Assembly and Student Activities the desire for increased performances and interactive events such as Quarantine Pantry, crafting events, and concerts; and

WHEREAS students lamented that it was difficult to socialize and create new friendships because events were not targeted towards specific groups or class years; and

WHEREAS students expressed concern that they were unaware of mental health resources and campus events because they were not significantly advertised; and



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WHEREAS students studying remotely repeatedly commented that there were not enough events or spots in events for them to regularly participate in Hamilton College programming,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The President, Vice President, and Committee Chairs of Student Assembly shall work with and support Student Activities and the Counseling Center to further aid in developing and advertising programming for mental health coping, resiliency, self-advocacy, and positive self-talk skills.
2. The Central Council requests that Student Activities shall continue to provide engaging programming and specifically focus on performance-based virtual events, such as musicians and comedians.
3. The Central Council requests that Student Activities shall increase community building and interactive events and advertising targeted towards specific groups, such as first-years, seniors, international, and remote students. Furthermore, it is recognized that Student Activities is already working to increase senior-specific programming.
4. The Central Council requests that Student Activities mandate that student organizations cannot require attendance/participation at programming on Wellness Days or count programming on Wellness Days towards membership requirements. The Central Council Treasurer shall consider violations of this requirement when granting funding requests.
5. The Central Council requests that Student Activities shall provide and advertise equipment check-out opportunities to students for items like board games and corn hole.
6. The Central Council requests that student organizations and Student Activities further engage remote students through the use of kits, such as care packages and Hamilton gear distributed in the Fall semester of 2020.



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7. The Central Council urges the college to increase communal spaces throughout campus by utilizing the pub, the atrium of the Events Barn, and the Kirner-Johnson Building.

ARTICLE IV COVID-19 Regulation Enforcement

WHEREAS students currently follow COVID regulations based on fear of harsh consequences; and

WHEREAS students with little or no access to a smartphone may be unable to complete the mandatory daily emocha check-in

WHEREAS even in times when COVID cases were extremely low in Fall 2020, anxiety around regulations increased; and

WHEREAS survey results for the question “how much fear and/or anxiety did you experience around being written up and/or facing sanctions?” indicated that, on a 1 to 5 scale from “No fear/anxiety” to “A large amount of fear/anxiety”, ~47% of 503 respondents selected 5, and another ~25% selected 4; and,

WHEREAS this survey data unquestionably proves that a major source of student mental health distress was caused by the threat of harsh consequences from their institution, nominally working to protect them; and,

WHEREAS such a situation breeds mistrust between its students and administrators,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The Central Council strongly urges the College to shift its principles of guideline enforcement away from punitive disciplinary measures.



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2. The Central Council urges the college to not move forward with proposals to require student organization leaders to check emocha badges at all in person programs and events in order to minimize student responsibility for policing one another and because there is an understanding that students will not attend events if they have symptoms.
3. The Central Council urges the college to incentivize filling out the Eموcha app each day and making appointments for all COVID tests by offering HillCard cash for students and competitions and awards for residence halls and/or family units with prizes including but not limited to candy, books, free loads of laundry, etc.
4. The Central Council encourages the college to celebrate the entire campus reaching certain benchmarks like no new cases for a certain amount of time with an event like a special meal at the dining hall, free gelato, etc.
5. The Central Council encourages the COVID-19 Task Force to recognize the weight of movement between blue and yellow status level on student mental health, to transition back from yellow to blue more quickly, and to create social alternatives to going in other dorms like putting games, projectors, etc in social spaces.

ARTICLE V Remote and International Student Needs

WHEREAS remote students often face a particularly challenging environment in being disconnected from the on-campus community; and

WHEREAS remote students often find themselves in untenable learning environments, including but not limited to: shared and loud study spaces; significant time zone differences between them and Eastern Time; inadequate internet, software, and hardware performance; lack of access to portions of Hamilton's mental health resources; lack of access to field-specific tools and laboratories; lack of access to the Hamilton College Burke Library; homes which are not tolerant or accepting of students' LGBTQIA+



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identities; homes which are not tolerant or accepting of students' faiths or lack thereof; homes which present a significant risk of physical, emotional, and financial abuse and coercion; homes where students must meet numerous time and energy-consuming familial obligations; areas where there is a higher risk of COVID-19 infection and/or civil unrest are at dangerously high levels; needs to obtain income at an in-person job; food insecurity; and

WHEREAS a number of remote and international students noted that their courses did not have class recordings posted with enough time to prepare for upcoming assignments and exams; and,

