

PROJECT TITLE: *Hoos Connected: A Scalable Intervention to Foster a Sense of Belonging and Enhance Mental Health In Entering UVA Students*

SCHOOL: College & Graduate School of Arts & Sciences

PROPOSER:

Joseph P. Allen, Ph.D.

Hugh P. Kelly Professor of Psychology

allen@virginia.edu 434 982 4727

FUNDING REQUEST: \$139,630

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (*Summarize the project—one page maximum.*)

This grounds-wide collaboration among the Psychology Department, Division of Student Affairs, Counseling and Psychological Services Center, and the Curry School will allow us to conduct research to scale and evaluate a highly promising intervention to enhance entering students' academic functioning and mental health by building their sense of community and belonging. The program was developed at UVA, based upon research showing that enhancing a sense of belonging is both feasible and can improve academic functioning and mental and physical health, particularly for students who might otherwise feel marginalized (e.g., racial/ethnic minority students, first generation students, etc.)^{1, 2}. This proposal uses both an action-research approach³, as well as a formal fully randomized trial to provide data needed to scale and evaluate the program.

What it is: *Hoos Connected* is an upward modification of a program developed by Professor Allen that has been found in a rigorous randomized trial to enhance sense of belonging, reduce depressive symptoms, and enhance academic engagement in a population of primarily racially and economically marginalized secondary school students⁴⁻⁶. The program consists of nine weekly small group meetings led by student facilitators. It uses a series of structured activities and facilitated discussions to help participants recognize how much they share in common across groups and beneath the surface so as to build a sense of safety, openness, support, and appreciation of the diverse perspectives and experiences students bring to UVA. The program is purposefully designed to be low-cost and scalable (heavily utilizing student energy and leadership and only relying on professional help for supervision, backup, and modest logistical support). Piloting has led to remarkably positive student response thus far, and suggests that the program is helping to rapidly build strong, supportive connections across *diverse* groups of UVA students. One student evaluation summed this up nicely: "Not only did it deepen the connections I had with [my friends], it really opened my mind to the different views and perceptions people had" (see HoosConnectedUVA.com for extended student evaluative comments).

The evaluation: Having demonstrated that the program can have a potentially powerful impact on students, our task now is to gain the knowledge necessary to adapt the program for larger-scale implementation and to rigorously evaluate our success in this larger-scale implementation. Our approach utilizes research demonstrating that successful scaling of promising programs typically requires both formal evaluation as well as systematic collection of data regarding contextual factors likely to influence scaling efforts (e.g., potential barriers to scaling, costs involved, resources available for large-scale dissemination, etc.^{3, 7}). We will use qualitative and focus group methods (applied iteratively each semester using a continuous improvement process⁸), followed by formal randomized quantitative research to achieve **three primary research objectives**:

1. Collect and then act upon knowledge to transition the program to be primarily undergraduate-facilitated. A key element in scaling the program is transitioning from having it led by graduate students (in limited supply) to advanced undergraduate 'alumni' of the program. We will iteratively pilot best practices for training and supervising undergraduates, obtain qualitative and quantitative feedback on this pilot work, and then use this feedback to modify our curriculum and training procedures. This iterative research will allow us to develop a sizeable cohort of well-trained student facilitators by the end of the project period along with a carefully evaluated and documented approach to continuing to organically grow this cohort going forward.

2. Assess a range of approaches for recruiting entering students to participate. Even a highly effective program will have an impact only if entering students actually choose to participate in it. We will coordinate with staff from the Office of the Dean of Students in developing a range of strategies to make students (especially underrepresented and first generation students) aware of the program as they enter the University, and then evaluate which approaches are the most effective in helping recruit a diverse and representative group of UVA students, with the end goal of having the program eventually become a significant part of the UVA 'identity' for new students from a range of backgrounds.

3. Rigorously evaluate the impact of the program on students using formal evaluation procedures, with which we have extensive expertise. We will use a pre- post- design to evaluate program impacts on student grades, sense of belonging, academic engagement, and mental and physical health using a state-of-the-art, wait-list based randomized controlled trial design (i.e., lottery selection used to assign students to program in first vs. second semester; IRB approval already obtained). The evaluation will use brief, well-validated assessment tools and a multi-level modelling data analytic approach (accounting for nesting of students within groups). Analyses will also allow us to examine whether the program has unique effects for potentially marginalized students (e.g., racial/ethnic minority, first generation, transfer, etc.).

