Student health services hosts STD testing

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

Roughly one in four college students have a sexually transmitted disease, STD, and in many cases, students who have contracted an STD are asymptomatic, according to Hartford Healthcare.org.

Located in Granoff Hall, Student Health Services hosted Get Yourself Tested. On Wednesday, Sept. 18, students were able to take advantage of free testing for sexually transmitted infections, or STIs.

While STIs can cause mild symptoms, they can develop into STDs.

Melissa Lopez, the director of student health services, said these events help to encourage students to get tested.

"It is important for students to get tested so that they're aware of their status, and if they have an STI, they can get treated," Lopez said.

Student Health Services also offers resources to students that do test positive for STIs.

Lopez said that due to a partnership with the Connecticut Department of Public Health, treatments and contact tracing are free of charge.



PHOTO | BRIANNA WALLEN

Linda Sadinsky, nurse practitioner and Melissa Lopez, the director of student health services standing in Granoff Hall.

"Treatments for STIs are offered free for students, and then we offer them education," Lopez said. "We also offer partner notification and expedited partner treatment here."

While these services are available, students can be hesitant to reach out and become aware of their status. The unwillingness to be tested can be traced back to the taboo around STDs.

"I think there's a stigma around STDs, and this makes people hesitant to get tested because they are scared people will judge them and their lifestyle," nursing major Favour Amayo, a sophomore, said.

Lopez said she believes that students should not be scared, as her department can assist students with the whole process.

"If they get tested, they're able to face the issue and also understand what their status is, and we can address the problem for them," Lopez said.

Biology major Dania Burgess, a sophomore, said that STD testing can provide students with a peace of mind.

"It is a good way to ensure that everything is okay and for students to be educated on ways that they can be healthy," Burgess said.

By getting tested and being aware of their status, students are also able to keep themselves and others around them safe.

"I think that everyone getting tested for STDs can help to stop an outbreak on campus," Burgess said.

Student Health Services also offers a wide variety of resources that students can take advantage of.

Students are able to make appointments for illnesses, injuries and reproductive health visits.

The department also coordinates flu vaccine clinics for students and weekly health education programs in the recreation center.

By welcoming students and helping to resolve their concerns through screenings, health promotion and case management, Student Health Services fulfills their mission of focusing on the physical, emotional and social requirements of students.

"I think that the department does a good job of creating a safe environment and bringing awareness for diseases that people might have and don't know how to find out if they have it," Amayo said.

Owls learn the secret to happiness at seminar

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

College students are battling a mental health crisis, as more than 60% meet the criteria for at least one mental health problem, according to the National Education Association.

With poor mental health hitting campuses worldwide, it is important for students to be educated on resources available to them to aid their personal well-being.

Located in John Lyman Center for the Performing Arts, "The Secrets to Happiness: Discovering the Science of Well-Being with Laurie Santos," was hosted on Sept. 17.

Santos is an expert in human cognition, its evolutionary history and the evolutionary biases that impact human decision-making.

Her research focuses on the relationship between positive psychology and behavioral modification for a happier life.

The speaker is a well-known psychology professor at Yale University and author of the widely acclaimed course The Science of Well-Being.

Santos also hosts the noted podcast The Happiness Lab, which explores the science behind happiness and how individuals can live more fulfilling lives.

The psychologist visited campus, as Owls united to gain insight on how to boost their mental health.

Santos said that there is a direct link between one's mental health and their performance.

"Not only does your mental health matter for your performance, but your mental health matters in particular if you care about solving the problems of the world," Santos said. "Positive emotions are the kind of thing that's going to make you fix the problems."

The conference "Elevating Student Wellbeing: Pioneering Strategies for Social and Emotional Empowerment" was held earlier in the day.

It is anticipated to provide groundbreaking insights that build on the knowledge gained from the previous event.

The event featured presenters Marc Brackeet, a research psychologist and founding director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, and clinical social worker Steve Gross, who is the founder of the nonprofit organization Project Joy.

Santos shared her top tips to building a fulfilling life. Her tips include both behavioral and mindset changes.

These ranged from making time for gratitude every day, being present, engaging in social activities and getting enough sleep.

"It's helpful to focus on gratitude, to focus on the things we're thankful for," Santos said. "I think we spend a lot of time not feeling grateful, and happy people don't spend as much time doing that."

It is important for people to get an average of 7–9 hours of sleep per night.

However, many, particularly youth, are sleep deprived.

Santos said a lack of sleep impacts one's behavior and mindset as well. Subsequently, it is important to prioritize sleep and implement healthy habits.

This can be true for students at the university. Sociology major and psychology minor Leilany Cruz, a sophomore, said she typically gets 5–8 hours of sleep each night.

Cruz also said that if she loses sleep due to her course load it does affect her the next day.

"If I don't get enough sleep, I get irritable, and it takes a toll on my mood" Cruz said.

Santos also taught the audience a meditation practice from meditation teacher Tara Brach that goes by the acronym book of RAIN, which stands for, recognize, allow, investigate and nurture.

