



# Student Counselling Service Annual Report 2010-2011

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## Executive Summary

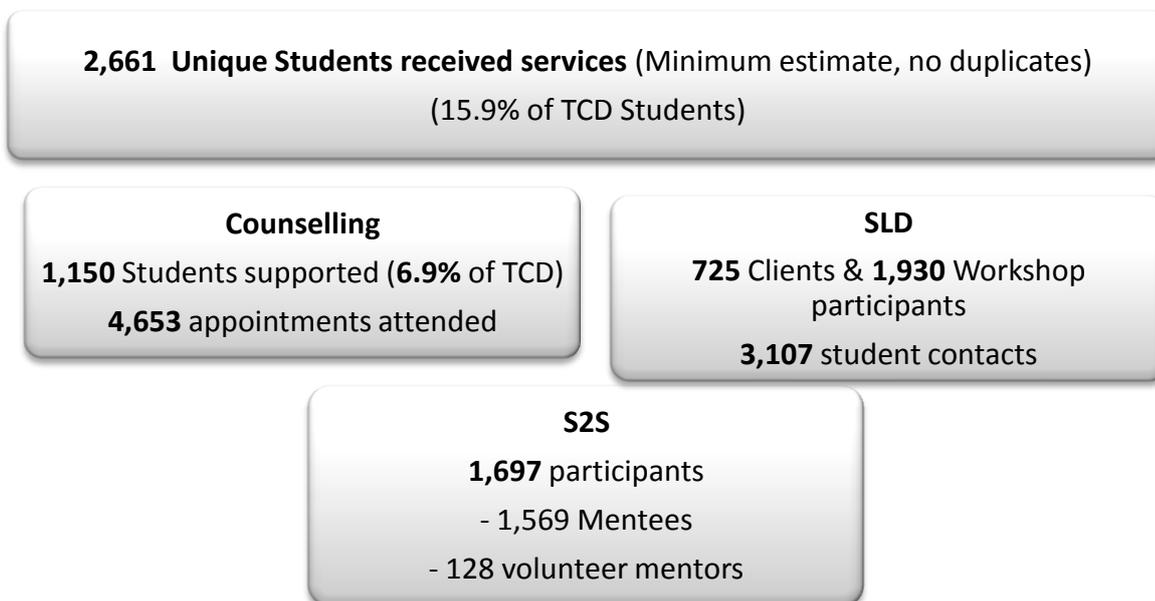
- A minimum of **2,661 unique students availed of services in 2010-11**. This is **15.9% of enrolled students**, without duplicate users. 4,653 counselling appointments were attended by 1,150 students (an increase of 0.2% of the student body from 2009-10). The Student-2-Student programme expanded to involve 1,697 students in peer mentoring for Junior Freshman. Student Learning Development provided support for 725 students (4.3% of TCD, the same service level as 2009-10). SLD also delivered departmental workshops to 1,930 students not included in the above total.
- **Student feedback was very positive for all services**. 83% of counselling clients reported positive change in their presenting problems, and 41% agreed that counselling had aided their retention at TCD. SLD had a retention rate of 94.6% for students attending one-to-one and workshop supports; and 87% of students receiving one-to-one SLD reported a positive change in their presenting issues. S2S users indicated the programme was valuable, and suggested more academic mentoring and specific transitional supports for Mature and International Students. (Detailed feedback comments in Appendix 1, p. 20).
- Counselling, SLD, and S2S moved to **new, accessible, purpose-built premises** at 7-9 South Leinster St. during Fresher's Week. The benefits of this move were felt immediately for both students and service staff. Situating the services together has improved communication and synergies among the 3 teams, and has increased flexibility in service provision to students. As a result, lunchtime opening hours were piloted in second semester, and group & workshop innovations have been implemented. Student feedback, both written and verbal, has been unequivocally positive.
- **Counselling appointment resources remain a key concern**. During peak demand times, the service remains unable to provide initial appointments to students within two weeks of request, and struggles to maintain fortnightly spacing of follow-up appointments. Dissatisfaction with both these issues is repeated annually by at least 25% of students giving feedback. The counselling team was reduced by nearly 1 FTE and 1 trainee between 2009-10 and 2010-11. Maintaining staffing levels is essential to meeting student requests for services. Currently 2.1 FTE

of student counsellors are on annual contracts expiring in summer 2012, with no guarantee of continued funding.

- The counselling team **launched several innovative online services** (My Mind Matters, Silver Cloud, and Pro Youth), targeting depression, anxiety, eating problems, and providing online counselling to students. The counsellor responsible for these programmes is on contract until Summer 2012 as above. Given students' high use of technology to access information and support, it is essential that we retain these programmes and the counsellor with online mental health expertise.
- The **appointment in May 2011 of a Student-2-Student coordinator** (2-year contract funded by the Senior Tutor's Office) was a very significant step for the programme. It has provided continuity, and enabled the expansion of peer mentoring to reach 38% of Junior Freshman, with 100% coverage planned for 2012-13. This outreach to new entrants supports key College objectives in aiding student transition and retention.
- **SLD staff worked very hard to maintain service levels**, reaching 4.3% of TCD students for the second year in a row, despite operating on reduced staffing of 1.4 FTE instead of 2.4 FTE due to nonreplaced maternity leave of one staff member. Objectives regarding College-wide liaison and coordination of student learning activities were however limited by the staffing deficit.
- **Plans for 2011-12** include: (1) rolling out web-based registration of students at reception, which will enable electronic screening measures to get important intake data on student functioning, severity of problems, risk factors, and appropriate interventions; (2) forming external partnerships with community agencies to deliver group supports to TCD students on-site; (3) improving the College's Critical Incident Response through further development of the Critical Incident Psychological Response Team (CIPR Team).
- **Risks:** while the staff are very committed and flexible in responding to student needs, staffing levels have fallen in the past year, and **service resources are stretched**. Any unforeseen staff absences (e.g., due to illness) would result in significant quality issues, such as long waiting lists.

