10 December 2019

Dear Dr. Borders,

We write to formalize our concern for the mental health and wellbeing of the undergraduate students in English Teacher Education program and ask for your help in meeting the needs of these students both with training for our program faculty and staff as well as increased campus resources for our students.

In quickly escalating numbers our students self-disclose mental health concerns. While this happens in conjunction with deadlines for coursework, just as often our students come to us for guidance about on-going mental health concerns. We dutifully follow campus policies and direct our students to campus resources, but struggle to feel like their mental health and wellness is adequately supported when our students report back the month-long waitlists at the Student Counseling Center or the availability of only group appointments. Many of our students, having “worked up the courage” (to use their language) to reach out for help, do not return to the Student Counseling Center after realizing that they might be waiting over a month to speak to a counselor there. In the space of waiting for appointments, many of our students continue to fall behind in their coursework and often things escalate to crisis situations. Too often it seems they struggle alone to find a way to make manageable their mental health concern. Are there additional campus or community resources to which we can direct our students?

We also want to formally inquire about training for our program faculty and staff for not only responding to students in mental health crises, but also supporting the mental wellness of our students. Furthermore, we know that the undergraduate students in our program will soon be teachers in public high school classrooms where there will also be students with mental health concerns. We feel as though it would be a tremendous asset if training was available for our students as well. We have monthly Professional Learning Workshops for our students and are eager to invite campus or community colleagues to provide this training. Are there campus or community resources you can suggest?

We realize that there are broad and complicated needs within the student body of Illinois State. Additionally, we know there are colleagues across campus in, for example, Student Counseling Services, University Housing Services, and Student Access and Accommodation Services who work daily to support the mental health and wellness of students. We remain appreciative of our colleagues doing this crucial work. We only ask for help so that we can know better how to support the students in our program.

Respectfully,

The 2019-2020 English Education Committee

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