

### Problem Statement

#### **Project Summary:**

To fund the City College of New York (CCNY) Beavers Bunny Center, in hopes of alleviating the stress, anxiety, and loneliness college students face. This program will provide job opportunities for students, while positively impacting the student body by encouraging an environment that promotes motivation to learn. This environment will foster an environment of tranquility and provide a source of happiness. This program will also help save the excess rescue animals at shelters.

#### **Problem Statement:**

College is a stressful time for many students. While adjusting to new social and educational environments, students need to perform well academically, carefully manage their time and finances, and begin creating a framework for their future. With all the stressors in students' lives, students tend neglect taking care of their mental and emotional wellbeing. We hope to provide an additional kind of service, pet therapy using bunnies, to the CCNY campus.

According to the latest Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors survey of counseling center directors, anxiety is the top presenting concern among college students (41.6 percent), followed by depression (36.4 percent) and relationship problems (35.8 percent). Depression causes students to lack motivation for doing their homework and interferes with studying. According to the American Psychological Association's, appointments for counseling rose 30% between 2009-10 and 2014-15, while student enrollment grew by only 5% during that timespan. One solution that decrease college students' anxiety and depression is providing animals in college.

Currently, there is only one counseling center located on the CCNY campus. With 16,000 students enrolled, one counseling center is not sufficient enough to meet student needs. Adding an additional counseling/therapy source for students will help facilitate the supply and demand of this service on campus.

Indirect benefits of this program are creating paid job opportunities for students and helping NYC's animal rescue centers. Many of the rescue centers around NYC have an excess in animals that are put down after a certain amount of days. Bringing some of the animals to campus will hopefully save their lives.

We intend to complete this project within a two years time span. One year for opening and running the bunny center and the next year to conduct surveys to record the impact of this center. CCNY's Beavers Bunny aims to better the environment for students to learn in and create work opportunities, while saving an animal's life.

## **The City College of New York Beaver Bunny Center**

### **PROJECT: CCNY'S BEAVERS x BUNNY**

#### **ABSTRACT**

Depression and anxiety are mental ailments prevalent among most college students. This is caused by the social and academic pressures that surround students, which often interferes with academic studies. These mental illnesses can become more serious, and in some cases, may result in suicide. As result of the growing numbers of depressed students countrywide, many colleges have implemented counseling centers on campus. Students at the City College of New York (CCNY) are offered only one counseling center on campus. Student access to counseling and therapy are limited by the low supply and high demand. Our objective is to provide a therapy resource, pet therapy, to reduce the population of students with depression and anxiety. We will achieve this goal by holding the bunny center at one of CCNY's classrooms in the North Academic Center. The bunnies used will be from a local rescue center for the pet therapy. Not only do we aim to provide a counseling source for students, but we are working towards minimizing the excess animals at rescue centers, as many of the unadopted animals are put down after a certain amount of time. Yearly surveys will be conducted to assess student experience and demand for this bunny center. Our findings will either show how necessary or superfluous the addition of the bunny center is to the CCNY campus. These results will provide insight into what needs to be improved for the success of the bunny center.

#### **BACKGROUND**

College is a stressful time for many students. While adjusting to new social and educational environments, students need to perform well academically and manage their time and finances carefully. These students are at risk of mental illnesses. According to the American Psychological Association, among concerns that college students face, 41.6% of college students are presented with anxiety (top concern) and 36.4% have depression. (College students' mental health is a growing concern, survey finds, 2013) These mental disorders arise because many students tend to struggle with practicing self care, while handling all the stressors in their lives.

Effective treatments that counter the effects of these mental disorders include counseling and therapy.

A study showed that in Northern America, only 10% of those with anxiety disorder receive effective treatment. This shows the significant gap between the volume of people with anxiety and amount of people who receive necessary treatment. Currently, “more than half of college students sought help for their anxiety issues.” (Folk, 2018) This indicates that there is a large population of college students who have anxiety and need treatment. With only a small percentage of those with anxiety who receive treatment, it is important to shed light that a large majority of people (90 percent ) with anxiety aren't getting the treatment they need.