## Review of the Year

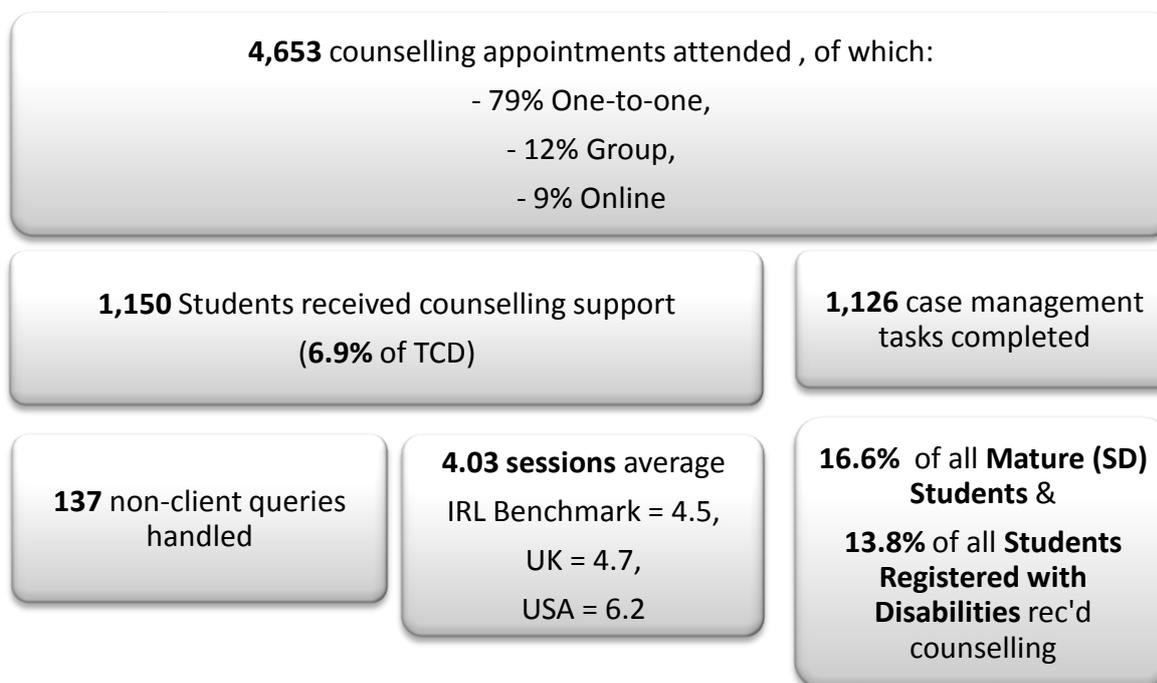
### All Services



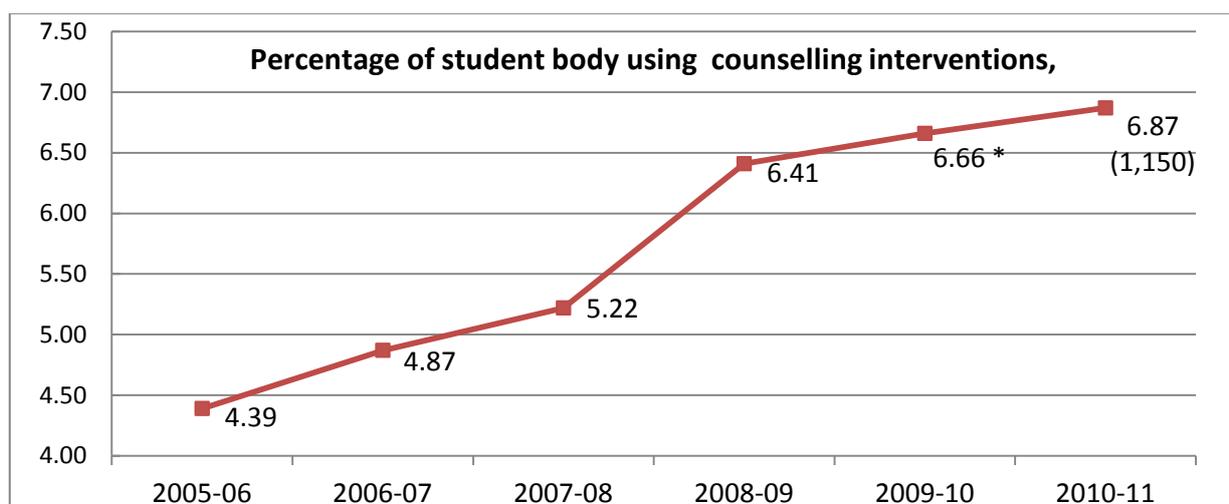
Unique student users (top box) were estimated by subtracting possible overlaps where students did not register with the Service, such as for S2S mentoring or SLD workshops. The actual number of overlaps is likely less; hence 15.9% service usage is a conservative figure.

