

THE "I CARE PROJECT": Revise NMU Student Self-Destructive Behavior Policy

As a result of numerous emails sent by the NMU Dean of Students Office, we the students and staff of Northern Michigan University would like to make the following 10 demands regarding NMU's policy and treatment of students suspected of being at risk for self-harm or suicide:

1.) That NMU immediately revise the current Student Handbook Policy, Section 3.12 that states:

(Due to changes in Title II, this policy is currently under review. NMU will not prohibit the continued enrollment of students who manifest self-destructive behavior, unless that behavior is disruptive to the NMU community. The Dean of Students Office continues to assist students who request a voluntary psychological withdrawal.)

Attempted or threatened suicide or self-inflicted physical harm is an occasional form of student behavior with which the University is unsuited to cope on any but the most temporary basis. This is so primarily because, as an institution of higher education, the University aims to provide students with a great deal of individual freedom to think, to speak and to act. (See Student Rights and Responsibilities, December, 1994.)

Physically self-destructive behavior, however, simply cannot be ignored. Therefore, unless such behavior is to be permitted to cause profound changes in the activities of University faculty, staff and other students, it may be necessary to withdraw students who manifest such behavior from the University, subject only to the possibility of conditional reinstatement during compliance with the terms of a behavioral contract between the student and the University. Aside from the possibility of such a contract, the risk to the student requires that such withdrawal may be carried out administratively and as promptly as possible.

Where student withdrawal occurs under this policy, every effort will be made to minimize adverse academic and financial consequences of withdrawal, consistent with existing University policies applicable to grades and refunds. Re-entry of the affected student will be approved at the earliest practicable date after it is made to appear that self-destructive behavior is not likely to recur.

3.12.2 Self-Destructive Behavior-Definition: Self-destructive Behavior shall be understood to mean and include (a) an attempt or attempts on the part of an individual to end his/her life or to inflict serious bodily harm on himself or herself by any means capable of producing such result, and (b) a serious threat or threats on the part of an individual to employ such means for such purpose.

3.12.3 Additional Information: A complete copy of this policy is available in the Dean of Students Office (2001 C.B. Hedgcock, 227-1700). Members of the University community who have questions regarding this policy and its application should contact the Dean of Students Office.

2.) An immediate apology issued from Dean Christine Greer and Dean Mary Brundage to students affected by this policy.

3.) Published statistics available on the number of students who have faced disciplinary action or have been threatened with disciplinary action related to this policy.

4.) NMU increase its amount of staff at the NMU Counseling Center to better address student need and improve mental health on campus.

5.) That records regarding student suicidal behavior not be cataloged or on record through the Dean of Students Office and that the Dean of Students Office respects student's privacy regarding services at the NMU Counseling and Consultation Center.

6.) That the Dean of Students remove the Behavioral Concerns reporting section on its website and instead defer that responsibility to the Counseling and Consultation Center when instances of mental health are involved.

7.) That the NMU Student Handbook be required to be ratified by 3/4th student vote each year, with transparency on how such policies are created.

8.) That a new Self Harm Policy be approved and in effect by the Fall 2016 semester that does not include negative consequences for students who choose to reach out to a NMU student, NMU staff, or faculty member for issues related to mental illness, self-harm, or suicidal thoughts or actions.

9.) That a statement be made clarifying how the Dean of Students made the decisions regarding the policy and contacting certain students about it, as well as how they gained information as to which students were deemed at risk for self-harm.

10.) To remove requirements placed on Resident Advisers, Community Advisers, and Resident Directors on mandatory reporting of students suspected of or discussing self-harm.

FACTS:

-Petition started 11/11/2015

-Signature count at 12/11/2015 at 9 a.m. is 2,510 supporters.

-On November 18th, an estimated 100 students wrote "I Care" on their wrists to show solidarity with students from suffering from mental illness and to protest NMU's current Self-Harm Policy.