According to the American College Health Association, a survey revealed that over 63,000 students at 92 schools in the spring of 2017, 40 percent of students had difficulty functioning the previous year. About 61 percent of students, “felt overwhelming anxiety” during that time. (Bander, 2018) The stress of college students has major implications on health care costs. According to the *Economic Burden of Anxiety Disorders*, a study commissioned by the ADAA and based on data gathered by the association and published in the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, anxiety disorders cost the U.S. more than \$42 billion a year, almost one third of the \$148 billion total mental health bill for the U.S. This implication shows that a part of the mental illness population is made up largely by people who suffer from anxiety, thus revealing that anxiety impacts a large population. Colleges are facing increasing levels of distressed students and will need to have a wide variety of tools to assist them. One such modality is animal-assisted interaction; a low-cost, low-risk, integrative practice with minimal side effects.

Erika Friedmann performed research that showed, "... pets can have a positive impact on people who feel positively about them." (Butler 2011) While Friedmann's research showed heart disease patients with pets, had better one-year survival rates than similar patients without pets, she also found additional benefits of pet ownership. The study found that pet ownership was associated with reduced stress, lower blood pressure, fewer doctor visits, less loneliness and increased social connectivity, and higher levels of physical activity. (Butler 2011) With all the benefits that come from pet and owner interaction, the same effects can occur between pet and student interaction. This will hopefully help students who suffer from anxiety and depression.

An article written by Jennifer A. Kingson, discussed "Research and opinion are starting to coalesce around the benefits of animal-assisted therapy for people with autism, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and other concerns." (Kingson, 2018) This supports the fact that there is a lot of research being done that supports impact of animal therapy on mental disorders, depression and anxiety, two of which that impact college students. In 2018, Kaitlyn Wylde studied the effects of students meeting with the therapy dogs. There was a total of 246 students, and the sessions included 12 different therapy dogs, in which students could hug, cuddle, pet, and talk to in whatever "doggy voice" they pleased. (Wylde, 2018) The result showed that students felt a significant increase in happiness and energy, and a decrease in stress. Effective treatments for anxiety and depression often use techniques that induce happiness and energy. Pet therapy is undermined as a treatment for depression and anxiety, but has many benefits such as inducing happiness and positive energy.

GOAL/MISSION STATEMENT

As one step to minimizing the ongoing trend of college students becoming depressed and anxious, our objective is to provide an additional resource to the campus, animal therapy, for students.

## METHODS

We plan to open the bunny center at one of the classrooms in the North Academic Center, CCNY's most trafficked building. The North Academic Center has the most student traffic, thus making this bunny center accessible to many students. We plan to adopt five bunnies from the Animal Care Center of NYC, located in East Harlem. We will hire a professional animal handler and students to maintain and take care of the bunnies, facilitate the flow of visitors, run each session in a timely matter, and provide surveys. Each session will run for approximately 10-15 mins., to provide enough opportunities for students to visit the bunnies. The bunny center will be open for two months during each semester. We aim to open and run the center for one year, conduct surveys at the end of the year, and continue in a cyclical pattern. The first year operation of the bunny center is critical, as we need to determine the success of the center, and take the steps necessary to run the center efficiently the following year.

## OUTCOME

After setting up and running the CCNY Beavers Bunny Center for a duration of one year, we will conduct a survey at the end of the year. We will distribute two types of surveys. The first survey will be given after each visitor's session. This survey will be used to determine the the degree of satisfactory service, experience, impact, and likeliness to visit again. We are giving this

survey right after each visit to ensure that our target population, visitors, provides us with data and that we are not missing any test subjects. This survey will contain a scale from 1-10 belonging to each category, and we will use statistical analysis to find the distribution among the categories. Higher ratings among the categories indicate that the center has a positive influence on campus, and support the need for pet therapy. An average will be taken of the ratings, and if the average is above 7, we will consider this a success. Additionally, any ratings that are subpar will allow us to determine the fields in which we need to improve.

