Building Awareness for Better Support of MSU Counseling Services

The ratio of counselors to students for the 2017-18 academic year at Michigan State University is 1 to 2,778. The ratio recommended by the International Association of Counseling Centers is 1 to 1,000-1,500. More than 75% of all mental health conditions begin before the age of 24 which is why having access to proper mental health services during college is so important. MSU mental health services simply are not adequately staffed to handle the demand for care. For our leadership project we decided to raise awareness for the need to increase the amount of mental health support available at Michigan State University.

In order to raise awareness, we decided to make flyers to post around Michigan State University’s campus that illustrated the current status of health care services at Michigan State University and highlighted the importance of mental health care for college age individuals. Furthermore, this poster also had tear offs that directed individuals to show their support for mental health services by signing and writing comments if they wanted to.

Only five days after hanging our posters and sharing the petition links on our facebook pages, we have almost one-hundred signatures and the comments are overwhelming.

* “It took them eight weeks after my initial session to get me in last year. This year I understand they are turning even more people away. I do not have insurance to pay for my mental health (a commodity) and would greatly benefit from a university service.”
* “It is so hard to get an appointment and when you do get one its a month or more in advance, mental health issues need to be addressed as soon as possible and I find that hard to do when I can't even get in for an appointment.”
* “I need counselling and can't get an appointment because they are too full”
* I was put on a waiting list for over a month for services that my insurance does not cover. This is not fair!
* Mental Health is something that should be important to every person, not just those affected.

We think this was a great start to building awareness of the need for more counselors and for more access to these counselors. We went into this not knowing much about the current services available at Michigan State University, with only anecdotal evidence that the services weren’t able to help the large student body. We learned more about the current status of mental health services and most importantly, through the comments on our petition, we really felt how important these services were to students in general and how discouraging it was for students who tried to access these services but were turned away.