



# Embedded Counseling Services Increase Student Mental Health Care Utilization: A pre-post analysis at a large public university

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## Introduction

- Traditional counseling models are inaccessible for some students due to lack of familiarity with counseling or stigma related to receiving mental health care.
- Embedding counselors within academic spaces increase the likelihood of students accessing care by making services more visible, relevant, friendly, and convenient.
- **This study describes changes in service utilization after embedded counseling services were implemented in three academic departments.**

## The Embedded Model

Places licensed mental health clinicians directly within academic, social, or residential areas, rather than exclusively in a central counseling center

Offices are directly positioned in areas where students engage in academic and/or social communities

Counselors develop strong relationships with those communities, allowing services to be tailored to the specific stressors and culture of each school

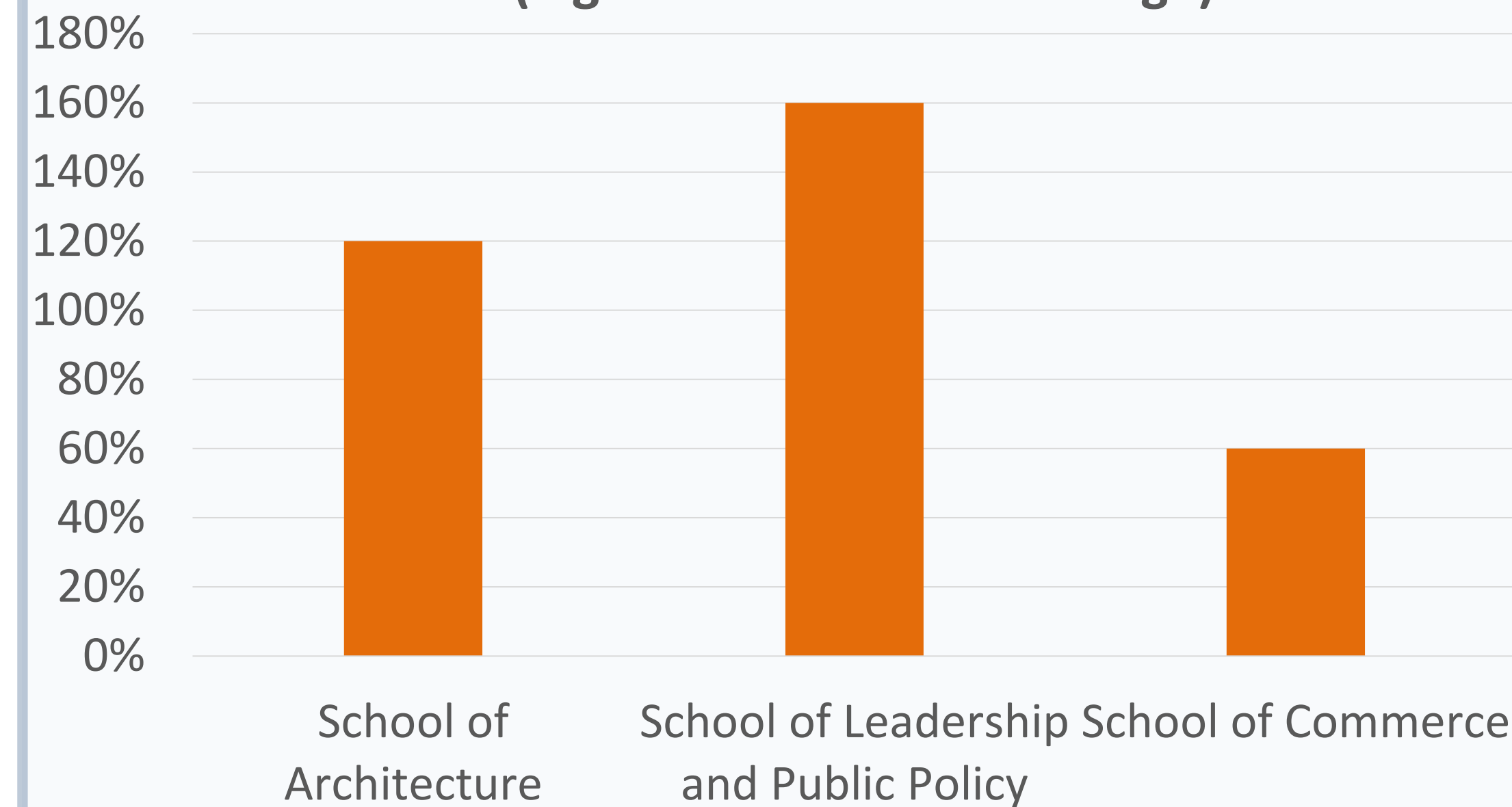
Program cost split between the department and counseling center, which fosters equal investment in supporting students' mental health