The other survey will be emailed to the rest of CCNY's students. This survey will be used to determine the interest of students and to predict how many visitors the center should expect the following year. This interest survey will ask students questions such as how likely they are to visit the center and whether or not they are diagnosed with anxiety and/or depression. If there is a great amount of students showing interest in visiting the center, we will extrapolate that the center will continue to have a sufficient volume of visitors, and the supply and demand will be close to equal. A high demand indicates the center as being an integral part of CCNY's campus. Providing these surveys are effective because they are short and quick surveys that won't take up most of the student's time. Additionally, these surveys allow us to gather data from two target populations, visitors and prospective visitors.

## BUDGET

	CCNY Funding
Personal	
(2) Project Director \$40/hr x 3 hrs/week x 52 wks	6,240
(1) Professor worker \$20/hr x 6hrs/day x 5 days/week x 4 weeks/month x 4 months	9,600
(1) Student worker \$15/hr x 6hrs/day x 5 days/week x 4 weeks/month x 4 months	7,200
<b>TOTAL PERSONAL</b>	23,040
Fringe Benefits	
Uniforms \$45/worker x 2 workers	90
Caps \$5/worker x 2 workers	10
<b>TOTAL FRINGE BENEFITS</b>	100
Travel	
Travel expense to pick up and drop off animals to Rescue Center (UBER) \$7/way x 2 ways/roundtrip x 4 times/year	56
<b>TOTAL TRAVEL</b>	56
Equipment	
Puppy pen \$70/pen x 2 pens	140
Little Box \$10/box x 1box/bunny x 5 bunny	50
Habitat \$100/cage x 1cage/bunny x 5 bunny	500
Food Dish and Bottle \$10/dish&bottle x 1dish &bottle/bunny x 5 bunny	50



Automatic Feeder \$80/feeder x 1feeder/bunny x 5 bunny	400
Nail Clipper	10
<b>TOTAL EQUIPMENT</b>	1,150
Supplies	
Hay \$20/month x 4 months x 5 bunny	400
Vegetables \$40/month x 4 months x 5 bunny	800
Cleaning supplies \$2/month x 4 months	8
Food/pellets \$20/month x 4 months x 5 bunny	400
<b>TOTAL SUPPLIES</b>	1,608
Other	
Adoption Fee \$50/bunny x 5 bunny	250
<b>TOTAL OTHER</b>	250
<b>TOTAL PROJECT COST</b>	26,204

## SOURCES

Bander, Dominique. "Depression and Anxiety Soaring Amongst College Students." *Study Breaks*, 20 Mar. 2018, [studybreaks.com/news-politics/depression-anxiety-soaring/](http://studybreaks.com/news-politics/depression-anxiety-soaring/).

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Folk, Jim, and Marilyn Folk. "Anxiety Disorder General Statistics." *Anxietycentre.com*, 20 Nov. 2018, [www.anxietycentre.com/anxiety-statistics-information.shtml](http://www.anxietycentre.com/anxiety-statistics-information.shtml).

Kingson, Jennifer A. "As Animal-Assisted Therapy Thrives, Enter the Cats." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 6 Sept. 2018, [www.nytimes.com/2018/09/06/well/live/as-animal-assisted-therapy-thrives-enter-the-cats.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/06/well/live/as-animal-assisted-therapy-thrives-enter-the-cats.html).

Wylde, Kaitlyn. "Therapy Dogs Can Actually Help College Students Manage Anxiety & Stress, A New Study Says." *Bustle*, Bustle, 14 Mar. 2018, [www.bustle.com/p/therapy-dogs-can-help-college-students-manage-anxiety-stress-according-to-new-study-8504145](http://www.bustle.com/p/therapy-dogs-can-help-college-students-manage-anxiety-stress-according-to-new-study-8504145).