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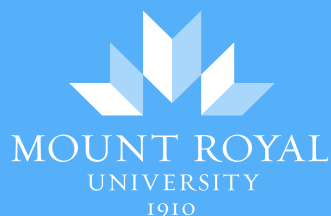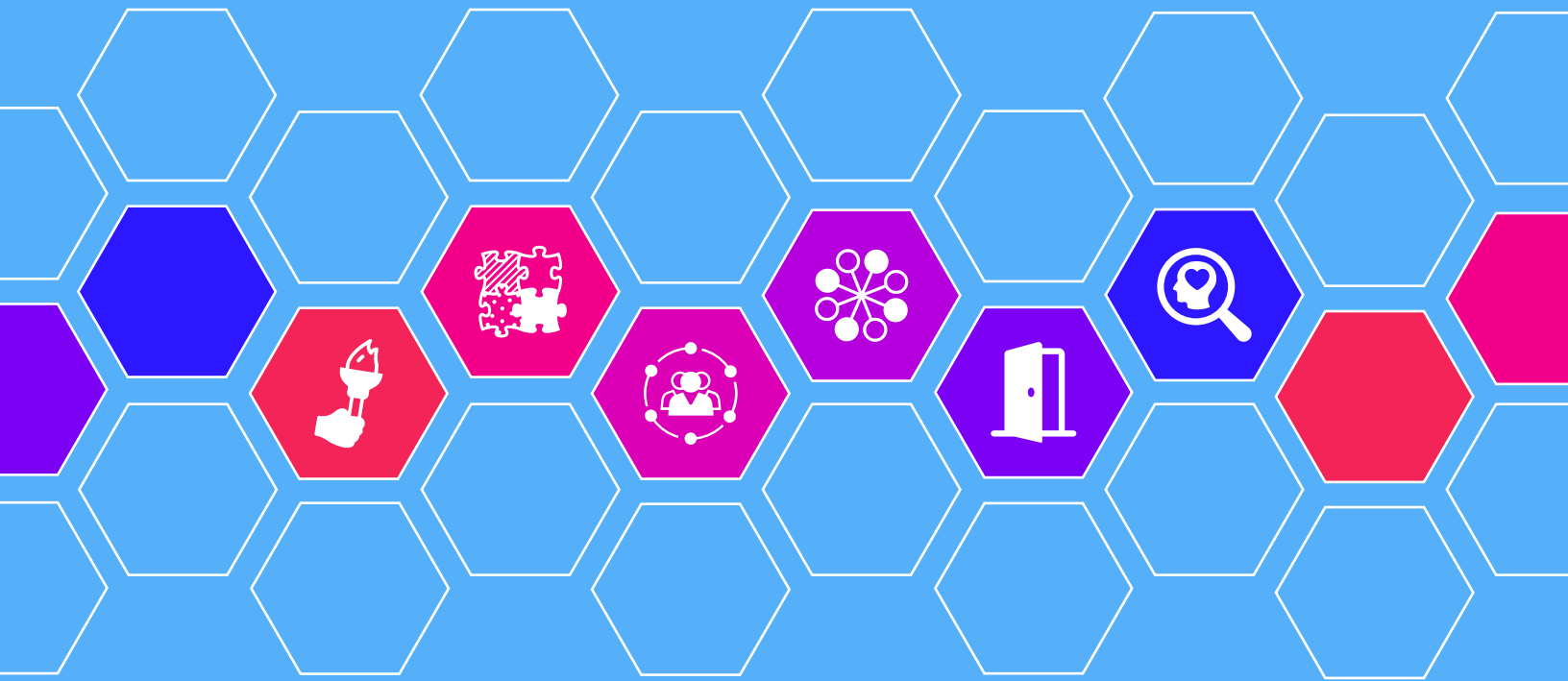
Models for Exemplary Student Mental Health Initiatives at Alberta Post-Secondary Institutions

MOUNT ROYAL
UNIVERSITY
1910

A toolkit created by Mount Royal University
Fall 2020

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Mental health is an increasing concern for Alberta's learners. Post-Secondary Institutions (PSIs) can increase their capacity to respond to this concern and create learning and living environments that encourage students to flourish. To support these efforts, the Next Steps to Improve Post-Secondary Student Mental Health resulted in direct funding to all publicly funded PSIs in Alberta. Through this funding, institutions have been tasked to take a systemic approach to support student mental health across seven dimensions, including components such as overall institution structure, policies, processes, programming, outreach, direct care for students, and crisis management. Evidence and the context of the campus community can inform and support these initiatives.

Navigating the complex array of evidence-informed initiatives and developing strategies that are appropriate for the specific context, resources, and capacity of various campus communities can be challenging. This toolkit was designed to further facilitate knowledge sharing and capacity building among Alberta PSIs to help achieve the outcomes of the Next Steps program.

This toolkit is made possible by funding under the Government of Alberta's *Next Steps to Improve Post-Secondary Student Mental Health.*

PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

This toolkit was developed by Mount Royal University to understand post-secondary student mental health priority areas within Alberta and identify exemplary mental health and wellness initiatives at Alberta PSIs. This toolkit would not have been possible without the collaboration, support, and engagement from PSIs across Alberta and Healthy Campus Alberta. The information within the case studies is compiled by MRU as described by the participating institutions. Ultimately, the case studies presented are meant to assist Alberta PSIs in the planning and implementation of effective mental health initiatives at their institutions.