WHEREAS international students, often of color, frequently face homesickness and express a strong desire to be in community with one another on this campus,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The Central Council encourages faculty to provide flexibility for international and remote students.
 - a. The Central Council requests that faculty take note of which students in their classes are remote and to make a special effort to communicate all class requirements with them.
 - b. The Central Council strongly recommends that in classes with remote students, class recordings be made available the same day they are created.
2. The Central Council encourages efforts on the part of the College to improve communication between it and international students about both College-specific policies and federal policies around topics such as visa status, immigration, and employment.
3. The Central Council affirms support for proposals for the International Cultural Association to receive guaranteed funding from the College every year to support its programs and events.



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ARTICLE VI Residential Life Needs

WHEREAS Residential Advisors expressed disconnectedness from broader Hamilton Community due to positioning as *Covid Police* and inaccessibility to their peers during Code Yellow guidelines; and

WHEREAS Residential Advisors are held to an irrational standard of competency at risk of significant, sometimes life-damaging financial repercussions should they fail to meet them; and

WHEREAS Residential Advisors are valued, appreciated members of our student body,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The Central Council recognizes the difficulty Residential Advisors have when attempting to balance their social and academic responsibilities.
2. The Central Council recognizes that the Residential Advisor role has significantly transformed from its meaning prior to the pandemic and causes additional challenges for Residential Advisors.
3. The Central Council recognizes that Residential Advisors are not formally trained in mental and emotional caregiving and encourages the formal duty to be clearly designated to the Counseling Center and other mental health resources provided by the college.
4. The Central Council recommends that Residential Advisors be held accountable under the two-strike system used for the general student body instead of the zero-tolerance policy that results in unfair financial repercussions.
5. The Central Council recommends that Residential Advisors be provided with more clarity about guidelines and restrictions throughout the semester as the conditions of COVID-19 and the college's adaptation to new information regarding COVID-19 changes.



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6. The Central Council recommends that Residential Advisors be granted access to at least one other cohort to allow for decreased isolation, with one *or* the other of the following proposals:
 - a. Regional cohorts (1-3 buildings) during the college's yellow status or safer
 - b. One cohort of an RA's choosing
7. The Central Council recommends that Residential Advisors are provided more intensive training in mental and emotional support to assist their residents, with extra compensation for these services.
8. The Central Council strongly recommends that a transformative (as opposed to current punitive) approach be taken when enforcing COVID-19 restrictions.
 - i. This includes but is not limited to:
 1. Preparing a cohesive and accessible list of other means to handle issues in residence halls (listing Campus Safety as a last resort).
 2. Encouraging Residential Advisors to facilitate one-on-one's with residents as opposed to immediate write-ups.
9. The Central Council encourages that emphasis be placed on the communal care role Residential Advisors serve as opposed to the deputized *Covid Police* role not only in word, but in practice.
10. The Central Council designates the Student Assembly President and Vice President to pursue future action regarding the improvement of Residential Advisors' working conditions during the global pandemic.

ARTICLE VII Distribution and Implementation

WHEREAS the Central Council would prefer to see its policies enacted in full,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The Secretary of the Central Council (henceforth "Secretary") shall read through and update this resolution as is indicated by conditional clauses as soon as is possible



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following the conclusion of the meeting of its passage. This clause shall be formatted with a strikethrough upon completion of said process. No other implementation clauses may be enacted until this process is complete.

2. The Secretary shall make clear in all messages distributing this resolution that responses to the sa@hamilton.edu email account, unless addressed otherwise, shall be considered responses to the entirety of the Central Council, and shall be distributed to all of the body's members by the Secretary.
3. The Secretary shall distribute this document in full to Hamilton College President David Wippman and the Office of the President.
4. The Secretary shall distribute this document in full to all members of Hamilton College Senior Staff.³
5. The Secretary shall distribute this document in full to the Hamilton College COVID Task Force.⁴
6. The Secretary shall distribute this document in full to the College Archives, and request that it be permanently saved both digitally and in print, and that copies may be made accessible to any community member who requests it.
7. The Director of Publicity or their designee shall draft a press release regarding this resolution's passage for review and approval by the President of Student Assembly to then be sent to publications, including but not limited to:
 - a. The Hamilton College Spectator
 - b. The Hamilton College Monitor
 - c. The Clinton Record
 - d. Inside Higher Ed
8. The Secretary and/or their designee shall create new, separate documents for each Article and distribute these specific Articles of this resolution to those relevant stakeholders listed:
 - a. Article I - Mental Health Needs of the Student Body