The psychologist said that it is important for them to fully identify all their negative emotions to try and nurture them.

"The problem is we never sit with it and look at it so closely enough that we feel it, but that's what the investigative step allows you to do. Kind of ride your emotions like a wave," Santos said.

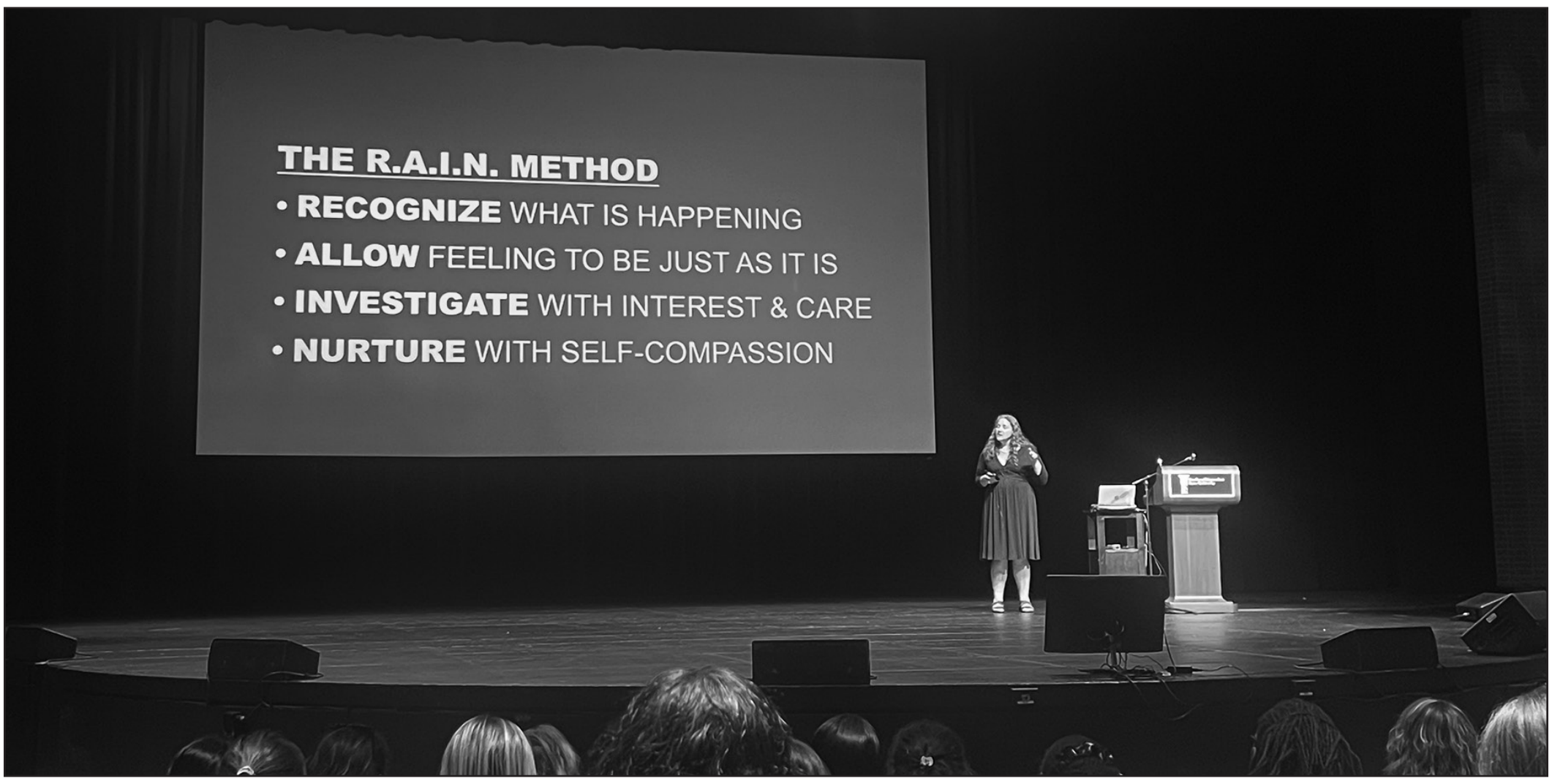
Feeling negative emotions is natural, and resources to help students cope with them can be beneficial.

Early childhood education major Priscilla Adebambo, a junior, said this decline can be traced back to the pressures placed upon their population.

"Especially as college students it can get overwhelming with classes and we don't know where to turn to or talk to. So, I think it's important for us to learn about our mental health and where to get help," Adebambo said.

With many outside factors that affect college students, Cruz said there should be mandatory seminars on campus, similar to Santos' seminar, where students learn about mental health resources.

"I definitely think that students should attend seminars and learn ways to manage and prioritize their mental health," Cruz said.



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Speaker Laurie Santos shares coping methods for negative emotions in the John Lyman Center for the Performing Arts on Sept. 17.