The 11 case studies and the toolkit reflect the unique context, priorities, and demographics of Alberta campuses, and facilitate the implementation of promising practices across the province. Aligned with the seven dimensions of the CACUSS & CMHA **Post Secondary Student Mental Health: Guide to a Systemic Approach**[1], the case studies are a resource for a variety of audiences within a post-secondary environment in the planning and implementation of effective initiatives.
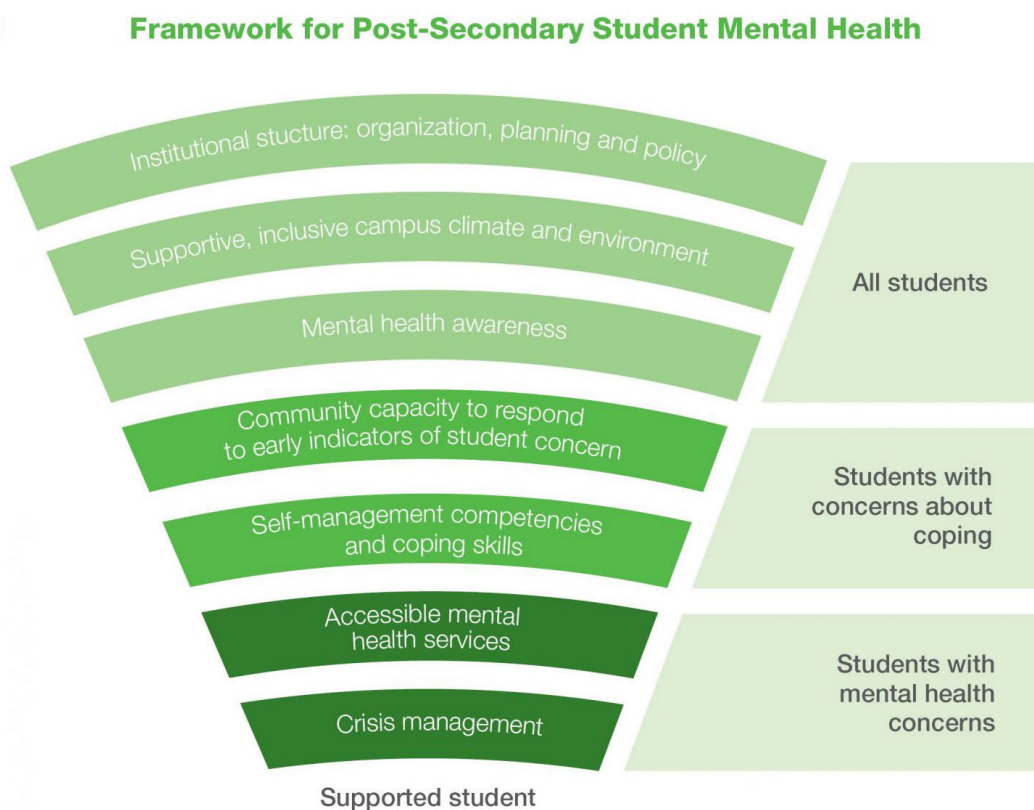
Framework for Post-Secondary Student Mental Health

- Institutional stucture: organization, planning and policy
- Supportive, inclusive campus climate and environment
- Mental health awareness
- Community capacity to respond to early indicators of student concern
- Self-management competencies and coping skills
- Accessible mental health services
- Crisis management

Supported student

All students

Students with concerns about coping

Students with mental health concerns

Figure 1. The dimensions within the CACUSS & CMHA Post Secondary Student Mental Health Guide: Guide to a Systemic Approach (2013).

Who this toolkit is intended for:

- Senior leadership at Alberta PSIs interested in expanding mental health and well-being offerings

- Health, Counselling, and Wellness Services at Alberta PSIs involved in the planning of mental health initiatives

- Mental health professionals and service providers who work with post-secondary students

- Student leaders involved in student government or student organizations.

Purposes of the toolkit:

- To act as a knowledge mobilization tool to share exemplary mental health and well-being initiatives at Alberta PSIs

- To represent institutions of various contexts with initiatives across the seven dimensions of a systemic approach to student mental health

- To support PSIs to develop and implement policies, systems, programs, and initiatives that facilitate mental health promoting organizational environments, mental health promoting communities, mental health care, and system leadership and co-ordination.

GUIDING THEMES

An integral part of the toolkit was the development of guiding themes. These themes constitute "guiding criteria" to which the promising practices are aligned. To identify such themes, a grey literature scan was conducted and included a search for Canadian toolkits and reports which provided recommendations for best practices for mental health initiatives, several of which focused specifically on post-secondary settings. Four key documents identified were:

1. **Healthy Campus Alberta. (2015). Alberta Post-Secondary Mental Health and Addiction Framework.**

2. **Alberta Mental Health Review Committee. (2015). Valuing Mental Health: Letter to Albertans.**

3. **Canadian Association of College & University Students Services and Canadian Mental Health Association. (2013). Post Secondary Student Mental Health: Guide to a Systemic Approach.**

4. **Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health. (2015). Environmental Scan of Promising Practices and Indicators Relevant to Campus Mental Health.**


References

1   Canadian Association of College & University Students Services, & Canadian Mental Health Association. (2013). *Post-secondary student mental health: Guide to a systemic approach.* **https://healthycampuses.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/The-National-Guide.pdf**

The cross-referencing of these foundational documents led to the development of six themes for post-secondary mental health promising practices. These themes are as follows:

INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP

There is "buy-in" and alignment with institutional values from multiple levels of leadership for this initiative. This initiative lends itself to informing and contributing to meaningful health policy development and/or change within the institution.
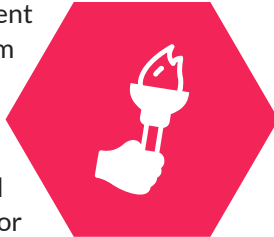
EQUITY, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION

The initiative is developed in consideration of various cultural, social, and socioeconomic groups. It promotes equitable opportunity to be involved; the initiative is used as a means to help reduce stigma and prejudice on campus among those who may be experiencing additional challenges that negatively affect their mental health.
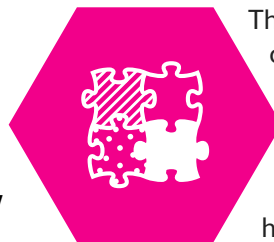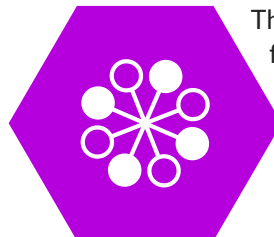
MOBILIZING LOCAL COMMUNITY

There is an effort to engage students, staff, faculty members, and all stakeholders at various developmental stages in this initiative.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY & COLLABORATION

The mental health initiative fosters sustained responsibility and connections between stakeholders.

ACCESS

The initiative accommodates the needs of diverse groups. This may include initiatives that are customizable at varying levels.

EVIDENCE-INFORMED PRACTICE

The mental health initiative is created in consideration of evidence such as needs assessments, research, and student feedback.

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University of Alberta

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MOBILIZING LOCAL COMMUNITY

THE PROMISING PRACTICE

The **Healthy University Strategic Plan (HUSP)** addresses one of three strategies laid out under objective 19 in the University of Alberta's **institutional strategic plan**. Specifically, the HUSP was created to help "develop an integrated, institution-wide health and wellness strategy, which increases the reach and effectiveness of existing health and wellness resources, programs, and services and promotes resilience and work-life balance."[2] By informing priorities of the institution and key policies and procedures on campus, the HUSP has helped to shape

Figure 2. *Promotion for HUSP Consultation at the University of Alberta.*

the rollout of initiatives such as campus sexual violence policies and the University of Alberta suicide prevention framework. The plan is comprised of the following four goals, under which there are a series of objectives:

1. Fostering a healthy working and learning environment for faculty, staff, and students.

2. Acknowledgment of the integration of health and wellness into academic programming.

3. Changes to technology that would reinforce health and wellness.

4. Evaluation of the success of each of the prior goals.

To date, the HUSP steering committee has focused only on the first goal, as per a directive from senior leadership. The development of the HUSP is overseen by a steering committee of three members of university senior leadership: the Vice-Provost & Dean of Students, Vice-Provost & Associate Vice-President (Human Resources) and the Dean of Kinesiology. A working group sits under the steering committee and comprises two representatives from each area of university leadership reflected in the committee, as well as undergraduate and graduate student representatives. The working group later included a Project Manager from Human Resources and a Communications Specialist.