³ Senior Staff of Hamilton College. <https://www.hamilton.edu/offices/president/senior-staff>

⁴ COVID19 Task Force. <https://www.hamilton.edu/covid19-information/covid-19-task-force>.
<covid19taskforce@hamilton.edu>



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- i. All names and titles listed under this clause (Article VII, Clause 8), noting the specific importance of all WHEREAS statements in this Article.
 - ii. The Director of the Counseling Center
 1. With an attached request to distribute to all subordinates, including student staff
 - iii. The Director of the Health Center
 - iv. The College Chaplain
 1. With an attached request to distribute to all direct colleagues and subordinates, including student staff
- b. Article II - Academics
- i. Faculty Chair Professor Margaret Thickstun
 - ii. Faculty Secretary Professor Katherine Brown
 - iii. Faculty Parliamentarian Professor Courtney Gibbons
 - iv. With all three in one communication and with an attached request to distribute attached documents to all members of the faculty on the Central Council's behalf; with an additional message of respect and gratitude to the Faculty of Hamilton College for their steadfast support and care for the student body
- c. Article III - Social Life and Extracurriculars
- i. Director of Student Activities
 1. With an attached request to distribute to all subordinates, including student staff
 - ii. Director of the Days-Massolo Center
 - iii. The Campus Activities Board (CAB)
 - iv. The Campus Media Board
 - v. The Organization Leaders Listserv
 - vi. The Inter-Society Council



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1. Via their chair, the Associate Dean of Students for Student Engagement⁵
 - d. Article IV - COVID-19 Regulation Enforcement
 - i. The Director of Campus Safety
 - ii. The Director of Residential Life
 - iii. A Residential Advisor, to share with all other RAs
 - iv. The Judicial Board
 - v. The Office of Community Standards
 - e. Article V - Remote and International Student Needs
 - i. Refer to subclause b. “Article II - Academics” of this clause
 - f. Article VI - Residential Life Needs
 - i. The Director of Residential Life
 - ii. A Residential Advisor, to share with all other RAs
 - iii. The Student Employment Office
 - g. Article VII - Distribution and Implementation
 - i. All members of the Central Council, via the listserv
9. The Secretary and Director of Publicity or their designee shall make this resolution available in full on the Student Assembly website.
10. Student Assembly President appointees to the College COVID-19 Task Force (not to be confused with the *student* task force) shall be bound by the advocacies of this resolution to the extent it is reasonable.
 - a. Appointees are encouraged to bring their unique perspectives to Task Force discussions, while noting the advocacies of this resolution.
 - b. Areas in which this resolution does not comment on should be complemented by appointees’ perspectives.
 - c. The Student Assembly President or their designee shall regularly convene the appointees and the chair of the Central Council Student Health Committee to

⁵ Associate Dean of Students for Student Engagement.

<https://www.hamilton.edu/directory/search/find-hamilton-employees-employee-details?id=4490115>



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coordinate action. This group shall be called the “Student COVID-19 Response Team”.

11. The Central Council shall consider all items in this resolution to be for future advocacy, mobilizing, and organizing. Items of particular importance for future action and implementation by the Central Council may be found in:

- a. Article I, 8., a.
- b. Article II, 7.
- c. Article III, 1.
- d. Article VI, 10.

12. The recommendations presented in this resolution shall only be amended by a two-thirds majority of the Central Council’s elected voting members.

- a. Amendments to any Article shall be passed along to the relevant positions and departments designated in Clause 8 of this Article.
- b. Expiration of these recommendations in full shall occur at the conclusion of the COVID-19 pandemic, as determined by a three-fourths majority vote, motioned for by any elected member.
- c. In cases where time will not allow for amendment procedures, the Student Assembly President or their designee shall immediately convene the Student COVID-19 Response Team to decide a course of action.
 - i. The team’s decision to override the content of this resolution shall be considered a temporary exception, not a permanent change in Central Council policy.
 - ii. The team’s decision to override must be discussed at the next Central Council general meeting, and be voted upon by members with a two-thirds majority required for affirming the resolution override.
 1. Should the Response Team seek and receive the Executive Committee’s (Class Presidents) unanimous approval at the time of the resolution override, a simple majority shall suffice to sustain the temporary override.



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- iii. Failure to achieve a two-thirds majority in favor of the Response Team's decision shall constitute it being overturned.
- iv. The Secretary shall immediately contact the College COVID-19 Task Force notifying them of this result.