### Counselling

#### Summary of counselling activities



Nearly 7% of the student body received counselling supports, significantly above the average of 4.5% in other Irish HEI's. The graph below charts the continued increase in this metric over the past six years. Figures from 2009 include group and online supports (counting these students was made possible by the new service database). Expanding provision of group and online support models is a key strategic objective being delivered in recent years (group therapy provision increased from 9% to 13% of all appointments from 2010 to 2011) and represents potential efficiency in attempting to meet student needs without increasing one-to-one supports.



\* From 2009, this figure includes individual, group, and online clients, made possible by the introduction of the new client database in 2009-10.

The Counselling Service operated with a Student Counsellor FTE of 5.95 in 2010-11 (down from 7.03 FTE the previous year). This does not include the Director of Service. A comparison follows:

Counsellor Type	2009-10 FTE	2010-11 FTE
Student Counsellors	5.9	<b>5.0</b>
Sessional Counsellors	0.15	<b>0.1</b>
Mental Health Portal Counsellor	0.6	<b>0.6</b>
Trainee Counsellors	0.38	<b>0.25</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.03 FTE</b>	<b>5.95 FTE</b>

The average waiting time for a first counselling appointment in 2010-11 was 8 days (includes weekends, Min = 0 days, Max = 28 days). Emergency appointments were generally provided

without a waiting period. During periods of peak demand, it was not possible to offer an initial appointment within the best practice target of 2 weeks.

Counselling clients were proportionately represented across gender, academic year, faculties, and by undergraduate/postgraduate standing. Some non-traditional student groups were over-represented, as mentioned in the summary above (Mature SD, Students with Disabilities). Non-E.U. students over-referred at a rate of 9%.

Over 50% of counselling clients report problems that negatively impact on their studies.

Furthermore, nearly 15% report elevated risk for dropping out of TCD. These figures compare favourably to student feedback on counselling's beneficial effect on course performance and retention (see below).

In addition to routine counselling work, SCS counsellors responded to a number of crisis situations in College, serving 81 students and staff (not logged as unique clients in the database).

### **Innovations**

- Increased access to online psychological support services, specifically "My Mind Matters" – a nationally-launched website (in collaboration with NUIG, DKIT, and UCC), providing mental health resources, including the opportunity for TCD students to access SCS counsellors online.
- A partnership with the Dublin Digital Hub was also undertaken to pilot/develop "Silver Cloud" – a web-based platform delivering Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy to students.
- A third online innovation was commenced with the Service joining an E.U. consortium to develop "Pro Youth" – an online programme designed to prevent the development of eating disorders (running as a 3-year project).
- Finally, to increase timely access to the Service (in addition to the Tuesday evening opening times added in recent years), lunchtime opening was piloted in Spring Semester, providing "drop-in" consultations with counsellors not requiring pre-booking.

### **Feedback on counselling**

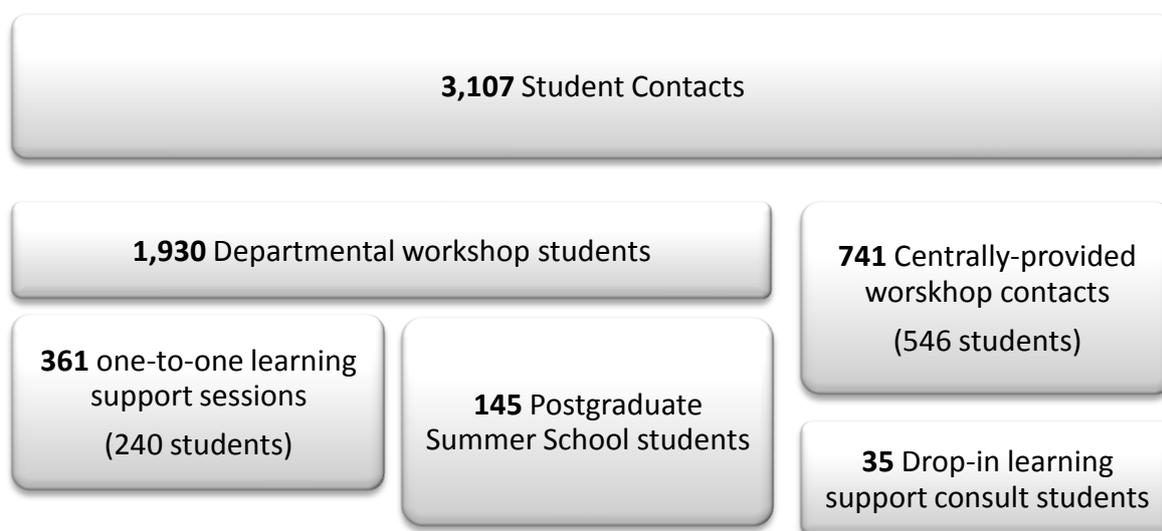
Students are surveyed routinely on their experience of the Service (via web-based questionnaire). 513 counselling clients gave feedback (45% of all clients). Of these, 83% reported positive change in the problems they initially brought to counselling (26% of these reported "Great" Improvement). In

response to questions about counselling's impact on salient student issues, 41% agreed that counselling had aided their retention at TCD, 48% agreed counselling had helped them do better on their course, and 34% agreed counselling had helped them complete their course in the given year.