RATIONALE

Prior to the development of the HUSP, the Office of the Dean of Students was acutely aware of there being a prominent

disconnect between traditional mental health supports and other areas of student support. Simultaneously, senior university leadership articulated a need for better efficiency among services. Therefore, the HUSP working group was struck to engage the community, conduct a scan of existing programming, and eventually co-ordinate service provision more efficiently.

PURPOSE

Falling under objective 19 of the institutional strategic plan, the Healthy University Strategic Plan (HUSP) has aided in informing the development of multiple activities on campus. With a specific focus on engaging communities, the HUSP has informed initiatives such as crisis support training, campus social space renovations, a Suicide Prevention Framework, and Sexual Violence Policy and Procedures.
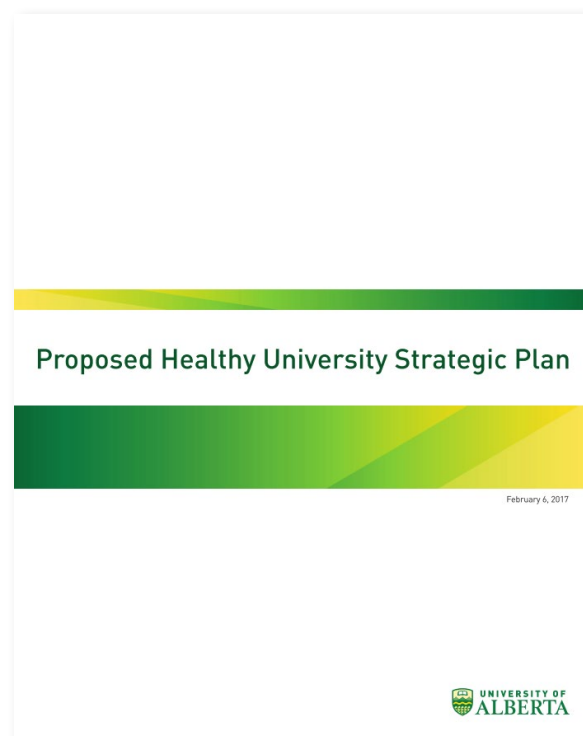

Proposed Healthy University Strategic Plan

February 6, 2017

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Figure 3. Front page of the final iteration of HUSP.

GOALS

1 To foster a healthy working and learning environment for faculty, staff, and students.

2 To introduce a level of accountability for ensuring that the University of Alberta is collectively working on health and wellness issues that are relevant to all community members.

3 To create connections among various groups, and the role they play in the wellbeing of themselves and the immediate community.

4 To acknowledge the need for services and supports that uniquely meet the needs of various groups, while ensuring their voices are heard when shaping programs and services.

IMPLEMENTATION

The development of the HUSP took one and a half years to complete. The goals presented in the HUSP were the result of a year-long community consultation with various groups on campus. The first round was conducted as an in-person consultation on the North, French, and Augustana campuses, solely with service providers. In advance of these consultations, a definition of service provider was drafted and an inventory of service provider contacts

was created. This consultation with service providers and other key governance members happened over the course of three days in January 2016 and was followed by a second round of consultations a few weeks later, with students, staff, and faculty between February and March 2016. These consultations were intentionally timed to be weeks apart so that the data from the service provider consultation could be analyzed and used to inform the consultations with the larger University of Alberta community. The team worked closely with the campus' communication representatives to promote this community consultation. Information was shared by means of email updates for faculty, staff, and students, as well as through lawn signs, social media, and promotions on electronic screens on campus. Additionally, the working group relied heavily on word-of-mouth promotion through specific group channels such as the University of Alberta Students' Union and Graduate Students' Association. This second round of consultations included hour-and-a-half-long sessions that were facilitated as guided conversations. Guiding questions were created in consideration of the principles of "Health Promoting Universities."[3] Once all consultations were complete, key learnings were extracted, synthesized, and used to create the first iteration of the HUSP.

The drafting of the first iteration of the HUSP was followed by a second round of consultations with both service providers and the larger community between October and November 2016. Again, service providers were contacted first and given the opportunity to participate in a gallery walk of the HUSP

and provide feedback. This informed how the consultation with the greater community was shaped. Overall, the working group saw that the majority of participants found the HUSP to be agreeable. Once final refinements had been made, the HUSP was shared with the steering committee, who provided further recommendations. At that point, the working group was prepared to take the HUSP through the governance process beginning in January 2017. Key governance players were contacted and a presentation of the HUSP was conducted for various levels of institutional governance. Dissemination of the final HUSP took place via the website and was marketed at a larger health and wellness breakfast event on the University of Alberta's North Campus.

EVALUATION

One of the four main goals in the HUSP is evaluation of the plan. To date, there has not been sufficient capacity to follow up on this goal, however, various activities that support the objectives of HUSP are regularly evaluated, such as mental health-related training and the provision of health and wellness services for students, faculty, and staff. Intentionally connecting more activities back to HUSP in the future would allow the University of Alberta to look across the HUSP objectives and assess the progress of the originally identified goals.

SUCCESSES

The University of Alberta sees the HUSP as a stimulus for change within the campus community by representing the multitude of voices from students, faculty, and staff. This has resulted in clear objectives and directives that resonate well with the entire campus community. The HUSP has done an excellent job at opening the doors for community conversations that previously were not being had. There are now ongoing conversations about service provision with students, faculty, and staff.

NOTED CHALLENGES

The major challenge of the HUSP is the current capacity to evaluate it and what it has done for the campus community. As mentioned, the University of Alberta looks forward to implementing a strategy for the evaluation of the HUSP in the future.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The University of Alberta is very interested in eventually creating a full-time position and/or unit for whom their primary responsibility would be to meaningfully drive the HUSP forward. Specifically, it would be beneficial to have one person dedicated to evaluation of the HUSP outcomes thus far, and have this person develop a roadmap for working towards the remaining three goals. ●

References

2   University of Alberta. (2016). *For the public good: Institutional strategic plan.* **https://www.ualberta.ca/strategic-plan/index.html**

3   Canadian Health Promoting Campuses. (2015). *Okanagan Charter: An international charter for health promoting universities and colleges.* **https://healthpromotingcampuses.squarespace.com/okanagan-charter**

WELL-BEING LOUNGE

Northern Alberta Institute of Technology

Figure 4. *The outside of NAIT's Well-being Lounge emphasizes the privacy of the space.*

THEMES

MOBILIZING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

ACCESS

EVIDENCE-INFORMED

THE PROMISING PRACTICE

The Well-being Lounge is an on-campus space in which students can unplug and take a break from the hectic nature of their day-to-day life. The space is open during regular building hours and is arranged to maximize individual space for any student who wishes to use the lounge. There are multiple lounge chairs and couches spread throughout the lounge, separated by dividers to facilitate individual space. Additionally, there is dim lighting inside the lounge, and minimal noises from the outside hallway can be heard. When in the

room, students are asked to remain unplugged from technology and to avoid socializing or using the room for studying. Near the entrance, there are wellness resources that students are welcome to take. This lounge began as a pilot program, before permanently becoming a space on campus.

