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## Sarah Lawrence Participates in Project on Depression in College Students; Significant Results Realized

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"Unrecognized and untreated depression is currently the most common serious public health problem in college students," states the National College Depression Partnership (NCDP), a public health initiative in which Sarah Lawrence College is taking part.

Utilizing a model developed by the NCDP for screening students both in primary care as well as counseling, connecting them with services, and tracking their progress, the College's health services, under the direction of director Nance Roy, is finding both a significant number of cases that would have gone undetected, and success in ameliorating the students' conditions. As noted by the NCDP, "effective collaborative depression care relieves suffering, improves readiness to learn, and promotes student retention and success".

"The initial goal of the project is to engage primary care in the identification, detection and treatment of depression in college students," said Roy. "Research has demonstrated that the majority of college students are much more likely to access medical services at their college than counseling services. As such, students who are struggling with depression and other mental health issues often go undetected and untreated, and as recent tragedies on college campuses have shown, most students who commit suicide have never accessed services at their college counseling center."

The National College Health Assessment, the American College Health Association's annual student survey, stated that the percentage of college students who reported receiving a diagnosis of clinical depression increased from 10% in 2000 to 16% in 2005. In a population of nearly 18 million students, as many as 2.35 million college students may experience significant depression during their college years. In addition to concerns for students' health, the impact of depression on the students' quality of life is substantial and can impair both their interpersonal and academic functioning. Students suffering from depression often have difficulty getting to class, completing assignments, and engaging in campus life. If left unidentified and untreated, it sometimes leads to students having to take a medical leave from college, explained Roy.

During the last academic year, more than half the student body at Sarah Lawrence College was screened through this project. Eighteen percent of students who were struggling with serious depression, students who may not otherwise have contacted mental health services, were identified and referred to mental health services through primary care.

The project has been particularly successful with two demographic groups that have been of concern to Roy: men and students of color, groups that historically have been less likely to seek mental health services.

Given the efficacy of the project, Sarah Lawrence College Health Services will continue to enhance their efforts in the identification and treatment of students grappling with depression. Funding for Sarah Lawrence's participation has been provided by the Englehard Foundation, which helped to sponsor the project that includes 20 selected colleges and universities and is coordinated by Henry Chung, M.D. and Michael Klien, Ph. D. of New York University.

For more information about the project and Sarah Lawrence's participation in it, please contact Dr. Nance Roy, Director of Health Services at (914) 395-2350.