

Name of the Initiative:

Student Mental Health Learning Series

Description of the Initiative:

Counselling Services has noted an increasing demand from staff and faculty for consultation and information about mental health concerns that are common among our student population, how those concerns may present in class and on campus, and how to respond when concerns arise.

We see this as an opportunity for (1) an educational/professional development intervention that will enhance student support and also as (2) a vehicle to advance our College-wide goal of creating an inclusive learning environment that supports a mentally healthy campus.

Our response has been to develop a series of **professional development Learning Sessions** that provide information on the “mental health complexion” of students attending post-secondary institutions in Canada, and NorQuest in particular. Sessions also explore the elements of a **mentally healthy learning environment** at NorQuest, and how participants may contribute to that goal in their daily work at the College. (Note: sessions are not Mental Health First Aid)

The first target group was faculty, as this is the group from which our Service has received the greatest increase in demand for supports and professional development, and are the group most likely to have daily close contact with learners. Sessions for instructors focused on classroom concerns and were delivered as collaborative dialogues **facilitated by Counselling Services and other faculty** from divisions across campus. Approaching topics in a context of partnership has been integral to meeting our objective. We want participants to consider the question: “How might we work together, in collaboration, to support a mentally healthy environment for our students?”

The series was promoted on the NorQuest’s Learning Resource Network (LRN) and received approval as a professional development activity for faculty. To date, three dialogues have been concluded with very positive feedback from attendees. The sessions are as follows:

- Session #1, “Student Mental Health in the Classroom” was hosted and facilitated by Counselling Services faculty in January 2016.
- Session #2, “Student Mental Health: Academic Accommodations” was delivered in February 2016. The discussion was hosted and facilitated by Counselling Services and Student Support Specialists from NorQuest Disability Services.
- Session #3, “Student Mental Health: Using Traumatic Material in Class” was delivered in April 2016. The discussion was hosted by Counselling Services and facilitated alongside instructors from the Faculty of Foundational, Career, and Intercultural Studies.

On the basis of its success, our intention is to continue the Series next academic year.

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