RATIONALE

The Well-being Lounge was the direct result of observations of student habits on campus, data from Students' Association surveys conducted in 2016 and 2018, as well as the National College Health Assessment (NCHA). Prior to the opening of the lounge, staff noticed the sheer number of students that had little other choice than to take naps in poor sleeping conditions — namely on furniture in high-traffic, noisy areas on campus.

In the 2016 Students' Association survey, a nap room was identified as one of the top three requested services on campus. In the 2018 version of the survey, 79.4 per cent of students agreed that a nap room was needed on campus. More recently, sleep was the third largest concern impacting academics for NAIT students. This data corroborated the need for the pilot and eventual permanency of the Well-being Lounge. Although the concept of a nap room showed potential for risk, it was decided that it would be beneficial to create a space in which students could relax and be unplugged.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Well-being Lounge is to present students with a highly accessible space in which they can rest and relax.

GOALS

1 To provide a visible space for students to relax or rest, directly related to a need expressed through NCHA data.

2 To offer a self-directed space that students can visit to find wellness resources.

3 To create a safe space that better accommodates the well-being needs of a commuter campus.

IMPLEMENTATION

Prior to the lounge being created, the Campus Recreation team was already mindful of the need for a wellness lounge for students. In June 2018, an official conversation occurred around the creation of a lounge, and a proposal was assembled for a three-week pilot, set to run from November to December of 2018. In August 2018, Campus Recreation collaborated with a marketing team to begin work on promotion materials, while also reaching out to NAIT's pre-approved furniture vendors to potentially support the space. At the time, NAIT was hoping to spend no money on furniture and was able to negotiate borrowing furniture from one of the vendors for the pilot. Conversations around the Well-being Lounge progressed throughout the semester, and 10 additional stakeholders were recruited: library

services, mental health co-ordinators, student counselling, health services, health and safety services, Edmonton fire prevention specialists, protective services, human resources, and separate unions for students and staff.

In September 2018, promotional materials were finalized, printed, and posted. The subsequent month, furniture was delivered and set up in the acquired space. Before the space could officially open in late November, there was training for all stakeholders who would take part in the monitoring and evaluation processes for the room. Specifically, training focused primarily on the risk and safety of the space, as well as how to collect information on participants' experiences in the lounge. Stakeholders also had to be trained in customer service, since health services and counsellors were optimistic about using the lounge as a referral space.

Reception of the room was incredibly positive during the pilot, leading to the development of a permanent space. Certain items and furniture were either added or removed from the room based on user feedback during the pilot. The space used for the pilot lounge was only booked for the semester during which the pilot ran, however, a discussion with facilities and NAIT's primary space planner resulted in the space becoming permanent for the Well-being Lounge. After a hazard assessment, Campus Recreation was free to design the lounge and determine the hours of operation, with a tentative re-opening of the lounge set for April 2019.

In January 2019, the team began to acquire quotes for purchasing the furniture used

during the pilot, as well as other recommended furniture. The following month, marketing was asked to update promotional materials to let students know about the permanency of the Well-being Lounge, and in April 2019, the wellness lounge officially opened as a permanent drop-in space.

EVALUATION

The Well-being Lounge is now tracked primarily in terms of usage. Due to the lack of a scanner in the lounge's entryway, it is the responsibility of a staff member to regularly visit the room and take a head count of everyone utilizing the space at that time. There are nine time slots a day during which an employee is meant to visit the room. Understanding that an employee is not always available every hour to check on the room, all data collected is transformed into a weighted average and plotted to see growth in traffic over time. The academic year is divided into quarters, for which a weighted average is calculated. For the first half of the 2019/2020 academic year, the Well-being Lounge was visited by 1,349 students. It was discerned that lunch hours (from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.) see the most traffic, but there is a steady flow of students throughout the rest of the day, until the final head count at 4:30 p.m.

During the piloting of the space there was an informal collection of feedback, which included asking students to rank their emotional well-being before and after using the lounge, the extent to which they liked the furniture, and the reasons students were using the room. The pilot revealed that the emotional well-being

of students generally improved after using the room. Likewise, 41 per cent of students were using the room to unplug and relax, while 16 per cent were accessing the room as a quiet space. Qualitative feedback collected reveals that students accessed the room for meditation purposes and as a means to lower anxiety. Additionally, 41 per cent of students used the room for 30 to 60 minutes, and data shows that 50 per cent of students opted to visit the lounge between 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. A total of 148 students were consulted during the pilot phase.

Figure 5. A lounge chair and barrier set up in the Well-being Lounge.

SUCCESSES

NAIT is proud of the fact that students have been given an opportunity to take care of themselves. The room is often used as a quiet, separate space by students who see the benefits of unplugging and taking a break from the busy campus environment. Likewise, this promising practice is successful largely because it was driven by an identified student need.

NOTED CHALLENGES

NAIT overcame more than one challenge in order to create a successful lounge. The largest challenge was related to the cost of furnishing the room. Representatives from NAIT recognize that they were very fortunate that the pilot space was available for permanent use but know this could present a challenge for other institutions where there is a lack of available space. Additionally, engaging with 10 different stakeholders can be challenging, but in this case, resulted in an offering that is cross-utilized and has had rigorous oversight to ensure that nothing was overlooked during development. A final challenge manifested

regarding the safety of students in the space. The space has always been unmonitored. There is no swipe entry, nor are there cameras in the room. This is mitigated by having Campus Recreation staff check in on the room once an hour during the weekdays.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

NAIT has many ideas of how to expand the Well-being Lounge to meet the diverse needs of their students. In consideration of a growing campus, NAIT hopes to create a second Well-being Lounge in another building. There is an understanding that many programs tend to have classes clustered in one building, so multiple locations would be beneficial. As well, implementing a scanner at the lounge's entry to collect traffic information is currently under consideration. To further improve the experience in the current lounge, staff are also exploring the idea to separate the space into sections in which students can try different sensory experiences, such as an ambient or soft light room. ●