Qualitative comments were made by 362 students. While largely positive about their experience with both staff and the new premises, 27% of these comments expressed dissatisfaction with appointment resources, including timely access to a first appointment, excess space between appointments, and the service's 8-session limit

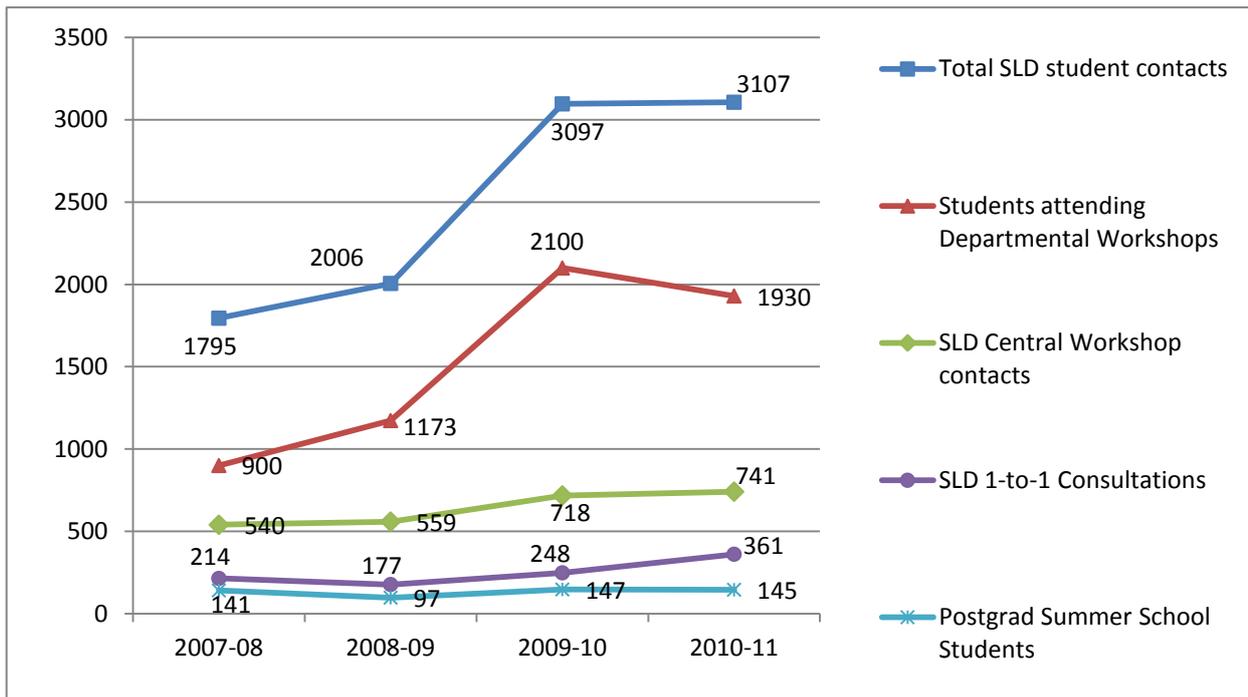
## Student Learning Development

### Summary of SLD activities



SLD staff delivered 3,107 student contacts through face-to-face and group/workshop support. In addition, SLD responded to 650 email queries and developed web-based supports, which received 39,643 unique visits.

**SLD Contact Trend, 2007-2011**



The chart above shows the range of SLD activities. Overall student contacts continue to increase year on year (top line). The number of unique students using Central Workshops and 1-to-1 support combined was 725 (no overlaps). Departmental workshop students did not register with SLD and therefore are counted separately. The SLD Service continues to provide a high-quality service with reduced staffing resources. The SLD Team developed its service with a compliment of 2.4 FTE, yet delivered the above 2010-11 services with 1.4 FTE (due to career break / maternity leave). Objectives regarding College-wide liaison and coordination of student learning activities were unfortunately limited by the staffing deficit.

**Retention**

SLD examines its contribution to the **retention and progression** of undergraduate and postgraduate students at Trinity. A retention rate was calculated based on the previous academic year (e.g. comparing students who attended during 2009-2010 with their standing for 2010-2011 as determined in Hilary term). For the academic year 2009-2010, a combined retention rate of 94.6% was achieved by students who engaged with the services (one-to-one SLD and central workshops). While a number of factors influence student retention and progression, this rate shows that SLD supports may be very positive factor for TCD students in this respect.

SLD clients were proportionately represented across gender and faculties. Junior Freshman and 1<sup>st</sup> year postgraduates attended in slightly higher numbers (6.7% of all JF students and 6.3% of all 1<sup>st</sup> yr postgrads). This reflects both the unique needs of students getting started on a course of study, as well as SLD's strategic emphasis on targeting students early in their academic journey.