PROJECT GOALS (*What outcomes do you anticipate as a result of this research? How will this research potentially benefit UVA?*)

Our *process-focused* iterative, qualitative and quantitative research efforts will allow us to:

1. Effectively train a substantial cadre of upper class student leaders who will further enhance the culture of connection and support at UVA (and likely gain similar program benefits as those they serve).
2. Use qualitative data from implementation efforts in this period to develop and refine a training and supervision process that is scalable and that provides strong, effective support to student facilitators.
3. Identify the most effective means to engage a large proportion of entering students in the program.

Our fully *randomized quantitative* research effort will allow us to:

4. Rigorously document the efficacy of the program in its student-led format, providing data on academic functioning (engagement and GPA), social functioning, and mental and physical health and well-being. These data will also serve as a powerful communication tool to use in recruiting students (and their parents) to the program, both pre- and post-admission.

Together, these two research efforts will allow us to:

5. Implement an engaging, scalable approach to helping students identify commonalities across diverse groups, develop deep, supportive connections with fellow students, and establish themselves as integrated members of a supportive, open community.
6. Enhance student mental health by reducing social isolation, depressive symptoms, and thereby reduce the need for psychological services.

Our overarching, **long-term goal** is to conduct the research needed to make this program a focal part of the UVA student experience and brand, enhancing the UVA culture by establishing norms of connection, inclusion, and support.

References

1. Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2011). A brief social-belonging intervention improves academic and health outcomes of minority students. *Science*, 331, 1447-1451.
2. Walton, G. M., Logel, C., Peach, J. M., Spencer, S. J., & Zanna, M. P. (2015). Two brief interventions to mitigate a "chilly climate" transform women's experience, relationships, and achievement in engineering. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 107(2), 468-485.
3. McNiff, J. (2013). *Action research: Principles and practice*: Routledge.

4. Allen, J. P., Narr, R., Nagel, A., Guskin, K. (2018). *The connection project: Changing the nature of peer relationships in high school*. Paper presented at the Society for Research on Adolescence, Minneapolis, MN.
5. Costello, M. A., Allen, J. P., Narr, R. K., Nagel, A. G., & Guskin, K. (October, 2018). "Everyone started to accept themselves a little more each day:" *The Connection Project and diverse adolescent groups*. Paper presented at the Topical Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development: Character Development Topical Meeting, Philadelphia, PA.
6. Allen, J. P., Narr, R. K., Nagel, A. G., & Costello, M. A. (In press). The Connection Project: Changing the peer environment to improve outcomes for marginalized adolescents. *Development & Psychopathology*.
7. Glasgow, R. E., Lichtenstein, E., & Marcus, A. C. (2003). Why Don't We See More Translation of Health Promotion Research to Practice? Rethinking the Efficacy-to-Effectiveness Transition. *American Journal of Public Health*, 93(8), 1261-1267.
8. Bryk, A. S. (2015). 2014 AERA Distinguished Lecture Accelerating How We Learn to Improve. *Educational Researcher*, 44(9), 467-477.

PROJECT MILESTONES

End of Year 1 –

- Enroll the first cohort of 140 students in the randomized trial of the program (70 in the intervention and 70 wait-list controls).
- Using focus group interviews, evaluate the first iteration of the fully implemented undergraduate student facilitation model that is currently being piloted (the prior model used graduate student facilitators).
- Train sufficient facilitators (in a 3-step process involving: 1. participating in a group; 2. co-facilitating a group; and 3. serving as lead facilitator) to support 18 groups of approximately 10 students each over the course of a school year (an approximately 80% increase from current capacity) and evaluate efficacy of this training process via focus group interviews with facilitators, trainers, and participants.
- Use these qualitative results to refine a training and supervision model for undergraduate facilitators.
- Develop and pilot expanded residence hall-based recruitment procedures for reaching students, and evaluate effectiveness of procedures in terms of percent of target audience recruited via various approaches.