UPSTANDERS PROGRAM

University of Calgary
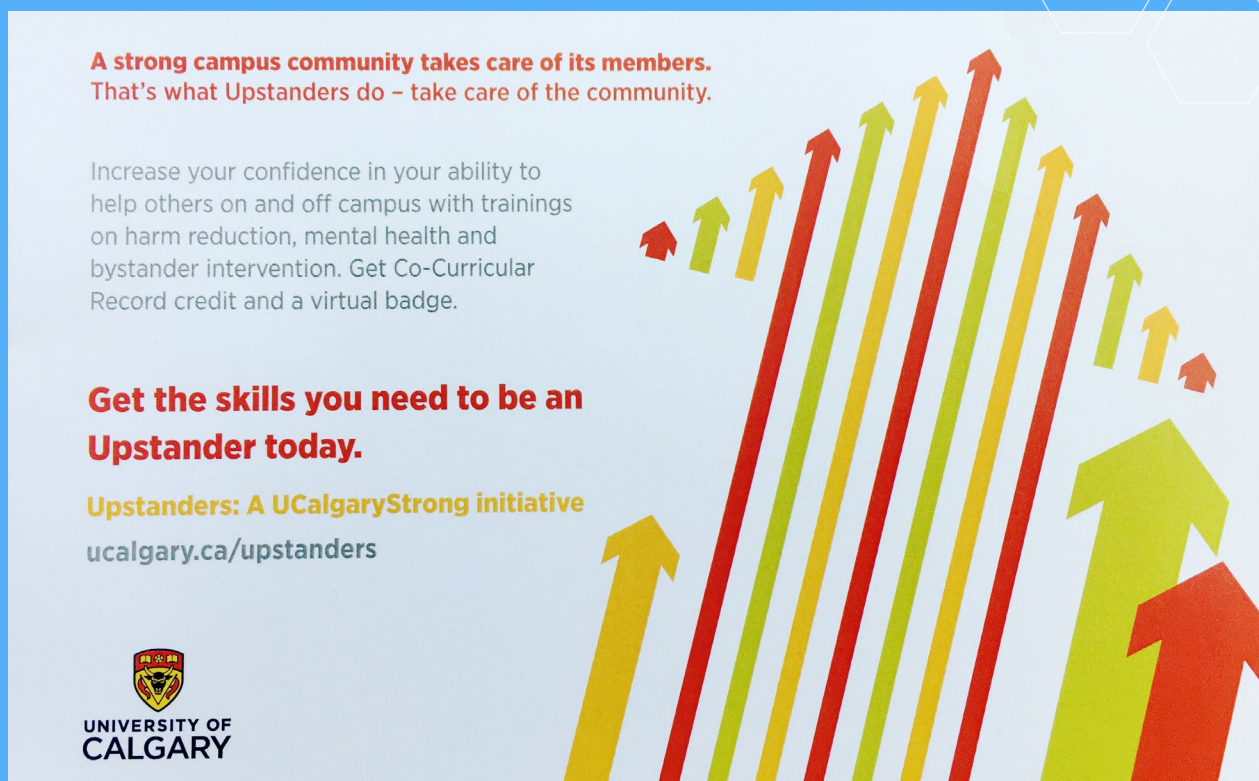
Figure 6. *A postcard used to promote the Upstanders Program.*

THEMES

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY & COLLABORATION

ACCESS

EVIDENCE-INFORMED

THE PROMISING PRACTICE

Upstanders is a multi-workshop program designed to help increase students' confidence in their ability to help others on campus. The program centralizes harm reduction training offerings so that students may gain a comprehensive skill set. These trainings provide mental health education for students while emphasizing the importance of social justice using an anti-oppression approach. When a student decides to be part of

Upstanders, the process of enrolling and completing training is tracked through an enrollment portfolio which is managed by two student staff. Completion of Upstanders requires of 20 hours of training, 16 of which are core harm reduction training, with an added four hours of optional training. The training sessions are organized as follows:

Core trainings/activities:

- Safer Substance Use: Harm Reduction Training
- Bystander Intervention Training
- QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer)
- The Inquiring Mind
- Naloxone Kit Training
- The Helping Skill and the Ethics of Helping
- The Comments Section: Addressing Harassment Online
- Introduce Yourself on the Upstanders D2L Site

Optional trainings/activities:

- Inclusive Event Planning
- Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory
- Conflict Management
- ASIST
- Standard First Aid
- Harm Reduction Volunteering on the Last Day of Classes
- D2L Action/Reflection Activities

Students are given a suggested timeline of a year and a half to complete all training, but

this is flexible. As they complete sessions, students are expected to complete a required introductory reflection component on Desire2Learn (D2L). This promotes online peer engagement within the Upstanders program. Those who complete the requirements receive the recognition of Upstanders on their co-curricular record, a digital **badge** that can be showcased on employment platforms such as LinkedIn, as well as an Upstanders sweater.

Figure 7. The Upstanders LinkedIn badge that students receive upon fulfillment of all Upstanders requirements.

RATIONALE

Mental health, suicide prevention, sexual violence prevention, substance-use education, and harm reduction are priority areas for UCalgary. The rationale behind the development of Upstanders was to centralize training offerings within these areas in a way that would be relevant and meaningful to students. This would allow for comprehensive wellness education and skill development, while aiming to increase student engagement.

PURPOSE

Offered as a co-curricular program, Upstanders consists of mental health awareness, pro-social concepts, and harm reduction-focused bundled training. The bundling of the training turns the collective offerings into a leadership pathway, along which students are able to see

intentional connections between various harm reduction topics, while building connections with staff and peers.

GOALS

1 To create a program that connects values of social action, connection, and efficiency between existing training opportunities.

2 To help students develop practical skills related to harm reduction.

3 To enable students to clarify personal values and ethics.

4 To encourage students to reflect on concepts of stigma, group dynamics, and leadership.

5 To exhibit and promote behaviours to students that advance healthy communities.

IMPLEMENTATION

Conversations for creating Upstanders began in the summer of 2018 among Student Wellness Services and the Student Conduct Office. Together, they decided which training sessions would be bundled and included in Upstanders, and which would be core training. For core training, the team determined what subjects could be classified as harm reduction:

stigma reduction, bystander education, safer substance use, and sexual violence. Currently, there is no bundled training for sexual violence, which is a potential next phase. At that point, other stakeholders who oversaw training sessions were consulted about Upstanders and potential benefits of bundling training in such a way that no substantial extra work would be involved for the facilitators. A proposal for the program was drafted and submitted in November 2018 to senior directors of both Wellness and Student Services.

Upon the approval of the proposal, two student staff were redirected to assist in administrative work for Upstanders, including engaging students at intake, creating their enrollment portfolio, and tracking students' progress through the program. Marketing and advertising was done by professors and through Upstanders postcards. A D2L site for the program was created as a space for connection and reflection (as well as sharing up-to-date information about upcoming sessions and events). Upstanders was piloted in the winter semester of 2019, followed by a post-survey.

