

MEMORANDUM

To: TAMUK Campus Community

From: James M. Palmer 
Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date: August 20, 2024

Re: Announcement of Executive Director of Counseling Services and the Institute for Rural Mental Health Initiatives (IRMHI)

Following the decision of Dr. Steve F. Bain to return to a full-time faculty role this fall after serving as the Founding Director of the Institute for Rural Mental Health Initiatives (IRMHI), an internal review has taken place of our current efforts and expertise in associated areas. We did not have to look far before the expertise needed to oversee the Institute was identified. I am pleased to announce that Dr. Renee E. Weiss will serve as Executive Director of Counseling Services and the Institute.

Dr. Weiss brings over 30 years of experience serving in various roles and at all levels in the field of education. Currently, she is the Director of Counseling Services. Weiss is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor, Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor, Board Certified Tele-mental Health provider; and is certified as a pre-k-12 professional school counselor, principal, and teacher. Before moving to Kingsville, Weiss served as the Director of Career and Employment Services at Amarillo College. She also taught adapted physical education and served as a school counselor and administrator for the Amarillo Independent School District.

Weiss completed her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership at TAMUK. Her dissertation was a multi-site Delphi study to identify and prioritize mental health needs in rural communities in Texas Public Health Region 11, which is a strong alignment with the Institute's mission. In addition, Weiss has a M.Ed. in Counseling, a M.S. in Sport and Exercise Science, both from West Texas A&M University, and a B.S. with distinction in Physical Education from the University of New Mexico. Weiss belongs to numerous professional organizations including the Texas University and College Counseling Directors Association (TUCCDA) where she has served on the executive board for the past three years and was recently appointed as President-Elect.

As Executive Director, Dr. Weiss will continue her oversight of Counseling Services for the University but will take on additional duties for the IRMHI. In this role, she will provide leadership of the Institute and its mission of serving as a focal point of expertise, research activities, and advocacy for rural populations across the Coast Bend and South Texas region designed to benefit rural citizens of Texas. The IRMHI will report to the Provost while Counseling Services remains with Student Affairs.

To support her efforts, the College of Education and Human Performance has been allocated a tenure-track line in counseling with 25% duties assigned to the Institute. Furthermore, Dominique Peña, in the Center for Student Success, will be assigned 25% effort for the Institute. Mrs. Peña has a M.S. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and is working on her Ph.D. in Counseling Education and Supervision.

Join me in welcoming Dr. Weiss (and Mrs. Peña) into her new role. Dr. Rito Silva and others in Student Affairs have demonstrated a strong cooperative spirit in agreeing to these new duties for her.