End of Year 2 –

- Complete randomized trial data collection, enrolling 260 *additional* students in the randomized trial (400 students in total across two years).
- Report final randomized trial evaluation results in multiple formats suitable for: a. academic audience and, b. a lay audience (i.e., parents, students, board members).
- Final qualitative evaluations of revised materials and procedures will lead to production of fully revised and documented training and curricular materials for *Hoos Connected* as a student-led experience.
- These results will be used to create a trained cadre of student facilitators capable of supporting 32 groups (320 students) per year (an 80% increase from Year 1 capacity), with the program set up for *continued* organic growth in subsequent years.
- Compile cost data to allow projection of costs per student for further scaling.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

Manager:

Alison Nagel, Advanced Doctoral Student in Clinical Psychology (Ph.D. expected May 2020)
email: agn3f@virginia.edu

Fiscal Contact:

Tabitha Lillard, Fiscal Administrative Specialist, Dept. of Psychology, tml9t@virginia.edu

Collaborators:

(Names and titles. Describe role of each collaborator.)

Patricia M. Lampkin, Vice President and Chief Student Affairs Officer. Will help garner organizational support and galvanize recruitment assistance from the offices she oversees, including the Office of the Dean of Students, Orientation and New Student Programs, Housing and Residence Life, and Student Engagement, among others.

Christopher P. Holstege, Professor, Emergency Medicine and Executive Director, Student Health & Wellness, will work with Nicole Ruzek and CAPS to integrate *Hoos Connected* into the broader UVA strategic plan for ensuring the health and well-being of our students.

Susan M. Davis, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs. Will help in fostering and organizing institutional support for the program, problem-solving barriers to implementation, and ensuring that strategies for growth work in conjunction with Student Affairs initiatives.

Allen W. Groves, Associate Vice President and Dean of Students. Will work with the *Hoos Connected* team to identify ways in which the program could ultimately be integrated as a fundamental aspect of the entering student experience.

Nicole A. Ruzek, Director, Counseling and Psychological Services. Will provide for ongoing collaboration with CAPS service providers and *Hoos Connected*, including co-facilitation training and experience, and as the program builds, supervisory support for student facilitators.

Robert C. Pianta, Dean of the Curry School of Education. Will facilitate ongoing collaboration with multiple Curry faculty and programs, as well as working with Prof. Allen to explore ways of ultimately integrating *Hoos Connected* into a broader approach to thinking about the role of higher education in facilitating youth social development.

Andy Petters, Associate Dean of Students; Director of Residence Life, Orientation, and New Student Programs. Will assist with program growth into residential settings by garnering support from Head RAs, assisting with recruitment of transfer students, finding appropriate meeting spaces, etc.

Liz Ramirez-Weaver, Embedded CAPS therapist, School of Engineering. Will facilitate recruitment of Engineering school students and oversee student-led groups at the E-school.

Noelle Hurd, Assoc. Prof., Dept. of Psychology. Will use her expertise and extensive research on the experiences of marginalized students' experiences at UVA to suggest means to enhance the impact of the program in helping these students feel integrated into the UVA community.

Scott Gest, Director, Youth & Social Innovation (YSI) Project, Curry School of Education. Will assist with recruiting talented undergraduates to co-facilitate *Hoos Connected* from the YSI major.

Nancy Deutsch, Director, Youth-Nex, Curry School. Will assist with qualitative research design and analysis. She will also explore intersections between training curriculum for *Hoos Connected* student facilitators and a new curriculum for students aimed to empower youth to promote racial justice.

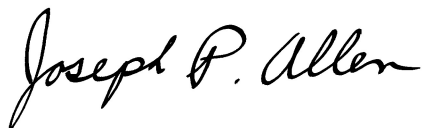
Karen Inkelas, Master, Hereford College. Will continue to assist with recruitment of Hereford students to participate in *Hoos Connected* groups, as well as logistics around meeting space and times.

Maggie Sullivan, Head RA, Kent and Dabney dorms. Will continue to assist with recruitment from Kent and Dabney, as well as provide ongoing advice about undergraduate recruiting.

PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE FUNDING *(If this project will not be completed during the funded period, what is the plan for support once PPFIR funds are expended?)*

The end goal of the project is to produce a rigorously evaluated curriculum, along with a fully developed training and recruitment plan, suitable for ready implementation at a steadily increasing scale by the Division of Student Affairs at UVA, and ultimately by other universities nationally. Funding beyond the project period will be needed only for implementation of the program by the Division of Student Affairs as part of its ongoing efforts to enhance the UVA undergraduate experience.

PROPOSER SIGNATURE



Joseph P. Allen, Ph.D.

Proposer Name / Signature

Date 10/23/2019

COLLABORATOR SIGNATURE(S) (if applicable)

Please see attached letters of support/agreement from the collaborators at the end of this document.

SCHOOL SIGNATURE(S)

Dean Name/School/Signature

Date

Dean Name/School/Signature

Date

Proposed Budget

Item	Salary	Fringe rate	Fringe	total
Allen, Pianta, Lampkin, Groves, Davis, Gest, Ruzek, Deutsch, Inkelas, Petters, Walker, Williams, in-kind	0	n/a	n/a	0
Program Manager year 1 (50% FTE for half-year)	17,500	1.289	22,558	22,558
Program Manager year 2 (50% FTE)	37,500	1.289	48,338	48,338
Logistical Support Person Year 1 (15% FTE)	5,550	1.396	7,748	7,748
Logistical Support Person Year 2 (30% FTE)	11,100	1.396	15,496	15,496
Graduate student summer stipends 2 per summer X 2 summers @ \$5,000				20,000
	Cost per student	# of Students		
Snacks @ \$12.50 per	12.5	260		3,250
T-shirts @ 10	10.0	260		2,600
Evaluations \$20 * 2 per person	40.0	400		16,000
Supplies \$17/10 group members	1.7	260		442
Food at final session	10.0	260		2,600
Recruitment expenses \$150/semester				600
Total Project Cost				\$139,630

Budget Justification

Personnel

In-Kind contributions to project:

Professor. Allen will oversee all aspects of the project, with particular focus on design and implementation of training and supervision procedures for program facilitators; supervision of the Project Manager; oversight of curriculum revision; and design, conduct, and interpretation of program evaluation.

Note that although there is a large group of in-kind collaborators, each has a specific, delimited, and unique area of contribution to the proposed project (see role descriptions above).

Patricia M. Lampkin	Vice President and Chief Student Affairs Officer
Christopher P. Holstege	Professor, Emergency Medicine and Executive Director, Student Health & Wellness
Allen Groves	Associate Vice President and University Dean of Students
Susan Davis	Associate Vice President for Student Affairs
Nicole Ruzek, Director	Director, Counseling and Psychological Services
Prof. Robert Pianta, Ph.D.	Dean, Curry School of Education
Andy Petters	Associate Dean of Students; Director of Residence Life, Orientation, and New Student Programs
Liz Ramirez-Weaver	Embedded CAPS Therapist, School of Engineering.
Prof. Nancy Deutsch, Ph.D.	Director, YouthNex
Prof. Scott Gest, Ph.D.	Director, Youth & Social Innovation Program
Assoc. Prof. Noelle Hurd, Ph.D.	Dept. of Psychology
Prof. Karen Inkelas	Master, Hereford College
Maggie Sullivan	Head RA, Kent and Dabney residence halls

Project Manager - Alison Nagel, M.A., (Ph.D. expected Spring 2020), will serve as project manager devoting 50% effort to the project. *Nagel's time is covered by funds from Student Affairs and the Jefferson Trust for the first 6 months of the grant period.* This role will include tasks relating to: 1. Organizing participant awareness/recruitment efforts; 2. Liaison with the collaborators on the project; 3. Production of training manuals for facilitators; 4. Review of qualitative data and revision of curriculum and procedures based on this review.

Logistical Support – Caroline Fowler, B.A. (15% time year 1; 30% time year 2). Logistical support will entail: room scheduling, collation of activity materials for groups, coordination of snack purchase and delivery, assignment of students to groups.