EVALUATION

Most of the Upstanders training sessions had existed independently in the past and were already well-established and appreciated. There has been a noted increase in attendance at training sessions since launching the program, as one student participating in Upstanders results in eight training registrations. For example, in the term prior to the start of Upstanders, Bystander Intervention Training was delivered to 16 students; after implementation of

Upstanders the following semester, that number of participants rose to 45. In the semester after, another 49 students participated in the training. Instead of re-creating individual evaluations, the development team conducted a post-survey for all participants after the end of the pilot year. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected using a program called Qualtrics. Anecdotal feedback from a facilitator of multiple wellness workshops had the following to say:

> *What a great group of students! Many of the students in the session knew each other from previous sessions. It's really cool to see the student connections and Upstanders community that is being built. I feel this also led to a deeper level of discussion in the workshop. Also — it is very rare for me to have a workshop this late in the semester that does not have 50 per cent no-show rate. It was amazing to see that every single person who signed up attended. I think these things really speak to the value of this program! And to think it's only just beginning — so excited to see how the program will grow over time!*

As of March 2020, there were 60 students enrolled in the program, which is an increase from 15 that had enrolled by the end of the pilot year. Since the program began, a total of 14 students have finished all the requirements for Upstanders. Another year-end post-survey is being developed for the end of the 2020 academic year.

SUCCESSES

Upstanders has been incredibly successful at harnessing the interest of students to increase the depth and breadth of their learning, and in facilitating connections with one another. Connecting students and staff in a new way on campus has been fruitful, as demonstrated by increased registration for training, compared to when the onus was on students to register themselves. This program has been a successful way to make connections between the various areas of harm reduction.

NOTED CHALLENGES

The main challenge in implementing Upstanders was the promotional aspect. Ultimately, postcards were created to promote Upstanders, while each of the trainings were able to keep their existing individual promotional pieces. Additionally, the team is still working on how to verify the program hours that students report in the post-survey. Certain elements of the program involve students self-reporting, so it is important to put trust in students. The team is open to exploring other ways of tracking completion as the badges earned become of higher value, for example, in the workplace.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The team responsible for Upstanders hopes to continue the development of learning outcomes for the training, as well as increased co-ordination between involved stakeholders. Specifically, there are talks of streamlining tracking and putting more standardized processes in place. This is in anticipation that there will be more stakeholders who will be interested in being included in the Upstanders program as it becomes more popular. ●

LEADERSHIP TO BUILD A MORE INCLUSIVE LGBTQ2S+ ENVIRONMENT

Lakeland College

THEMES

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION

MOBILIZING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP

THE PROMISING PRACTICE

Lakeland College has worked tirelessly to develop an inclusive community for LGBTQ2S+ students. Through the work of a cross-functional committee dedicated to promoting inclusivity on campus, there have been multiple points of engagement with the student population through surveys, collaboration on the Safe Space sticker, and the development of a Pride

Figure 8. LGBTQ2S+ student champion, William Yap, and a Safe Spaces training sticker.

Week. With these events and meaningful engagement opportunities in place, the community further recognized there needed to be a broader understanding of how to engage with LGBTQ2S+ students. Appreciating that building an inclusive campus environment is a shared responsibility of staff and faculty, **Safe Spaces training** was implemented as a means to increase awareness related to LGBTQ2S+ inclusive practices, to gain an understanding of the LGBTQ2S+ world experience and appropriate verbiage, and how to respond when someone is disclosing sensitive information.[4] Lakeland College is proud that there is intention to build an inclusive environment with the holistic perspective of staff, faculty, and students.

RATIONALE

In 2016, there was encouragement from senior college leadership to ensure that campuses were being inclusive and safe spaces for all students. The college was seeing an increase in demand for inclusive college policies, such as a noted increase in name changes at the time. Policies were being drafted and events like Pride Week were being spearheaded by students, however, a persisting challenge was communication of these efforts and the need for more inclusive services to internal and external stakeholders.

Lakeland College realized that education was key in the transition to an overall more inclusive campus. At the time, one of the challenges LGBTQ2S+ students were facing was trying to explain to staff and students why

LGBTQ2S+ Pride mattered. This resulted in the decision to implement additional inclusive events and collaborate with the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) to adapt their approach to Safe Spaces training.

PURPOSE

The cross-functional committee was struck in recognition of the need to build a more inclusive campus. The committee engaged students through the implementation of various Pride events on campus. Safe Spaces Training was adapted for staff and faculty, and designed to promote LGBTQ2S+ safety on campus.

GOALS

1 To create institutional commitment to ensure that campus providers are facilitating safe spaces for the LGBTQ2S+ populations.

2 To orient staff and faculty with appropriate language and training needed to be inclusive of the LGBTQ2S+ community in their service delivery.

3 To create safety around having conversations about and with diverse students.

IMPLEMENTATION

In 2016, Lakeland's Counselling Psychologist was approached by the President of the college with a request to make strides in ensuring that the campuses were inclusive and safe spaces for all students. That year, a cross-functional committee was created, including a number of campus stakeholders such as college leadership, students, faculty, staff, and administration. The committee spent 2016 and 2017 reviewing college policies and procedures in order to implement more gender-neutral language and signage, establish gender-neutral washrooms, and propose other changes. For example, a document was created detailing how to request a legal name change with the school. Additionally, Lakeland's Counselling Psychologist facilitated Teaching Talks on both campuses during the 2016 and 2017 academic years to provide updates to interested staff on the work of the committee and to elicit feedback on the committee's next steps. Staff were also provided with a newsletter detailing myths, stereotypes, and using purposeful language with the LGBTQ2S+ community. At this time, it was determined that more formal training would be appropriate for the upcoming school year.

In changing these policies and procedures, the committee began to explore how they could create safe spaces on campus with knowledgeable people. There were still many changes the campus was hoping to implement at the time, such as "coming out" presentations for the college and surrounding community, but the committee grappled with how to communicate these changes, events, and safe

spaces with internal and external stakeholders. It was decided that education would become the primary focus of the committee. Research led to Tim Ira from NAIT who was conducting Safe Spaces training at the NAIT campus. He graciously connected with the Lakeland committee, sharing information and training with them.

Meanwhile, the committee was in the midst of planning and implementing Lakeland College's first annual Pride Week in April of 2018. Numerous events were held throughout the week that engaged over 200 students on campus. An example of a particularly successful event was the engagement of over 60 campus and community members in a coming out event hosted in collaboration with the LGBTQ+ Society of Lloydminster. In the following school year, the committee's student liaison spearheaded the implementation of an event entitled The Prom You Never Had on campus, which catered to the LGBTQ2S+ campus community.

In May 2019, the first Safe Spaces training was delivered to faculty and staff at Lakeland, co-facilitated by Ira and a LGBTQ2S+ champion on campus — a student named William Yap. Both Ira and Yap worked together to shorten and contextualize the training to the Lakeland culture, which was a benefit of involving Yap. Completion of the training results in the obtainment of a sticker, which Lakeland asks the Safe Space training participants to place on their office doors to identify who has taken the training. The training was hosted twice again in March 2020 for senior leadership, faculty, and staff, and was delivered

to approximately 50 people total. In 2019, Lakeland College also took the initiative to host training events called Creating Inclusive Environments for LGBTQ2S+ Individuals and Families for Lakeland College students, staff, and the surrounding community. That year, the committee also organized the second coming out event in Vermillion with over 100 individuals in attendance.

