



MUN Faculty Association  
Room ER 4047  
Alexander Murray Building  
St. John's, NL A1B 3X5  
Tel: (709) 864-8642  
E-mail: munfa@mun.ca

**TO:** All MUNFA Members

**FROM:** The MUNFA Executive Committee

**DATE:** August 3, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Immediate Action Needed in the Student Wellness and Counselling Centre  
(SWCC)

---

Higher education is experiencing a mental health crisis that has only intensified throughout the pandemic. The mental healthcare needs of hardworking students have become more urgent and complex, leading to rising demand for services. As registered psychologists and experts in post-secondary mental health, the contributions of Counselling Faculty members are integral to student mental healthcare, the general campus community, and the province of Newfoundland and Labrador as a whole. Instead of bolstering this resource, however, the SWCC's faculty complement has been continually cut leading to rampant instability and reducing the capacity to provide students navigating complex mental health concerns with the psychological services that they need and deserve.

Though demand for psychological services continues to outstrip resources, the current capacity would not be possible without the contribution of the Centre's Doctoral Residents. Counselling Faculty have trained Professional Psychologists through an intensive, year-long Doctoral Residency since the 1990s. This Residency program was developed to address a severe shortage of psychologists in the province and received full accreditation from the Canadian Psychological Association, the gold standard within the field, in 2003. Such accreditation is a mark of excellence for Memorial University and has allowed the SWCC to greatly expand its capacity to provide high-quality psychological treatment beyond what could be achieved otherwise. Residents provide ongoing counselling and psychological services to hundreds of Memorial students each year.

Importantly, the SWCC Residency is also the most significant and consistent contributor to the local professional field: **over 40% of the Residency's graduates have opted to stay and work in Newfoundland and Labrador in the past 20 years.** The program is therefore central to the provincial government's goal of recruiting urgently needed psychologists for the public mental health system. Counselling Faculty are the sole SWCC team members with the qualifications necessary to train these Doctoral Residents but have only half the permanent Faculty Complement needed to sustain the Residency. Despite the clear and

plentiful benefits of the program, Memorial University's senior administration has repeatedly denied requests to fill the vacant permanent faculty positions required. These concerns have been brought time and again to the Dean of Students and brought forward to senior administration. With a site visit to inform re-accreditation scheduled for late August, however, *time is running out*.

Two recent events have escalated this situation further. In early 2023, a Counselling ASM transfer to a unit with an ASM vacancy was undertaken with the understanding that the position would be refilled. Recently, MUNFA learned that administration instead chose to cut this permanent position from the SWCC and its Residency while Counselling Faculty members were on the picket lines fighting for renewed stability. Additionally, the job advertisement for an Interim Director of the SWCC circulated by the AVPA and Dean of Students last month was significantly altered without consultation. Responsibility for maintaining the Doctoral Residency's accreditation standards and understanding the training requirements, previously listed as key responsibilities of the Director, were removed. The ad instead referenced only support for unnamed accreditation "processes" and a responsibility to support administration's priorities. This change is not a matter of semantics; it is an erosion of the commitment to sustaining the Doctoral Residency at the field's highest standard.

**At this point, Counselling Faculty have confirmed that Memorial's Psychology Doctoral Residency has finally reached the point of imminent collapse.**

Expanding support resources at the expense of longstanding specialized care and services for mental health treatment and psychologist training *is not progress*. It costs Memorial students and the people of this province. It further devalues the professional expertise and labour of SWCC ASMs.

When these concerns were raised at a July 27 meeting with President Bose and Provost Lokash, administration offered no solution. The Provost stated that the Counselling Faculty vacancies will be revisited in a meeting of the Complement Advisory Committee within the next few days. A commitment was made to provide an update to MUNFA by August 10th. MUNFA made it clear that should the next steps not include increasing the SWCC faculty complement, the Residency and its re-accreditation will be jeopardized to the point of imminent collapse - endangering essential mental healthcare access and training of much-needed Doctoral Psychologists in NL.

MUNFA has taken steps to file grievances related to these issues, however, given the urgency of the situation, more immediate action is vital. [A letter](#) addressed to the Premier, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Health and Community Services, the President, and the Provost has been sent demanding critical attention.

We will continue to keep members informed on any updates on this crisis and encourage all members to send an email to the Provost at [vpacad@mun.ca](mailto:vpacad@mun.ca) calling for immediate action.