Graduate Student Summer Stipends – These will be used to compensate doctoral students for obtaining and helping analyze both qualitative and quantitative data on the project, working to train undergraduate facilitators, overseeing the revision of the training process and training materials, and testing and evaluating strategies for recruiting entering students over the summer. Graduate students will also be co-leading program groups during the academic year (time already covered by department) as part of training undergraduate facilitators.

Per Student Costs – For the *evaluation* 400 students (200 participants and 200 waitlist control group students) will participate. Costs for the *intervention* are budgeted with the expectation that 260 students in total will participate in the program. This allows both for modest attrition (i.e., not all intervention students will finish the evaluation), but also for inclusion of participants who come from groups or settings in small numbers (i.e., from a particular dorm or recruitment approach, RA referral, etc.), not large enough to allow true randomization (and participation in the evaluation, but where participation in the intervention is still desirable).

Evaluations - Students (both *Hoos Connected* and waitlist control members) will be paid for completing pre- and post-intervention evaluation forms (this is particularly important for wait-list/control students who may be less motivated otherwise).

Snacks, T-shirts, and Food at Final Session are all part of making the intervention inviting. T-shirts are also viewed as a recruitment tool for future sessions, and as a tool for community-building and establishing a stronger presence for the program on Grounds.

Recruitment expenses reflect costs for printing recruitment flyers and related informational materials.

Letters of Collaboration/Support (attached below)

Patricia Lampkin	Vice President and Chief Student Affairs Officer
Joint letter:	
Christopher P. Holstege	Professor, Emergency Medicine and Executive Director, Student Health & Wellness
Susan Davis	Associate Vice President, Liaison to University Counsel
Allen Groves	Associate Vice President and University Dean of Students
Nicole Ruzek, Director	Counseling and Psychological Services.
Prof. Robert Pianta, Ph.D.	Dean, Curry School of Education
Andy Petters	Associate Dean of Students; Director of Residence Life, Orientation, and New Student Programs
Liz Ramirez-Weaver	Embedded CAPS Therapist, School of Engineering
Prof. Nancy Deutsch, Ph.D.	Director, YouthNex
Prof. Scott Gest, Ph.D.	Director, Youth & Social Innovation Program
Assoc. Prof. Noelle Hurd, Ph.D.	Dept. of Psychology
Prof. Karen Inkelas	Master, Hereford College
Maggie Sullivan	Head RA, Kent and Dabney residence halls

October 23, 2019

Joseph P. Allen
Hugh Kelly Professor of Psychology
University of Virginia
P. O. Box 400400
Charlottesville, VA 22904

Dear Joe:

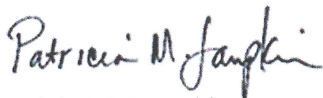
I am writing to confirm my wholehearted enthusiasm for *Hoos Connected* and its potential to become an integral part of the UVA student experience. The program has clear and direct tie-ins to our mission in Student Affairs – to enrich the lives and minds of our student community members – and does so through fostering meaningful interpersonal experiences.

In recent years, we have learned that many students come to college with high levels of anxiety, a reality supported by both anecdotal and research data. A new and competitive environment can further exacerbate feelings of loneliness and inadequacy. Students who feel isolated struggle on multiple fronts and require the support of many University resources. UVA data from the Student Experience in the Research University Survey (SERU) show that first generation students and those from underrepresented minority groups in particular experience a sense of not belonging during their time at the University.

Hoos Connected offers a tremendous opportunity, within an inclusive framework, to address some of these struggles for our students. By integrating the residential experience with weekly facilitated sessions, the program helps students explore and appreciate differences while they simultaneously build connections with their peers. Discovering the common fears, feelings, and experiences they share as human beings leads to a lessening of students' anxiety levels and the cultivation of positive interactions. The direct benefits to students are many, including enhanced academic performance and improved emotional health. Those benefits also accrue to the University at a systems level. Student Health and Counseling and Psychological Services, for example, are extremely supportive of the ways in which *Hoos Connected* is building needed social scaffolding for students to develop sound physical and mental health.

Based on the promising results we have already seen, I believe *Hoos Connected* will enhance students' well-being and empower them to shape their community culture. I am eager to use the full resources of my office to support the growth and expansion of the program, with the hope that it can one day be widely available to our student body.

