Destigmatizing Mental Illness on Campus: Responsibility of College Administrators

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**(Tommy Simoncini/Flickr)**

**The Situation**

Mental health has become a growing concern among college students in recent years.

The National Survey of Counseling Center Directors noted, “88 % of counseling center directors reported an increase in ‘severe’ psychological problems over the previous 5 years including learning disabilities, self-injury incidents, eating disorders, substance use, and sexual assaults”

Students are flooded with responsibilities juggling being dedicated students, having a social life, working out and staying in shape, and eating healthy. It can be suffocating. Students manage their emotions in different ways. Instead of seeking help from the school, students will turn to substances or avoidance, which spiral into a bigger problem.

Colleges are responsible for providing their students with the resources that will give them the tools to learn how to cope with this stress healthily.

**The Problem**

The stigma around mental health inhibits students from seeking help.

When talking to my friend about mental health she said is discouraged to seek help because she was worried that, “I will never be able to feel ‘normal’”. As humans, we have the urge to fit in. Those

suffering from mental health feel misunderstood. Having allies around campus will help relieve students struggling with mental health.

A study from The Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors found that “The average percent of students seeking counseling services is 9-12% at small colleges and 6-7% at larger colleges/universities.”

This statistic illustrates the need for clear communication from colleges to destigmatize mental health problems among their students. The fear of not fitting in and not accepting the need for help only makes things worse.

**The Solution**

Clear communication from college administrators about mental health will help destigmatize mental illness.

Colleges need to emphasize the importance of mental health. They need to be more upfront about the services they provide to their students and how they are beneficial. They need to head conversations about mental health and the importance of seeking help. By talking more about mental illnesses, students will no longer feel alone and will be more inclined to talk about it and go to counseling.

A study from The Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors recorded, “Among students reporting if Counseling Services helped with their academic performance, 67% reported positively.”

The increase in mental illness among students translates to an increased demand for counseling services at colleges. Colleges need to provide sufficient services for their students to decrease the number of students suffering from untreated mental illness. By providing students with the resources to resolve these inner conflicts, students will be healthier.