There is one rite of passage on the Lynn University campus that senior Clayton Weingartner has never missed: the day the therapy dogs visit.

"God, I love these dogs," says Weingartner, 22, stroking Charley, an 8-year-old Labrador-golden retriever cross, who is flopped on the grass and being petted by a circle of students.

Lynn's counseling department has arranged for the therapy dogs during exams for the past five years. Their presence appears to lower anxiety and enhance mood at one of the tensest periods of the college cycle.

In December, Lynn brings in a petting zoo of llamas, pigs, goats and chickens. After the last petting zoo, Lynn students reported feeling 83 percent less stressed, said Nicole Ovedia, head of counseling at Lynn.

At Florida Atlantic University, the mandate of new counseling director Kirk Dougher is to make sure that FAU's counseling program is helping students have a better quality of life during their time there.

The treatment for anxiety is often some form of cognitive behavior therapy, which encourages patients to become aware of their mental processes, to challenge negative or self-destructive thoughts and to set recovery goals. When possible, treatment is short-term and focused.

Therapy dogs are among many ways to calm anxious students.

More counselors are encouraging students to relax with meditation and mindfulness techniques that originated in Eastern religions such as Zen Buddhism.

"In Eastern religions, you start where you are and you might say, 'What are some of the advantages of being in the place you're in?'" Dougher said.