As per SLD's remit, 45% of SLD clients reported high levels of negative impact on their academic performance. Nearly 9% of SLD users reported high drop-out risk.

### **Innovations**

As well as the aforementioned website innovation, which made new writing and literature review "tool kits" accessible to student 24/7, SLD continued improving its service in a number of ways:

- The introduction of a "drop-in" learning support clinic staffed by a retired College academic
- Providing a training placement for an Educational Psychologist, who undertook the project of developing further groups and workshops
- Revising and reprinting the SLD Exam Skills Workbook, which has been popular with students during the annual examination period
- Responding to student needs by introducing a new workshop module on Presentation Skills

### **Feedback on SLD**

High levels of satisfaction with the SLD workshop programme remain consistent annually, encouraging the SLD team to maintain its delivery with only minor adjustment in topics and format. 70 one-to-one SLD students provided feedback (30% of all clients). Of these, 61 (87%) reported experiencing a positive change in the concerns they brought to SLD. Further, 25 students (36%) agreed that SLD helped their retention at TCD, 53 (76%) felt SLD had improved their course performance, and 37 (53%) said SLD helped them complete their course of study.

### **Student-2-Student (S2S)**

#### **Summary of S2S activities**

The S2S Programme continued to expand its mission of providing Peer Support and Mentoring throughout College, especially to the incoming Junior Freshman. S2S operated with 2.0 FTE staff

during the year, made up of a combination of paid internships and administrative staff. A full-time S2S Coordinator was appointed in May 2011 with the remit of rolling-out mentoring to all JF students. Development of the **Peer Mentoring Programme** is outlined here:

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
<b>Volunteer Peer Mentors</b>	54	42	74	128
<b>JF Mentees:</b>				
Natural Science	340	345	340	345
Single Honours Science	-	-	130	105
Medicine	-	-	-	164
Nursing	-	-	-	284
TSM	-	-	314	325
BESS	-	-	-	226
<b>Subtotal JF Mentees</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>784 (19%)</b>	<b>1449 (38%)</b>
Visiting/Erasmus Mentees	-	98	85	120
<b>Total Mentees</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>869</b>	<b>1569</b>
<b>Total Student Involvement (Mentors + Mentees)</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>943</b>	<b>1697</b>

Matching SF, JS, and SS student volunteers with newly arrived JF students to aid their transition to TCD is the main focus of the Peer Mentoring Programme. In this task, it has nearly doubled both its JF and volunteer numbers annually for the past two years. Volunteer mentors received training prior to Fresher's Week (8 training sessions total). A range of mentoring services was then provided to JF students, including an initial orientation meeting, follow-up social events, and ongoing communication during the first weeks of the semester. All JF students from participating schools were matched with volunteers and given the opportunity to receive mentoring services. College-wide JF mentoring coverage is planned for 2012-13.

### **Innovations**

S2S received a boost in May 2011 with the appointment of a full-time coordinator. A dedicated coordinator will make achieving strategic S2S objectives much more feasible. An S2S internship post ran successfully throughout the year, paving the way for further recruitment of volunteer and intern staff in 2011-12.

S2S was able to expand the mentoring programme to include the School of Medicine, the School of Nursing & Midwifery, BESS, and Erasmus Students. In addition, S2S Peer Mentor roles were

included as an option for the School of Nursing & Midwifery's "Contribution to Society" module, assisting in volunteer recruitment for the programme.

Several new initiatives to promote student wellbeing were piloted in 2010-11, using student volunteers to deliver education and guidance on physical, mental, social, and occupational/academic health. Further development of these programmes is planned based on the successful response.

### **Feedback on S2S**

An electronic survey was sent to all JF students matched with mentors. 239 students responded (16.5%). Most respondents reported feeling the programme was valuable. Key constructive feedback included:

- Mature and international students expressed a desire for more specific supports to meet their unique needs
- A significant number of students requested that mentors organise a larger number of social events, to further improve peer integration
- A wish for more academic support was highlighted
- The low number of feedback responses from the School of Nursing & Midwifery prompted liaison by the S2S Team with the School, to further ascertain their needs

## Plans for 2011-12

The review of service levels and feedback from 2010-11 informed a planning process that commenced in May 2011. This process continuously updates the Service's strategic planning and monitors initiatives set for completion. Plans and initiatives for each area are summarised:

### *Overall Service Plans*

To improve the technical infrastructure currently used to manage workflow in the Service, ISS Services will facilitate the transfer of the current electronic shared folder to a SharePoint server in January 2012.

Improved security and backup testing for the new Titanium Schedule database was ongoing in 2010-11 and will conclude with the introduction of a new "Web Component," allowing students to register at intake electronically from inside the Service's waiting area. This development will also allow for the introduction of more sophisticated screening measures for counselling clients utilising free software already employed by many college counselling services in the USA.

The introduction of supports from external public agencies into the Seminar Room space of the new Service premises will be realised in 2011-12, with Bodywhys (Eating Disorder support) and Console (support for suicide bereavement) scheduled to facilitate meetings for TCD students.

