



Impact of a Full-Time Facility Dog on a University Campus

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Professor Beauregard Tirebiter



Facility Dog vs Therapy Dog

Beau: USC Wellness Dog

- Primary Role: Enhance the general well-being of the USC campus and ease student stress.
- Tirebiter Assistants (TAs)
- Types of Visits
 - Res Ed Visits
 - Office Hours
 - Outdoor Office Hours
 - Lunch Walks
 - Visits by Requests



USC Chan Division of Occupational
Science and Occupational Therapy

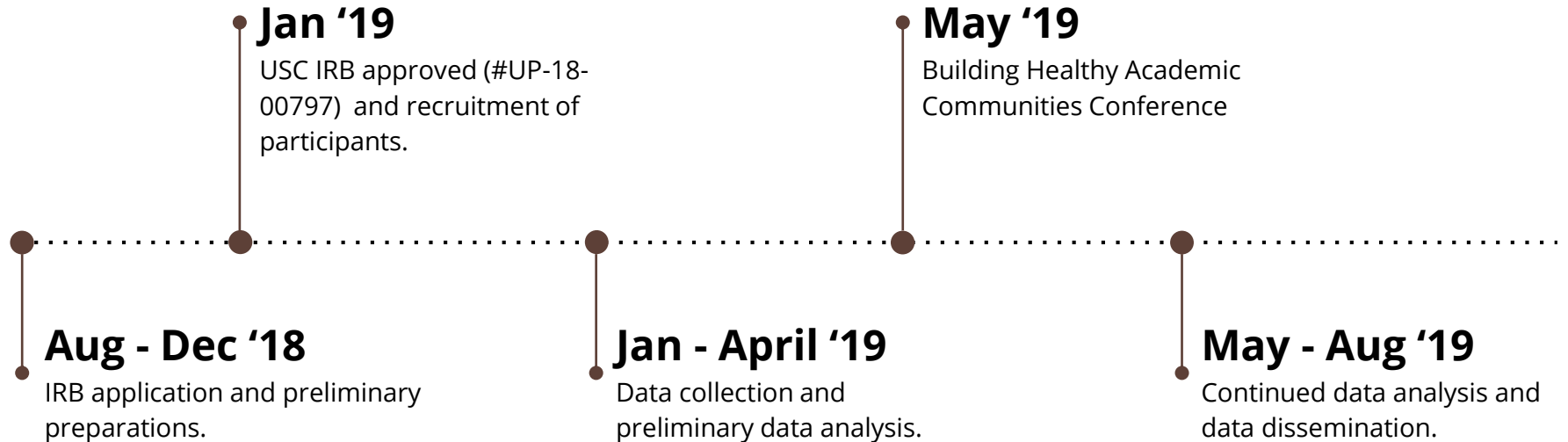


USC Student Health
Office for Health Promotion Strategy

Beau Research
OTD Residency



Research Timeline



Literature Review Key Concepts

Dogs and People

Physiological

- Blood Pressure
- Heart Rate
- Stress Hormones

Emotional

- Mood
- Anxiety
- Loneliness
- Depression

Therapy Dogs and Finals

Stress reduction

Social interaction

Emotional/ mental health support

Facility Dogs

Courthouses

Hospitals

Special Ed. Classrooms

Nursing Homes

Research Questions

From the students' perspectives:

- 1) How is a full-time facility dog impacting the multiple systems within a university (Individual, Community, University)?
- 2) How does a facility dog foster stress reduction and occupational engagement?
- 3) How is a facility dog impacting students differently than therapy dogs?

Methods

Data Collection

- 20 Observations
- 19 Interviews

Analysis

- Thematic Content Analysis

Reflexivity

- Occupational Therapy Lens



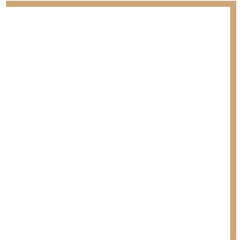
Emerging Findings

Beau seems to be....

- 1) Improving Student Mental Health
- 2) Addressing Changes in Roles and Routines
- 3) Fostering a Sense of Home
- 4) Enhancing Perceptions of USC's Mental Health Efforts



Improving Student Mental Health



Improving Student Mental Health

TOUCH

“My friend and I just sit there and **pet him** for the **whole two hours.**”

Female, Sophomore, Transfer

“I **just like soft things.** I'll see things in the store and I'll be like, "Let me feel that. Let me touch that.”

Female, Freshman



“Well I guess it's kind of like, having a **soft toy...** as I said it's **comforting to pet** [a dog].”

Female, Graduate Student

Improving Student Mental Health

ATTENTION:

"[If students are] really stressed, and then **they see Beau and [he gets] their attention, [he'll] take their mind off** of whatever is on their mind and **be away from it for a bit.**"

Male, Graduate Student

"[W]hen I see Beau... **my mind** is gone from what I was thinking of. It's just an automatic, "**Make this dog happy...**[m]ake this dog... bark or smile or do something."

Female, Sophomore





Addressing Changes in Roles and Routines



Addressing Changes in Roles and Routines

"At the beginning of the semester, fall semester, I kept texting my mom like, **"Did you feed him?"** And she'd be like, "your brother is home." I'm like, "Oh, okay." I don't trust him. He's kind of lazy... I wouldn't bother them about walks because I know they're busy, too, but **I just wanted to make sure the basics like water and food.**"

Female, Freshman

"[P]laying with Beau definitely **feels very similar to when I play with my dog.** That's been really nice to have or even watching him play. I'm like, "Wow. That's what my dog does." **It's just nice to see that.**"

Female, Freshman

"**[With Beau],** the fact that **I'll be able to pet someone's dog without asking** [is why I like to see him]."

Female, Freshman, Transfer Student



Fostering a Sense of Home



Fostering a Sense of Home

"[Beau makes USC like a] casual campus. **You're back home.** It's not a college campus. It's kind of like a little community. He helps establish that kind of atmosphere, which I think is really healthy."

Female, Sophomore



"It's one of those little things that has helped me **feel more comfortable** and really start to **feel like I belong here.**"

Male, Sophomore

"While those kinds of temporary **therapy dogs** can still be very comforting. Like I said, the **bond isn't as strong.** It almost makes **Beau similar to having a pet here** that you're not with all the time, but you can see a lot of the time."

Female, Freshman



Enhancing Perceptions of USC's Mental Health Efforts



USC's Mental Health Efforts

"This is like a really **creative** way beyond just the basics. You know we've got therapists and little break rooms and all that. **This is something special.**"

Male, Sophomore, Transfer

"I think people will see [Beau] and say, "Wow. **[USC is] really looking out for the welfare of their students** because they have this **facility dog** who's **here for students** who are **having trouble** with anxiety, emotion, etc."

Female, Senior



USC's Mental Health Efforts



"I feel like sometimes it is **harder** to have those **[mental health] conversations with a therapist** or someone ... **Beau, you don't even have to tell him** anything. **He's just there.** I think that's just more comforting overall."

Female, Freshman

"I think [dogs are] **the best therapists** 'cause **they don't need a voice to tell you.** They just **sense you** and then they connect eyes [with you] and it's almost like **they're speaking through their eyes.**"

Male, Graduate Student

Limitations

- Convenience sampling
- Time constraints
- Demographics of participants
- Generalizability





University Facility Dog...

- Several perceived **positive effects** for students
 - Mental health
 - Culture of mental health and wellbeing on campus.
 - May have **distinguishing** characteristics or benefits **compared to therapy dogs.**
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Questions?

Thank you for your time.

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Beau's Instagram: @beau_usc



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