The committee has continued to branch out and build relationships with champions in the community. In March 2020 Dr. James Makois and Anthony Johnson were invited to the campus to speak about their journeys of coming out and the challenges they faced in post-secondary as intersectional students who identified as First Nations and as part of the LGBTQ2S+ communities.

EVALUATION

There have been various points of evaluation for the multiple events and training held on Lakeland's campuses. The success of most events organized by the committee is measured through attendance and the participation of attendees. Examples of this include high attendance rates at the "coming out" events and inviting students to vote on the Safe Spaces training logo for Lakeland College. Following Safe Spaces training, facilitators provide advice to participants on how to be more outwardly inclusive. This includes faculty or staff members prominently displaying Safe Space stickers in their classroom or office, and publicly listing their pronouns. Lakeland uses these initiatives as a way of informally measuring the uptake of values presented in the training.

Figure 9. William Yap receiving the Leadership Excellence Award for Students for strides to make Lakeland College a more inclusive space.

The facilitators also receive informal, anecdotal feedback post-training. Currently, this anecdotal feedback is used to improve training for future participants. For example, a facilitator recalled the inclusion of the "trans umbrella" in the training in response to questions from participants about appropriate language. Since then, the training has adopted a more intersectional approach. In the future, they hope to supplement the anecdotal feedback with a structured evaluation.

SUCCESSES

Lakeland is thrilled they have been able to embody their value of "leading and learning and putting students in lead." Significant relationship building has happened as the

campus has become a more inclusive space; students have presented on the benefits of inclusivity at other campuses and at local high schools. On campus, it is observed that the campus community is becoming more open to having conversations about their identities and expressing their diversity. There is an increase of support for the campus' Gay Straight Alliance. Local media is also praised by the campus for covering all Pride events and efforts, and increasing awareness in the Lloydminster community.

NOTED CHALLENGES

A noted challenge at Lakeland was overcoming the initial collective mindset of students, faculty, and staff regarding the need for a more inclusive campus. Those that planned Safe Spaces training and Pride Week found themselves in the position of first having to explain why these inclusive measures were in fact necessary. This is a sensitive conversation that was softened by including the voices of those with lived experiences. Another major challenge facing Lakeland is the question of how to measure sustained impact of training and events on a campus with a high turnover rate of graduating students.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Moving forward, the college is in the process of creating a mental health framework which is anticipated to be heavily influenced by the continued interest in meeting LGBTQ2S+ population needs. There will be collaboration between the mental health framework committee and the Lakeland LGBTQ2S+ committee to keep momentum going on

the progress made over the past few years. Lakeland students also look forward to strengthening the presence of LGBTQ2S+ clubs on campus. Holding meetings every month would facilitate consistency, so that students can approach the club for support, according to their own schedule and on their own terms. Lakeland College recognizes the significance of the Post-Secondary Mental Health Grant in supporting training for staff, as well as acting as a catalyst for LGBTQ2S+ efforts on campus. However, the college looks forward to continuing to promote a self-sustaining student committee supported by the student body. ●

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COMMUNITEA

Red Deer College

THEMES

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY & COLLABORATION

EVIDENCE-INFORMED

MOBILIZING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

THE PROMISING PRACTICE

Based on the premise that one conversation can make a difference in the lives of students, Communitea is a peer support program that facilitates building connections between students and Campus Wellness Advocates. It is a designated two hour drop-in tea time that occurs once a week on campus, where students can connect, engage in pre-planned activities, grab a free cup of coffee or tea, and access mental health resources. Held in the Student Association Lounge and at the Donald School of Business (DSB), students attend Communitea on a drop-in basis and can choose the extent to which they engage with others and the activities. Although the program is focused on building connections

Figure 10. Poster promotion for Communitea.

and thereby facilitating positive mental health, there are no constraints around how students spend the two hours. Sensory items and activities such as colouring are provided, but students are welcome to finish homework or simply socialize with their peers. Communitea is adapted from the University of Alberta's Unitea and was developed by Red Deer College's Mental Health Promotion & Education Coordinator.

RATIONALE

Prior to the development of Communitea, staff noticed an increase in students reporting they were feeling lonely or isolated on campus. Despite already having mental health programming on campus, there was an urgent need for an offering that would address loneliness. The college's Mental Health Promotion & Educator Coordinator was responsible for spearheading this project, and through research, discovered the benefits of utilizing a peer support model to connect peers in meaningful ways. A shared social environment can contribute to a sense of belonging, purpose, and self-efficacy, which contributes to positive mental health. Likewise, peer support programs can show students the power of knowing they are not alone in their academic journey. Looking to other campuses for inspiration, Red Deer College connected with the University of Alberta, which facilitates a program called Unitea. Information sharing and the previously conducted research laid the groundwork for Communitea. A particularly important aspect of Communitea is that it was created in consideration of the institution's strategic plan. Specifically, the program is

aligned with two goals related to building community.

PURPOSE

Communitea is a peer-support group that is based on the premise that one conversation can make a difference. It is meant to be a time when students can connect with one another, and Campus Wellness Advocates, thereby contributing to positive mental health and decreased feelings of loneliness on campus.

GOALS

1 Provide access for Red Deer College students with mental health needs to find a path to help them meet their social, health, and educational goals.

2 Increase engagement of Red Deer College students with mental health services through awareness and support.

3 Strive to create a sense of community for Red Deer College students.

4 Connect Red Deer College students to resources and supports on campus.

5 Help Red Deer College students find different ways to get involved on campus.

IMPLEMENTATION

In response to the noted increase in students feeling lonely on campus, the Mental Health Promotion & Education Coordinator took the initiative to find a way to fill this identified need. A scan of the literature revealed that a peer support program would be the most successful type of programming to offer. In addition to reviewing the theory and successes of peer education programs, research was done to understand best practices for implementing peer programs. McGill University's "Peer Program Toolkit" was sourced to gain a preliminary understanding of how to start, co-ordinate, and evaluate peer programs.[5] Hoping to learn from the successes of other campuses, the coordinator learned about Unitea at the University of Alberta. The Mental Health Promotion & Education Coordinator reached out to a contact at the University of Alberta, who shared information regarding the implementation of Unitea at their institution and offered insight into the development of Communitea at RDC. For example, Unitea gifted first-time participants with a travel mug, and Communitea adopted this idea. Equipped with the knowledge of what would work, it was then important to create a program that catered to the specific needs of the Red Deer College community.