### *Counselling plans*

Faced with the evidence that demand for services increases annually, the counselling team will capitalise on the newly expanded counselling space of 7-9 S. Leinster St. by attempting to increase the number of supervised counselling psychology trainees to five (FTE = 0.625). This will allow the maintenance of FTE counselling at 5.9 from 2010-11. Recruiting this number of trainees is not guaranteed on an annual basis. This number cannot go over 5, as professional guidelines dictate that no more than 20% of counselling can be delivered by trainees. Furthermore, best practice (UK) recommends that trainees provide less than 10% of total counselling sessions on offer.

The availability of a dedicated group therapy room enables the Service to further meet student needs by adding to the existing group therapy programme. In 2011-12, a new Managing Mood CBT Group for students with depressive problems is planned. Also, drop-in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction practice will be offered weekly during term time.

Ongoing collaborations with other TCD student services in delivering supports will continue. The Bereavement Support Group will be co-facilitated by College Chaplaincy, the College Health Service (CHS) physiotherapist will teach a 4 week relaxation/stress reduction class on the SCS premises near exam time, and the SCS and CHS will also pool their expertise for the “Appetite 4 Life” group, which treats students with eating disorders

After the success of the lunchtime opening pilot in spring 2011, daily lunchtime opening will be offered during Term Time. This will improve timely student access to counsellors, as well as overall access to the front office Administrative Team for daily Service business.

The counselling team will continue to develop its crisis-preparedness, most importantly by organising the Critical Incident Psychological Response Team (CIPR Team) for its role in the overall College Critical Incident Response Plan. A critical incident simulation day will be held in January/February 2012 to inform the ongoing refinement of the CIPR Team plan. Also, counsellors will receive Forensic/ Risk Assessment training from consultant staff of the Central Mental Hospital in October 2011 as a key piece of continuous professional development.

Online counselling initiatives will continue to develop, with the re-launch of My Mind Matters on an improved technological platform in early 2012. Silver Cloud will be further embedded in routine practice as a clinical tool for supporting students with mood and eating problems. The Pro Youth project will hire a research assistant in Winter 2011, and the Pro Youth site itself will be formally launched in December 2011.

#### *SLD plans*

SLD staffing numbers will remain low in 2011-12 and as such emphasis will be placed on maintaining the current high quality level of service delivered in recent years. Following the success of the drop-in advice clinic, a second retired TCD academic will join the team for additional clinic hours. Toastmaster’s groups for improving student presentation skills will be piloted from January – March 2012. Finally, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Undergraduate Research Conference will be organised in part by SLD staff in DCU, October 2011.

### *S2S plans*

Peer Mentoring for JF students will continue to expand, providing mentors for over 2,000 new entrants. By September 2012, all full-time UG junior freshmen will be included. A Head Mentor programme will also be established to improve school-wide communications between mentors and the S2S Office. Further, using student feedback, the training for peer mentors and other peer support volunteers will be developed to better prepare volunteers for their role. SLD will aid in the training of S2S volunteers to help address peer learning support needs suggested by students.

Two new team members will join S2S through Job-Bridge and European Volunteer Service positions. These new team members will assist the S2S Coordinator in developing the programme. New peer support initiatives will be introduced, including a “drop-in” area for peer support and advice, a “How to do Trinity” series of information sessions (in collaboration with the TCD Students’ Union and SLD) teaching new students about fundamental aspects of student life, and a National Peer Support/Mentoring Conference hosted in Dublin, February 2012. Finally, based on previous agreement, the incoming S.U. Welfare and Education Officers will receive the extended Peer Support Training.

## **Risks**

### *High Risks*

The **Online Mental Health Portal Project funding** ceases in August 2012. The TCD SCS is currently a nationwide leader in developing and delivering online mental health services. Maintenance and development of these programmes will require further funding. Cessation of funding risks the loss of these innovative service models, the loss of significant expertise built-up in the Service, and risks impacting on the SCS’s ability to achieve College objective 4.3—Promote a healthy lifestyle among students.

**Increased demands for counselling and diminishing counselling resources** remain a high risk. To ensure safety of service users, the Service prioritises access for at-risk students, which can hinder access to appointments within 2 weeks at various points in the year (both for initial appointment requests and follow-up appointments). Longer wait times are a deterrent to students accessing

necessary supports. The ensuing loss of timely interventions can cause easily resolved issues to intensify, leading to more urgent needs and negative outcomes (such as drop-out).

The **rising number of international students** projected by College poses a significant risk to the Service. These students attend counselling and learning support in significantly disproportionate numbers. Acculturative stresses (e.g., language issues, family and social support issues) likely account for this difference. Additionally, international students tend to have higher expectations for student service provision. Inability to respond to this group's needs poses a serious reputational risk for College, which could negatively affect recruitment targets.

#### *Medium Risks*

**Funding for the Student-2-Student Coordinator** expires in May 2013. The Peer Mentoring and Peer Support programmes are unlikely to continue unless funding is obtained for this post. This will prevent key College objectives from being reached, including Objective 4.9: Ease the transition of new students into full membership of the College community, and Objective 4.7: Enhance and extend student support services.