## Data Analysis

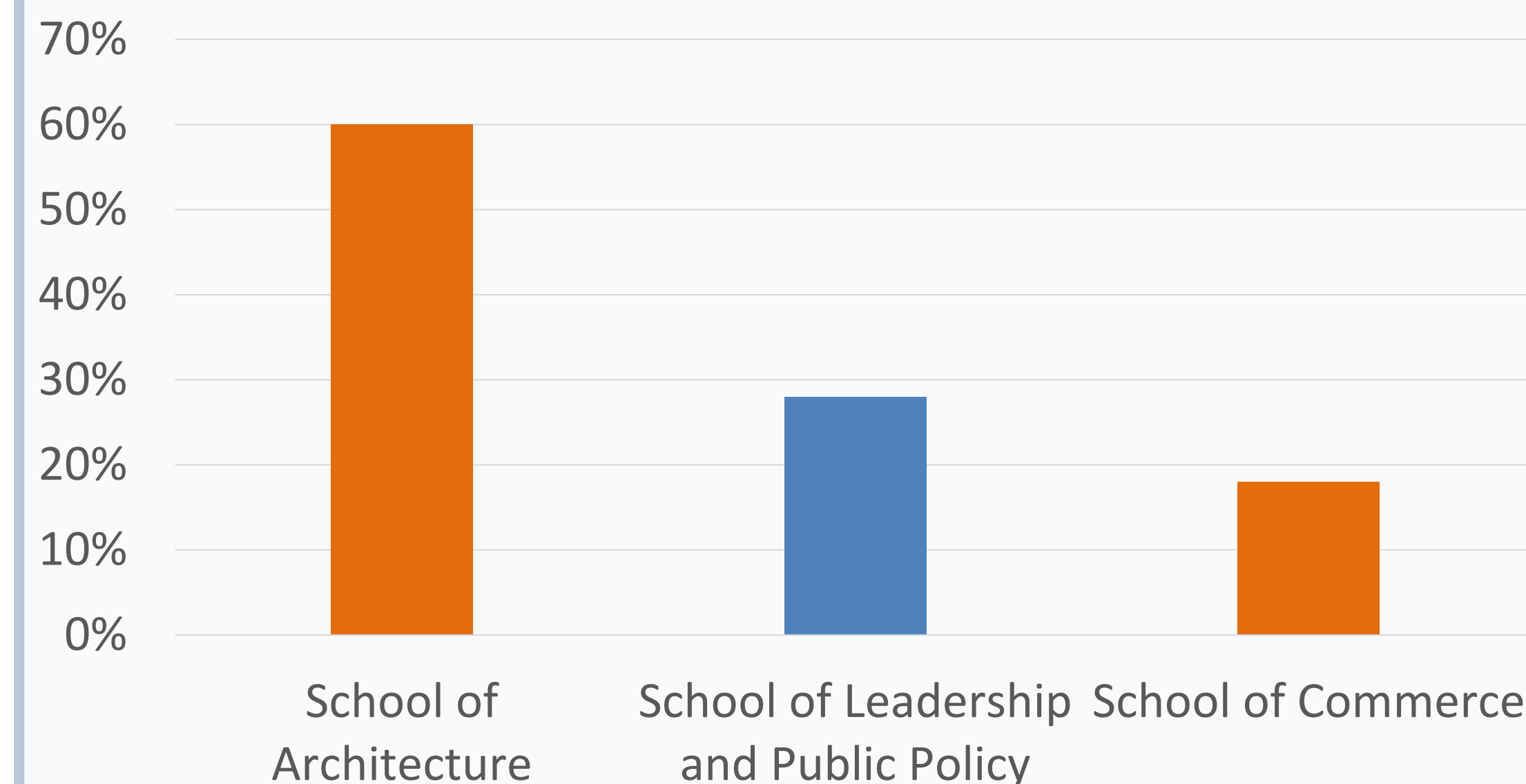
- Design: Pre-post observational study
- Population: Students in the Schools of Architecture, Commerce, and Leadership & Public Policy
- Periods
  - Pre: 2016–2019
  - Post: 2021–2024
- Analysis: Poisson regression with enrollment offset

## Results

Visits % increase  
(Significant effects in orange)



Unique students % increase  
(Significant effects in orange)



## Conclusions

- **Mental health visits increased by 60-160% and the number of students served increased by 34-86% across three academic departments after embedded counseling was introduced. This was independent of increases in enrollment.**
- All effects were significant except for increases in students for the School of Leadership and Public Policy.
- Easier access to services may serve as a motivator to seek care early before more serious problems emerge.



## Future Directions

- See if changes in utilization generalize across other embedded settings (e.g., counselors housed in residence halls, the student union, etc.)
- Examine demographic characteristics of students using embedded services to identify if there are differences in the populations served through embedded sites versus the central counseling center office
- Examine whether students who use embedded services show any differences in psychotherapy use, outcomes and/or future incidents of crisis