

Policy Statement IX – Mental Health

Adopted: February 25, 2014

Expires: February 25, 2017

Motion from the 8th ULSU General Assembly meeting of 2013-2014:

MOTION [20442GA]

MSC: S. Glydon/N. Peters

BIMT that the General Assembly ratify ULSU Policy IX "Mental Health".

Carried

WHEREAS the 18 - 24 demographic has been shown to demonstrate a high prevalence towards the occurrence of mental health episodes¹;

WHEREAS the Chinook Health Region experienced the second highest rate of suicide in Alberta²

WHEREAS the majority of those in older age demographics who suffer from mental health issues have started their battle with mental illness while they were within the 18-24 demographic³

WHEREAS current post-secondary students are under more stress than ever before as a result of factors such as the increasing cost of education;

WHEREAS anyone battling mental illness who then enters the workforce is less productive, in terms of economic output, than someone who has no mental illness;

WHEREAS there is still a stigma associated with mental illness, which prevents many from seeking the help they need;

WHEREAS for Spring 2011 the University of Lethbridge had one full-time equivalent (FTE) counselor for every 1 950 students. The International Association of Counseling Services (IACS) recommends a minimum ratio of one FTE professional staff member for every 1 000 - 1 500 students;

WHEREAS there has been a 76% increase in booked counseling sessions between 2006 and 2011 at the University of Lethbridge;⁴

WHEREAS patients at counseling services may only be eligible to receive a limited number of counseling sessions (10 per year);

WHEREAS physical and emotional well-being are directly correlated with the state of one's mental health;

¹ Student Mental Health: Breaking Down Silos and Busting Stigmas, Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, 2013, pp. 1 - 3

² Mental Health Needs of Albertans: Select Factors and Findings, Alberta Mental Health Board, December 2007, pp. 36 - 37

³ Student Mental Health: Breaking Down Silos and Busting Stigmas, Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, 2013, pp. 1 - 3

⁴ Student Mental Health Services are

WHEREAS it is important to offer a variety of programs and events for students, in order to keep them in a good mental state, realizing that prevention is always preferable to the cure;

WHEREAS the University of Lethbridge received 3 million dollars per year, for three years, beginning in 2013 -2014, in order to bolster its mental health services; and,

WHEREAS this funding must remain stable and predictable in the long-term if any appreciable efforts are to be made in reducing the amount of individuals on the University of Lethbridge campus that suffer from mental illness.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT

The University of Lethbridge Students' Union advocate for a policy that:

- a) Secures long-term, predictable funding for mental health services at the University of Lethbridge campus.
- b) Results in a variety of different events and programs, consistently throughout the year, aimed at reducing student stress, such as stress-busters (puppy rooms, etc) and thus working against mental illness.
- c) Recognizes that physical health is also of paramount importance in achieving good mental health, and thereby ensures that adequate exercise facilities, adequate outdoor spaces, and healthy eating options are readily available to students, at a reasonable cost.
- d) Results in enough counselors to properly service the needs of the student population, according to the quota as recommended by IACS.
- e) Results in adequate space for activities and counselors related to student mental health, as previously outlined.
- f) Results in a concerted effort by the University of Lethbridge to remove the stigma associated with mental illness, so that those affected will feel secure enough in themselves to access the services available to them.
- g) Ensures an increase in awareness concerning student mental health on the University of Lethbridge campus.