Emotional Support Animal Policy

**Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for students who request a letter for emotional support animals (ESA) from CSB Health Services or CSB|SJU Counseling.

**Definitions:** An emotional support animal is a companion animal that provides therapeutic benefit to an individual with mental or psychiatric disability. The animal is part of the treatment plan for a person who meets the definition of the disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Fair Housing Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The animal is determined to be needed in order to address specific functional limitations and allow the person to live independently.

**Policy:** The CSB Health Services and CSB|SJU Counseling departments have had an increase number of students requesting that a medical and/or mental health provider “prescribe” (write supporting documentation for) an ESA. While we understand that a pet can be an important source of support during stressful times for many students, ESAs are not prescribed or specifically recommend by CSB Health Services or CSB|SJU Counseling staff.

**Procedure:** If a student requests a letter of support for an ESA from CSB Health Services or CSB|SJU Counseling, these procedures will be followed:

1. Explain to the student that CSB Health Services and CSB|SJU Counseling does not provide letters recommending ESAs. A further explanation may be offered that at this time the mental health literature directs counselors not to engage in dual roles of serving as counselors and evaluators. The literature also recommends that those requesting letters be evaluated by professionals trained in forensic evaluation.

2. Students who request such letters will be referred to their current or past medical or mental health providers outside of CSB/SJU or to make contact with local, external mental health providers. Our providers will assist students to the best of their ability with community resources that might offer this type of assessment and documentation for the purposes of accommodations.