Over 25% of clients annually criticise the resource constraints for counselling, specifically objecting to: the wait time to see a counsellor, the gap between their appointments, and the eight session limit. As previously stated, the Service is not in a position to respond to this disapproval, and thus risks **not being able to implement change based on student feedback**.

The **reduced staffing level in Student Learning Development**, due to non-replacement of staff (on maternity leave and career break) is estimated to continue to December 2012. This staffing reduction has compromised the coordination, development and embedding of College's student learning development programmes.

The Service has a relatively small staff embodying considerable corporate wisdom and expertise in the area of student support. There is thus the risk that the quality of services would seriously suffer from **the loss of key personnel**, such as to illness or non-replaced maternity cover.

**Administrative systems and IT security measures are not robust enough.** While the Service has achieved well in the area of storing confidential client data on the new Titanium Database, other IT systems are vulnerable to data loss, inefficiency, and security concerns. Documentation has been lost or irretrievable due to the current “shared electronic library” system. There is a concern that IT security may not be sufficiently implemented within the service, i.e. appropriate storage of and transmission of data, especially re: passwords, email, laptops and other mobile devices. The IS Services IT Security staff member contract finishes in December 2011, leaving uncertainty re: resource availability.

The **Critical Incident Psychological Response Team Plan may lack adequate resources** to implement properly. Resources for periodic recruitment of new team members, training & simulation exercises, and supplies to effectively respond to crises must be forthcoming to ensure College meets the psychological needs of those affected.

#### *Low Risks*

There is a risk that **limited access to the Service’s physical premises** (currently 07:00 – 21:30, weekdays only or by special arrangement) will limit student service expansion plans (Objective 4.7: Enhance and extend student supports) and impede a timely response to out-of-hours crises.

All student contacts with the Service are held electronically on the Titanium database, comprising a large body of confidential information. **Titanium security measures** are thus a top priority. If recommended security measures are not continuously implemented (e.g., the Service is currently responding to a recent “Titanium White Paper” on security) both the Service and College face a serious reputational risk.

## Appendix 1: Qualitative feedback from students, 2010-11

The following is a sample of qualitative feedback statements shared by service users on annual surveys and workshop feedback forms. Comments have been pasted verbatim from the original spreadsheets, with quotation marks added.

### *Counselling comments*

*"I found the service brilliant. Without it I don't know if I would have been able to cope or survive college."*

*"Because of the high demand it can be difficult to get an appointment it would be beneficial to have more appointments available"*

*"I felt the layout of the service very welcoming and bright and an open space to talk in. The staff were extremely friendly and everything is kept as discreet as possible."*

*"I feel that the provision of the counselling service indicates Trinity's interest in helping students who are struggling, and not just those who can sail through. This in turn gives me confidence to struggle on which in turn helps my confidence and self esteem. On the practical side of the counselling I have been guided to look more closely at my attitude to my own work, to value it more, which allows me to express my own opinions and begin to enjoy the study as a product of, and for my own development. I am encouraged also by knowing the service is there so that if and when I need it again, I can call on a friendly face who is on my side."*

*"The service was absolutely fantastic. Always making me feel completely at ease. as I was very unsure of attending the service in the first place. It helped me so much in getting through what has been a very tough year for me. There is nothing you can do to improve. It's fantastic. Thank you so much and well done."*

*"As a post-grad I was reluctant to contact the Counselling Service as I felt under-grads would need it more and because I didn't think it could help with my issues. My course coordinator suggested I could contact the service and I did so belatedly. I realized immediately that it would have helped enormously if I had gotten in touch when I first encountered difficulties."*

*"The SCS has been a life saver, I found the staff were lovely, and my counsellor has been really helpful and been there whenever i needed something. The only thing that was out of the ordinary was having to wait three weeks for a next appointment"*

*"The new building is lovely too, much nicer than the old one."*

*"I enjoyed the few workshops I went to; I found them helpful and interesting. It was nice to see other people struggled with the same issues as me. I would probably have been better to make an individual*

*appointment for some of the issues I had but I was unsure whether to or not. I think perhaps more workshops on stress and dealing with deadlines etc would be good."*

*"I liked the way the rooms were small and quiet because it was easier to talk about things as the place felt very safe. Everyone was really nice and welcoming. I think it would be a good idea to give better directions and signage to the location though as the first time I went I got a bit lost!"*

*"I found the Service very helpful and accommodating. I got seen to very quickly and was put on an emergency waiting list for my second appointment. My counselor was friendly and understanding, but most importantly, she gave me practical advice to address my problems independently."*

*"I had previously felt the need to attend a session but did not due to the old premises being clearly marked Student Counselling above the main building door. I felt my at ease entering the new building and the counsellor I met was very helpful and made me feel relaxed to be there. Many thanks!"*

*"I was matched with a counsellor that was leaving the student counselling service, thus cutting my sessions (and my improvement) extremely short. I was extremely unhappy about this, and stopped going after two sessions. There was no point to continue with a counsellor that was just about to leave."*

*"Extremely useful, and when I asked for appointments they were given as promptly as possible. The group I was referred to was also extremely helpful in that I met other people with similar difficulties to me. The counsellor I attended, listened to me without judgment, and made it easier to talk. I also liked the text reminders, as it was often difficult to keep track of appointments. Overall, really useful service, especially that it was free."*

