

Question Time

For the past few years the university has employed two full-time doctorally-trained psychologists and one part-time master's level therapist on campus to deliver mental health services (both counseling and prevention education) to our students. For personal and professional reasons, both doctoral-level psychologists recently left the university. It has come to our attention that the administration is not planning to replace them, and is seeking to "outsource" mental health services to Parkview Behavioral Health, and to no longer engage doctoral level psychologists to serve the mental health needs of our students.

It has been widely reported that mental health needs of students have been sharply increasing in recent years. Students increasingly come to campus with serious mental health-related conditions such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse problems. Last year's tragedy at Virginia Tech was clearly caused by a student with a serious mental illness. There is no reason to believe that IPFW students have fewer mental health concerns than other students across the country. The more we move to having residential programs, mental health needs become even more important to serve effectively.

Mental health professionals can also offer educational and prevention programs. One of the doctoral psychologists, Shauna Summers, obtained grant support to offer a substance abuse education program to students who faced alcohol-related abuses in the student housing. This kind of program is only able to be effectively run by employees of the university, and such grant funding is usually contingent on the university having on-site staff and facilities to effectively manage it.

We do not understand how decreasing the on-campus presence of psychologists and other mental health professionals will effectively serve our students' mental health needs. Across the country, universities are seeking to increase the presence of clinicians on their staffs, not to reduce them. We are very concerned that the university would seek this solution to student needs by outsourcing this critical service to a community mental health center, rather than by providing it with employees who are an integral part of the campus community. We think this will lead to fewer educational services, less of a presence of mental health professionals on campus, a poorer relationship between campus constituencies and mental health professionals, and reduced quality of services to our students. We ask our fellow senators to join us in speaking against this plan,

and we ask the administration to tell the campus community how a plan to outsource this vital service to our students will effectively meet their needs.

The Psychology Department Faculty

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