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Professionals to discuss mental health issues

campus-news

April 11, 2011

KOKOMO, Ind. – Indiana University Kokomo will host its first Mental Health Summit this Saturday, April 16, featuring an open discussion with a panel of eight professionals representing faith-based and mental health specialists. The event will take place from 10 to 11:30 a.m. in Kresge Auditorium, and is free and open to the public.

Inspired by a student's concern about counseling collaboration between mental health professionals and religious leaders, Christina Downey, assistant professor of psychology and director of IU Students Engaged in Excellence at Kokomo (IU-SEEK), discovered there is little literature on the subject.



"The student's comments indicated that, in their experience, members of the clergy might have some lack of knowledge or mixed feelings about mental health services offered outside of the religious organization," said Downey. "The student was distressed by this perceived disconnect between mental health and religious organizations, and it made me curious about what the academic literature had to say about this issue. I could find no reports of what happens when professionals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives are brought together and dialogue about issues related to collaboration."

Also during her research, Downey found a great deal of support for the idea among the community and faculty members. Downey, along with faculty members Amber Reed and Cathy Holcomb, moved forward and prepared a team of student research assistants to ensure the project's success. Organizers hope to host a similar event in at Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis.

"Holding the event in two different kinds of communities will allow us to make a number of comparisons that will contribute a new dimension to the existing literature on this topic," said Downey. "In addition, the general response from mental health professionals and religious leaders has been so positive that we are considering holding a conference on this topic in later years. It has been a very exciting experience, and we have good reason to believe that the event will be well attended."

For more information, contact Downey at (765) 455-9385, or by email at downeyca@iuk.edu (<mailto:downeyca@iuk.edu>).

Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.

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