Name: Katie Phelan
Year: 03
Major: Marketing

Qualifications:
Young Life Leader at Smith’s Station High School
Student Recruiter

Platform:
“I believe in honesty and truthfulness, without which I cannot win the respect and confidence of my fellow men”

During my time at Auburn, I have been passionate about speaking on the importance of mental health in my life and those close to me. In this line of the Creed, I was drawn to the idea of believing in honesty and truthfulness. However, when grasping this concept, I believe the importance of this line stems from first and foremost being honest and true with yourself. The only way that we can effectively pour out to others in the Auburn family and beyond is to first--take care of ourselves.

That is why I am choosing to highlight the importance of mental health during this campaign. Oftentimes, discussing mental illnesses can be hard to do because of the stigma that has often surrounded it. This stigma seeks to isolate and condemn those that struggle with anxiety, depression, or eating disorders to name a few. I related to that isolation for years, wondering if I was battling this alone. I would never have been able to speak candidly about mental health if it weren’t for people who encouraged me to be honest with myself and seek out help beyond my own ability. It took time, encouragement, and resources; but I am indescribably grateful for those that choose to invest in my wellbeing. During this campaign week, I want to speak openly about mental health because there is freedom in knowing you’re not alone in your feelings—whether you are personally impacted or know of someone who is. In addition to having that dialogue, I want to ensure information is provided to students about free resources available on Auburn’s campus and nationwide. Mental illnesses can seem less daunting when you know you’re not alone and that there are people eager to help. There are some incredible resources for students on campus, like the Auburn University Student Counseling Services or the Active Minds club. My goal throughout this campaign is for students to realize that they are seen, valued, and heard regardless of what they are struggling with. That is why I chose to display a semicolon in my slogan’s name. Over the years, under the mission of Project Semicolon, I have understood the symbol to remind people that their life’s story is not over yet, similar to how the punctuation signifies a continuation of a sentence.

It’s important for me to that this initiative of promoting mental health carries on beyond a campaign season. My goal is that overtime, anyone can feel comfortable to speak honestly about their mental health and be able to find resources. Throughout the week, I encourage you to check in with yourself to see how you are genuinely doing. I know I will be. Sometimes all it takes is just a conversation to allow someone to seek help or resources. I’m hoping that during this week we will all be starting or continuing the conversation about mental health.