Illustration by IZEK GARCIA | *The Ranger*

Students' stressors put mental health in shambles

EDITORIAL

The mental health of students has been declining for years, but the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the problem, making it more urgent than ever before. According to a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the percentage of emergency department visits for mental health concerns among children and young adults increased significantly during the pandemic. This is a worrisome trend that must be addressed immediately.

There are many factors contributing to the decline in mental health among students. One major issue is academic pressure. The competition to get into top universities and secure high-paying jobs has led to a culture of overachievement, where students feel immense pressure to excel academically. This pressure often results in stress, anxiety and depression.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has made it even more challenging for students to cope with academic demands as they have had to adjust to online learning, social isolation and other pandemic-related stressors.

Another significant factor is the lack of access to mental health services. Despite the increasing demand for mental health services, many schools do not have enough resources to provide adequate support to students.

Furthermore, mental health services are often stigmatized, and many students are reluctant to seek help, fearing social repercussions. This stigma needs to be addressed, and students should be encouraged to seek help when needed without fear of judgment.

Social media is another factor that is contributing to the declining mental health of students. Social media platforms like Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok can create unrealistic expectations and a sense of inadequacy among students. The pressure to present an idealized version of oneself online can lead to feelings of insecurity and anxiety.

In light of these challenges, schools and policymakers must prioritize mental health initiatives to support students. This may include increasing access to mental health services, providing mental health training for educators and staff and creating supportive environments that encourage students to seek help when needed.

Parents and caregivers can also play a vital role in supporting the mental health of students. They can monitor their children's social media use, encourage open communication and model healthy behaviors such as mindfulness, physical exercise and self-care.

The declining mental health of students is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach. It is time for schools, policymakers, parents and caregivers to work together to address this crisis and provide the necessary support for students to thrive academically, socially and emotionally.

By prioritizing mental health, we can ensure that our students are equipped to face the challenges of the future with resilience and optimism.

Tattoos shouldn't be taboo

OPINION

By GENEVIEVE PRESLEY
Coulumnist

For many years, I have been told that tattoos are bad- sinful even. Not only are these controversies are popular, but they are also highly unfair.

My dad is a tattoo artist and he's been doing it ever since the year that I was born. Some of the things that I know about art I learned from my dad, and tattoos are nothing more than a work of art.

Tattoos are not bad, rather they are just another form of creative expression. Each tattoo has a meaning or story behind them.

If all tattoos tell a powerful story, then I don't understand why so many people think that they're so bad. If people heard that something was wrong to do, there would be a portion that would go against the rules of society and do that particular thing and another portion would completely refuse to do it, agreeing with what everybody else says, thinks and feels. I can't speak for everybody else or tell them what to believe, but I refuse to believe for even a second that tattoos are bad.

Honestly, it's not our place to judge others anyways so we shouldn't be telling people that what they do for their job is bad and they shouldn't be doing it. I know personally that I wouldn't want anybody to say that to me.

Another reason why tattoos aren't bad is because there are some religious tattoos (crosses, Bible verses, etc). Out of all the different tattoos in the world, besides animals, these are my favorite and one I would even strongly consider getting someday.

All things considered, tattoos aren't wrong, sinful or even violent. However, they are personal, captivating and powerful pieces of art.

Bring back physical textbooks

OPINION

BY DANIELLE LOWREY
Student Reporter

It's January 2021, and I'm walking into my first college class. Like a good student, I have my prescribed textbooks in hand. My older sister of ten years had warned me ahead of time that most of my learning would be done in the textbook.

Imagine my surprise when the professor told us we wouldn't be using the books. I thought it might just be a one-off. Perhaps that class, in particular, was just weird, but as time went on, I realized I hardly used my textbooks at all.

The "textbooks" I did use were nothing more than a system to quiz and test me over the content of the class, and they weren't even real textbooks. I purchased books to have access to an online learning platform. I paid for a class, and then I paid for the learning platform I would be learning on.

According to the U.S. Public Interest Research Group, the average college student spends $1,200 on textbooks each year. That's a lot of money to spend on something I will never use again.

Sure, I can resell the physical textbooks and make some of that money back, but only under the right circumstances.

While my sister may have had physical textbooks when she went through college, by the time I came around, most of my professors were assigned e-books and learning platforms. Once that class is over, the book is useless. I'll only have access to these books for a set amount of time (normally six months).

On top of that, the textbook was hardly the reason for purchasing online access. We purchased it for tutorial videos, problem examples and online quizzes.

Students are already having a hard time trying to figure out how to pay for college classes. Now we don't just pay for college classes, we pay for the source our professors will use to grade us. In some classes, online learning is all there is. In place of lectures, it's videos within the learning platform. Instead of taking notes, we go through examples online on our own.

College has been, and probably always will be, a learning experience in which students rely on teaching themselves a majority of the curriculum, but I can't help but think this is such a waste of money.

Why should we have to pay for a class within a class? Bring back the physical textbooks and professor lectures. Don't make us pay for a class when we're just going to pay more to learn online. College is expensive enough. Don't make it more expensive out of convenience.