Sincerely,



Patricia M. Lampkin
Vice President and
Chief Student Affairs Officer

October 24, 2019

Joseph P. Allen
Hugh Kelly Professor of Psychology
University of Virginia
P. O. Box 400400
Charlottesville, VA 22904

Dear Joe:

As members of the senior leadership team in the Division of Student Affairs, we are joining with Vice President Lampkin to emphasize our support for *Hoos Connected*. It is our shared belief that our mission to help students become citizen leaders begins with a foundation of mental and physical well-being. The capacity to manage life's stresses, build relationships with diverse peers, and contribute to the betterment of society only develops from a springboard of wellness.

It is well-documented that the mental health of college students has become a central issue of our time. As cited in the most recent annual report of the Center for Collegiate Mental Health, counseling center utilization rates across the nation increased on average as much as 40% during the six-year period from 2009 to 2015 (with a modest increase of just 5% in enrollment). The same report states that the prevalence of depression among college students continued a steady upward rise through 2018. Similarly, indicators of "threat-to-self," ranging in severity from non-suicidal self-injury to attempted suicide, steadily rose. Within Counseling and Psychological Services at UVA, we have experienced a similar demand for services, forcing a shift in human and financial resources to meet the very real needs of our students. CAPS surpassed the national statistic referenced above, with a utilization rate that increased by 55% from 2014 to 2018.

Other sources reveal compelling data on rising levels of loneliness and social isolation among young people today, whether generated by societal and family changes, an unbalanced reliance on technology, or the rapid rate of change spawning increased competition and an ever-present sense of impermanence. All these factors and more, combined with what we now know about brain development during the critical years of traditionally aged college students, present implications for every aspect of student life. More than ever, the educational process must address these needs in a manner that is positive, expeditious, and substantive.

Hoos Connected expands our ability to meet those needs through an approach that is both practical and experiential yet grounded in decades-long research. From our perspective, the program is successful because it moves students beyond superficial conversation to meaningful engagement with one another in authentic, inclusive, and safe ways. Whether participants end up viewing a previously distant hallmate with fresh eyes or they develop one or more deep, lasting relationships as a result of the program, *Hoos Connected* promises to provide the "connective

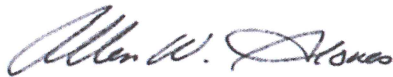
tissue” to bridge some of the chasms created by anxiety, depression, and social isolation. By coupling the program with residential life, the opportunities for growth seemingly multiply well beyond the temporal constraints of weekly sessions.

We know the college years can be a time of great experimentation, personal growth, and moral development. When embedded within a comprehensive and strategic framework focused on well-being, *Hoos Connected* can be the link that further enriches each student’s experience and moves them closer to becoming healthy, productive, and compassionate citizen leaders.

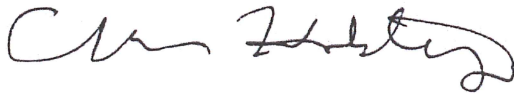
Sincerely,



Susan M. Davis
Associate Vice President
for Student Affairs



Allen W. Groves
Associate Vice President
for Student Affairs
University Dean of Students



Christopher P. Holstege
Executive Director of Student Health
Professor of Medicine

October 16, 2019

Hi Joe,

I wanted to reiterate my enthusiasm for the expansion of *Hoos Connected* and my willingness to continue our collaboration. As more and more students seek services at CAPS, we are eager to support programs focused on prevention. I see *Hoos Connected* as serving an important role by providing a positive experience for the students served *and* contributing to a shift in the broader school culture, both of which may help to reduce the mental health burden at UVA. We've had several CAPS staff co-facilitate *Hoos Connected* groups and have had great feedback.

Additionally, the program's supervision structure is a natural fit for CAPS therapists to lend their expertise. In short, the collaboration between CAPS and *Hoos Connected* seems to be mutually beneficial on all fronts.

I believe that *Hoos Connected* has the potential to fundamentally change the experience for new students entering UVA, and can play an important part in reducing the overall impact of mental health issues on Grounds. I look forward to continuing to collaborate as you take the next steps toward implementing *Hoos Connected* at scale.