*"While the emergency appointment feature is extremely useful, it may not immediately occur to students to make use of it. As such the main, and only, flaw of the service is that the appointments are way too far apart."*

*"The counselling helped me in my communication issues. I am rather isolated, and the SCS has provided me with the support I needed. Their friendliness and patience have been very helpful."*

*"I used the online Silver Cloud Programme and this helped me enormously with my self-confidence issues and with my anxiety issues."*

*"I'd like to be able to get more frequent appointments when necessary"*

*"Have found it really helpful in a really stressful period, the willingness to accommodate me in an emergency was invaluable to my experience"*

*"I found the drop in service a good way to start interacting with the Service. Counselling services appear to be overstretched as it can be several weeks between meetings with my counsellor."*

*“Initial appointment took a few weeks to get, would be helpful if this could be sooner. Also would be good if there was an online service where you could see what slots are free and book yourself in.”*

*“Thoroughly satisfying. Nothing to complain about at all except for long waiting time but this was understandable particularly at the end of the year”*

*“I liked the fact that the counselling was based on what the client needed and not on a prescriptive course for treating a particular complaint. It would be highly beneficial to be able to access more than 8 sessions as I feel that I would greatly benefit from more counselling input although I know that this may not be possible due to resources and funding.”*

*“Personally I found the counselling service to be of great benefit in helping me deal with personal issues which in turn greatly assisted me in staying in college I'm not sure if I would have remained in college if the counselling services wasn't available. I did find the waiting time a bit long, both getting an appointment and in between counselling sessions.”*

*“I feel it is a service that needs more resources. I found it difficult to get appointments and this was due to the amount of students accessing the service. I was happy with the sessions. I was scheduling in appointments as they are so busy was the problem.”*

*“As a PhD student, I feel very isolated when I have problems with the work. My supervisor is the only sort of pastoral care provided by the university, and the only person I really deal with, and I'd rather not tell them all my problems. I would highly recommend every new PhD student have a one-to-one with a counsellor there so they know what's available. If I were starting all over again, I would have made contact sooner.”*

*“The staffs from the front desk to the counselling rooms are some of the kindest and most thoughtful people I have had the pleasure to meet in TCD. They are a vital asset but you need more staff or more money!”*

*“Counselors were very nice, understanding and helpful and I always felt better after my sessions. However, I felt that the waiting list is far too long. When you're having a bad day your next appointment can seem like ages away. Also as I do student placements and am often only available in the evenings I can only attend appointments on Tuesdays; there should be more evening appointments available.”*

#### *SLD comments*

*“No improvements necessary that I can think of. This service kept me from going over the edge as I was extremely stressed and depressed. This is an invaluable support for students such as myself. Thank You.”*

*“Personally I would try to use more the service and I strongly recommended to my colleagues. When you are in a stressful process you need the support and the service provided was more than what I was expected.”*

*"The Academic councilor was wonderful. She got me through an incredibly hard time during midterms and I am so thankful to her."*

*"the help with the study plan really helped as a mature student."*

*"I think it would be a very good idea to highlight this course on admission for mature students and for people who have not done critical writing before."*

*"I found this service great. I worked with my counsellor over three sessions, as he helped me to prepare for my viva. He gave me very helpful tips to help me prepare. I have recommended this service to fellow postgraduate students. I don't think my viva would have been as successful if I had not made use of this service. Thanks a lot for providing this!!"*

*"I received help when I doubted my approach to essays. I had misinterpreted a title in my first term, and barely passed after doing heaps of work. When I met with a couple of people at SLD I learned practical approaches to essays. These approaches are so quick and clear that they can be applied to exam essay questions. This boosted my confidence and my subsequent results. The fact that sound advice and down-to-earth help is at hand is a great reassurance. Thank you."*

*"I loved the exam workshops - i think they should be held earlier though, March is too late, Jan/Feb would be much better."*

*"I attended for help with a presentation. Staff were a great help, the suggestions I was provided with greatly helped me improve my presentation and confidence also, great service."*

*"I found it very supportive and kept me from dropping out early from course. The Counsellor helped me deal with stressful matters and gave practical and empathetic support. I don't know of any way to improve on that."*

*"The staff was friendly and professional; however, the experience felt disorganized due to the new building move."*

*"Great service. I would not have gone back to college this year without them or I probably would have ended up dropping out."*

*"Friendly, professional, effective and efficient team of people. Understand student problems and offer practical solutions when time is limited. Give practical explanations which are crucial to the course. I went to a exam tips and essay writing appointment I have to say I can't find any faults in that appointment. I learned an awful lot of new techniques on how to approach essays and the lady that helped me answered every question I had regarding essay structure referencing etc, along with giving*

*me printed information to understand further. I also liked the fact that having a one to one meeting was not any hassle and was quick, i.e. I didn't have to wait weeks before there was an appointment available that would fit my college timetable. Overall I thought the service was brilliant!"*

*"My greatest concern was taking study notes and study skills generally. The appointments I attended helped me somewhat, however many of the more suitable classes provided clashed with my lecture schedule."*