

GOVERNING BOARD

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Counseling and Consultation Service
The Ohio State University
614-292-5766
sharma.369@osu.edu

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Counseling Services
University at Buffalo
716-645-2720
smitch@buffalo.edu

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Counseling Services
Whitworth University
509-777-4216
mwhitlock@whitworth.edu

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University Counseling Center
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970-980-8779
charles.davidshofer@colostate.edu

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Counseling and Psychological Services
University of Richmond
804-289-8119
plevines@richmond.edu

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Counseling and Psychological Services
Duke University
919-660-1001
danielle.oakley@duke.edu

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University of Kentucky
859-257-8701
marvchandler.bolin@uky.edu

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Counseling & Psychological Services
Emory University
404-727-7450
wanda.collins@emory.edu

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Northwestern University
847-491-2151
j-dunkle@northwestern.edu

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Counseling, Disability Support, & Student Wellness
Missouri University of Science and Technology
573-341-4211
pfleck@mst.edu

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University of Iowa
319.335.2794
barry-schreier@uiowa.edu

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Counseling and Psychological Services
University of North Carolina at Charlotte
704-687-0311
david.spano@uncc.edu

Sue Stock, Ph.D.
Board Member, 2015-2018
Student Health and Counseling Services
Northeastern Illinois University
773-442-4650
s-stock1@neiu.edu



AUCCCD Statement on Violence in Charlottesville, VA

The Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors (AUCCCD), a professional association for the higher education leaders for college student mental health representing over 800 institutions in the United States and internationally, seeks to advance the cause of collegiate mental health through innovation, education, and advocacy. As an organization committed to inclusive excellence and the promotion of social justice, AUCCCD strongly speaks out against racism, discrimination, oppression, and violence in its many forms. On Friday, August 11, 2017, and Saturday, August 12, 2017, several White supremacist hate groups gathered on the campus of the University of Virginia and elsewhere in Charlottesville, purportedly to protest the removal of a Confederate general's statue. The weekend was marked with violent clashes between various hate groups and anti-racism groups, leading to property destruction and the needless death of a young woman who was there to protest against racism and bear witness. Several other people were injured, some seriously. Two law enforcement officers who were there to keep the peace also lost their lives when their helicopter crashed.

As college mental health professionals, we have long known that hatred and bigotry and the perpetration of racial and bias-motivated violence are harmful to EVERYONE'S mental and physical health, including those who espouse it and those who are hurt by it. AUCCCD condemns language and behaviors that aim to harm and divide people. We also view college mental health professionals as having a responsibility to facilitate greater self-understanding, value individual and group differences, encourage and model respectful dialogue, and support the right of all people to live in communities that are safe and promote emotional well-being. As the University of Virginia and college campuses all over the country prepare for the start of a new academic year that is filled with much promise, there is much work to be done. The provision of counseling or therapy in the aftermath of harm is but one service that we provide to our campuses. We also must be educators, role models, and advocates who seek to create healthy learning and living environments that reflect the diversity of our campuses and our society and who seek to eliminate the harm that comes from hatred and violence.

Association for University and College Counseling Centers Governing Board
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Website: www.aucccd.org