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### Counseling and Wellness Now Hosts GSU4U

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# Counseling and Wellness Now Hosts GSU4U



Since returning to [Governors State University](#) as an employee in January, Angela Johnson ('15) has found herself quite busy.

As the university's only social worker serving students, in the [Counseling and Wellness Center](#), Johnson has watched the demand for services escalate. "When I run to the café, students stop me and say, 'I need to come see you.' "

Along with the need for emotional counseling also comes the demand for essential resources such as food and housing. In 2020, an estimated 62% of students surveyed experienced at least one of three forms of basic needs insecurity — food insecurity, homelessness, or housing — in the previous year.

“As we transition back to campus, faculty and staff are becoming more aware of the resources we offer and are referring students to address their needs,” said Johnson, coordinator for the [GSU4U Program](#), which connects student and staff to a campus and community resources, including the food pantry on campus, a list of emergency housing and shelters, health, wellness and emotional support, academic and career services, child care, financial assistance and personal care.

In August, the GSU4U program moved from the [Office of the Dean of Students](#) to the Counseling and Wellness Center A-Building, Room 1120, making it more accessible. “I think it is a better fit,” Johnson said.

“I have referred students to the local townships, to the CEDA program for rental and utility assistance, to Catholic Charities for rental assistance, and the state’s emergency relief program for housing.”

There’s more to the GSU4U Program than helping students. The program also provides training to faculty and staff to become GSU4U Ambassadors.

The ambassadors raise awareness of basic needs insecurity on campus and the impact on student success, and equips faculty and staff with information and resources so they can better assist students facing basic needs insecurity, Johnson said.

Helping people seems second nature for Johnson who earned a master’s degree in [Social Work](#) in 2015. Prior to joining GSU, she was an emergency department social worker for Franciscan Health in Crown Point, Ind.

She’s faced many of the same circumstances as her clients, such as job loss, and relies on the GSU Career Services Center to help students explore opportunities.

Shared experiences are critical to connecting, she said.

“It helps that when I was a graduate student at GSU, I was still parenting,” Johnson said. “A lot of the students here at GSU are parents. And I, too, am a first-generation college student.” Her oldest daughter is a GSU graduate and her youngest daughter is a junior at GSU.

Her services are offered through the Gaining Enrichment through Educational Readiness grant, or GEER, under the Office of Dean of Students. The \$1.2 million federal grant, received earlier in 2021, was designed to provide help to first-generation students, those from low-income backgrounds, and students who are underrepresented or historically marginalized.

“It’s going great,” she said. “The GEER program (this year) has provided 447 students with tuition assistance, Wi-fi assistance, laptop computers, and books and materials.”

Johnson said she is grateful for the support of the Counseling and Wellness Center (CWC) team, including assistants, Social Work Fellows Peter Bressea and Janai Hicks, Director Dr. Freddy Tung and Assistant Director Dr. Kim Major-Ford.

“The Office of the Dean of Students has been instrumental in transitioning the GSU4U program to the Counseling and Wellness Center,” Johnson said. “The CWC picked the ball up with me and are so supportive. There’s no way I can handle this alone.”

Looking back at her time as a GSU student, Johnson said she was supported by faculty and staff. “My goal, when I became an employee, was to give back what was given to me — support to empower students to graduate,” Johnson said.

For more information, visit [www.govst.edu/gsu4u](http://www.govst.edu/gsu4u) or e-mail [GSU4U@govst.edu](mailto:GSU4U@govst.edu).