Nicole Ruzek, PhD
Director, Counseling & Psychological Services
Department of Student Health

CURRY SCHOOL of EDUCATION
and HUMAN DEVELOPMENTBavaro Hall
417 Emmet Street South | PO Box 400260
Charlottesville, VA 22904-4260P 434.243.5481
F 434.924.7970
curry.virginia.edu
planta@virginia.edu

October 21, 2019

Joseph Allen, PhD
Department of Psychology
University of Virginia

Dear Joe,

I just wanted to confirm my eagerness to collaborate with you as you work to roll out *Hoos Connected* to a steadily larger group of entering UVA students. As you've suggested, the *Youth & Social Innovation* program at Curry seems like a great source of potential upper-level student facilitators, and I know that this work also dovetails well with your ongoing involvement with *Youthnex*.

This is an incredibly exciting project with potential to dramatically enhance the experience both of students entering UVA, and of the broader social culture of the school. I look forward to working with you and exploring additional ways that *Hoos Connected* can fit into Curry's educational mission as you take the next steps to move this program toward implementation at scale.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Pianta, Dean
Novartis US Foundation Professor of Education
and Professor of Psychology

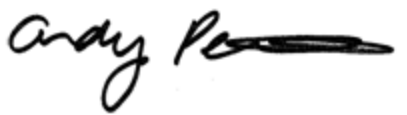
October 21, 2019

Dear Joe,

I just wanted to confirm my eagerness to collaborate with you on *Hoos Connected* in your efforts to expand the program to serve greater numbers of first years and transfer students. As we discussed, I see *Hoos Connected* as a natural fit with our programming, which aims to create healthy housing communities. Your focus on forming *Hoos Connected* groups within dormitories/housing areas makes great sense, and will serve to enhance the experience and the wellbeing of participating students. As we work together to grow the program, I am able to offer support in recruitment (e.g., garnering the support of our Senior Residents to generate enthusiasm among their residents) as well as logistics (e.g., coordinating meeting space).

I believe that this program has the potential to prevent some of the significant issues that arise among new students to the University, which would not only help students served but also be parallel to the important work of our student leaders (RAs, Senior Residents). I look forward to continuing to work together in scaling the program over time.

Sincerely,



Andy Petters
*Associate Dean of Students & Director
Orientation & New Student Programs and Residence Life*



UNIVERSITY
of VIRGINIA

Department of Student Health
Counseling & Psychological Services

Liz Ramirez-Weaver
CAPS
400 Brandon Ave
PO BOX 800760
Charlottesville, VA 22908-0760

October 22, 2019

Dr. Joe Allen
UVA Department of Psychology
485 McCormick Road
Gilmer Hall
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Dear Dr. Allen,

I am writing to express my continued enthusiasm for the collaboration between *Hoos Connected* and CAPS at the School of Engineering. As we've discussed, I believe that mental health outcomes for students will improve if we continue to focus on wellness and social connection as this helps to create a supportive environment where students can thrive. *Hoos Connected* does just that, through informal weekly group meetings that explore topics relevant to the First Year student experience at the University of Virginia.

The *Hoos Connected* group I am co-facilitating this semester is progressing extremely well as evidenced by consistent attendance and engagement in activities and discussion. The participating students express that they enjoy the group because they have fun, learn something new each week and because we have great snacks! I have observed our group of students linger in conversation for 10-15 minutes after the group ends and they are always willing to help clean up the room and put away materials.

Hoos Connected is a valuable resource for First Year School of Engineering students as it builds positive social skills, while normalizing difficult experiences in a supportive and safe group environment. *Hoos Connected* is a program with the potential to enhance student wellbeing on a large scale. I look forward to our continued collaboration. I fully support the expansion of the *Hoos Connected* program across the University of Virginia.

Sincerely,

Liz Ramirez-Weaver, LCSW
Embedded CAPS Therapist
School of Engineering

October 17, 2019

Dear Joe:

I wanted to confirm my willingness and excitement to work with you on *Hoos Connected* as you move towards a scalable model. A primary goal of *Youth-Nex* is to translate research to practice in order to create settings that better serve adolescents; as college students are late adolescents, *Hoos Connected* fits well into our broader mission. In addition, I can see potential linkages between *Hoos Connected* facilitator training and a new curriculum being developed at *Youth-Nex*, in collaboration with the University of Virginia Equity Center, focused on helping students become racial justice advocates. Our shared goal of creating informed and skilled student leaders makes this a natural collaboration. Finally, I am excited to lend my expertise in qualitative research design and analysis to make data-driven decisions as you build out the program and refine the curriculum.

I see *Hoos Connected* as a program with the potential to significantly and positively shift the social climate of UVA. I look forward to working with you and continuing to explore how *Hoos Connected* and *Youth-Nex* can work together to create a healthy environment for students.

Sincerely,



Nancy

Nancy L. Deutsch
Professor, Curry School of Education
Director, Youth-Nex: The UVa Center to Promote Effective Youth Development



CURRY SCHOOL *of* EDUCATION
and HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

October 18, 2019

Joseph Allen, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology

Hi Joe,

I just wanted to confirm my eagerness to collaborate with you as you work to roll out *Hoos Connected* to a steadily larger group of entering U.Va. students. I see a natural link between what you're proposing and the goals of the *Youth & Social Innovation* program at Curry. Moreover, I know we've already got a significant number of students in the program who are motivated to make a difference around issues of social belonging and higher education. In short, I believe we've got a ready source of potential program facilitators for *Hoos Connected*, and I look forward to coordinating our efforts going forward.

I see this program as having real potential to fundamentally change the experience both of students entering U.Va., and of the broader social culture of the school. I look forward to working with you and exploring additional ways that *Hoos Connected* can fit into Curry's educational mission as you take the next steps to move this program toward implementation at scale.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott D. Gest".

Scott D. Gest, Ph.D.
Professor & Chair, Department of Human Services
Core Faculty member, Youth & Social Innovation Program
sdg9t@virginia.edu
434-924-6254



October 20, 2019

Hi Joe,

I'm writing to confirm my support for *Hoos Connected* and your work to implement the program to scale at UVA. I believe your curriculum has the potential to positively impact students, perhaps particularly marginalized and first-generation students who face unique challenges in finding a sense of safety and community at the university. I know that the high school version of this program effectively served marginalized students; I am happy to continue to consult on how to best address the unique challenges facing underrepresented students at UVA.

I see *Hoos Connected* as having the potential to reshape the culture at UVA at the grass roots, an effort that might help support those students who have historically been least welcomed at UVA. I look forward to continuing to collaborate and consult with you as you grow *Hoos Connected* to serve more young people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Noelle Hurd".

Noelle Hurd, PhD, MPH
Scully Family Discovery Associate Professor
Department of Psychology
University of Virginia



HEREFORD RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE

October 16, 2019

Dear Joe,

I wanted to confirm my eagerness to continue to collaborate with you as you work to expand *Hoos Connected* to a larger group of entering students. As we have discussed, I see a natural link between the work of *Hoos Connected* and our ongoing efforts to build positive relationships and a prosocial culture at Hereford. I believe that our students participating in a *Hoos Connected* group this semester are benefiting from the experience.

I see this program as having the potential to help reshape our community around the virtues of authenticity and connection, both at Hereford and in the University more broadly. I look forward to continuing our collaboration as *Hoos Connected* grows.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Kurotsuchi Inkelas
Principal, Hereford Residential College
Associate Professor, Curry School of Education

Lower Vaughan House
Station #2
Charlottesville, VA 22904

PHONE 434.982.4872
EMAIL ask.hereford@gmail.edu
WEB SITE hereford.virginia.edu

Hi Professor Allen,

I am writing to confirm my support for *Hoos Connected* and my enthusiasm for its implementation in a dorm setting. As a Head RA of two dorms, I encouraged my residents to try the program this semester. The students I've spoken with have had positive feedback. I think that the program is a natural fit for dorms, where we work hard to build healthy, supportive relationships between residents, and compliments our existing programming.

I see *Hoos Connected* as having the potential to enhance the dorm experience, and ultimately the college experience, of first years at UVA. I would love to continue to collaborate in my role as Head RA, and hope to see the program expand to more dorms in the future.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Morgan Sullivan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned in the lower-left area of the page.