From the beginning, it was important to garner insight and build relationships with representatives from other areas of the college, who would become stakeholders in Communitea. This included representation from Residence, the Student Life department, the Students' Association, Alberta Health Services, and the Addiction and Mental Health Promotion Facilitator. Together, this team discussed the logistics of Communitea, including timing and location. Representation from Alberta Health Services was included because Communitea is funded by Alberta Health Services through the Community Helpers Program. The eventual date and time was selected based on data obtained from the Office of the Registrar, to learn when most students were not in classes during the day, and therefore, were more likely to be on campus. Each department contributed considerably to the creation of Communitea – staffing the sessions, helping with promotion, and splitting the costs of required materials. More recently, the Students' Association donated hot water dispensers and cold milk for each session. In return, the Mental Health Promotion & Education Coordinator is mindful of other service schedules when scheduling Communitea, so as not to compete for students' attention. The Marketing and Communication department was also sought

Figure 11. *Tea and other supplies laid out in anticipation of a Communitea session.*

out to develop promotional materials and a specific brand. Currently, Communitea is promoted through a Students' Association agenda, screens around campus, and through posters and postcards. Additionally, Communitea was shared with staff and faculty through an institutional newsletter. Fostering relationships with faculty on campus has resulted in the creation of a PowerPoint presentation that interested faculty can share with their classes. Social media (Facebook and Instagram) is also heavily used as a marketing tool through partnerships with Counselling Services and the Students' Association. The diversity in the marketing approaches was devised intentionally to reach staff, faculty, and students through different methods.

Communitea officially launched in September 2017 and is held over the lunch hour every Tuesday. In preparation for the first day, the team purchased a kettle, tea, cups, a table cloth, and sensory items. As is the case with each subsequent session, there was an abundance of promotion before the session, as well as promotional signs leading students to the Communitea room. Feedback to the team regarding the openness of the space later resulted in moving Communitea to the new Students' Association Lounge upon its opening and extending the drop-in time to two hours. Communitea has since branched out into doing promotion alongside other mental health programming. For example, a table to hand out promotional materials and free coffee and tea was recently set up in collaboration with an Eating Disorder Awareness Week event.

EVALUATION

The success of Communitea is primarily evaluated through attendance numbers and the informal collection of anecdotal feedback. However, Communitea is supported by literature that relays the benefit of using peer support programs to engage students in meaningful ways. Peer educators tend to be very valuable for an institution because they can relate to the experiences of their peers.[6] Moreover, peer education programs often contribute to perpetuating a sense of well-being, belonging, purpose, and self-efficacy for both peer educators and their peers.[7] Self-determination theory suggests that meeting one's needs to build competence, relatedness, and autonomy can also predict psychological well-being.[8] Communitea is facilitated on the main campus approximately twelve times per semester, with an average attendance of 10 students per session. Most of the anecdotal feedback comes from trained students that run the room, as well as students themselves who choose to share feedback during the Communitea hour. Students appear to be very appreciative of the quiet space away from the chaos of academics, and find the time spent at Communitea to be "rejuvenating."

SUCCESSES

Communitea has overall been a very successful endeavor for Red Deer College. This success is largely attributable to the co-ordination and collaboration of other stakeholders, including various departments, the Students' Association, and the Community Helpers Program at Red Deer College. Likewise, the

partnership between the University of Alberta and Red Deer College demonstrates the benefit of knowledge-sharing practices and inter-institutional collaboration.

NOTED CHALLENGES

The largest challenge Red Deer College has faced is maintenance of consistent student attendance. Increasing the drop-in hours to more than once a week would be ideal, but staff capacity is limited. To circumvent this, Red Deer College created a student peer support volunteer opportunity within counselling services. These individuals have mental health and Community Helpers training, and are now able to run Communitea sessions. Hosting Communitea at the Donald School of Business has also resulted in challenges with attendance.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

In consideration of their satellite campuses, Communitea facilitators hope to transition the program to an online platform using Blackboard Ultra, in addition to continuing to facilitate the in-person sessions. They envision this would be offered on a recurring basis in the evenings and led by a staff facilitator. There would be an anonymous sign-in process, with the understanding that students experiencing distress or in immediate need of medical assistance, would have their information shared with the facilitator. The team responsible for Communitea on campus is currently in the process of holding focus groups about this idea. Similarly, they would like to redesign Communitea offered on the DSB campus, or increase accessibility for students to attend Communitea on the main campus.

However, being able to connect with students on their own campuses is the main priority at this moment in time. On the main campus, Communitea looks forward to facilitating partnerships with the Indigenous Student Services department. The two departments are currently discussing potentially hosting a secondary Communitea in a newly acquired space in the Indigenous Students' Centre. ●

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OUTREACH WELLNESS LEADERS PROGRAM

Southern Alberta Institute of Technology

THEMES

MOBILIZING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

ACCESS

EVIDENCE-INFORMED

Figure 12. *The OWLs logo.*

THE PROMISING PRACTICE

The Outreach Wellness Leaders (OWLs) are a group of three to eight student volunteers that are highly involved in mental health promotion initiatives on campus. The program leverages the benefit of engaging the student voice in mental health and is supported by research that demonstrates the importance of peer support programs. Oftentimes these initiatives are facilitated in collaboration with staff, faculty, and other departments. This involves facilitating events and creating mental health resources for dissemination across campus. Examples of these events include

the screening and discussion of the *Happy* movie, the Disconnect to Reconnect campaign, representing SAIT Student Development and Counselling (SDC) at mental health promotion booths, and SDC wellness checks.

OWLs are selected through an online recruitment process and are expected to commit up to five hours per week. Before the

start of the school year, the OWLs are expected to complete training in various dimensions of wellness, including suicide prevention and how to respond to disclosure of sexual violence. The major distinction between OWLs and the Peer Support Workers on campus is that the OWLs are peer educators, specializing in mental health and wellness promotion.

RATIONALE

Prior to the creation of OWLs, SDC was involved in the creation of mental health promotion initiatives and found there was limited capacity to deliver content as intended. The idea that led to the development of the OWLs program was to have a student group dedicated to delivering this content, while leveraging the benefits of student engagement through peers. Further research on peer support as a best practice supported SAIT's interest in such a peer model.

PURPOSE

The OWLs program leverages the noted success of peer education to share information regarding mental health resources for students, staff, and faculty, thereby continuing conversations regarding mental health from a peer education perspective.

Figure 13. The OWLs team wearing their sweaters with the distinctive OWLs logo.

GOALS

1 To mobilize students and leverage peer interaction to effectively share mental health promotion initiatives on campus.

2 To create a program that promotes the multiple facets of health in a way that students find relatable and can understand.

3 To facilitate leadership opportunities by involving students in the development and creation of programming on campus.

IMPLEMENTATION

Prior to launching OWLs in September 2018, counsellors within SDC were trying to navigate delivering important mental health resources with limited capacity. Research was conducted into leveraging peer support programs before SAIT connected with the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) regarding their OWLs program. NAIT was able to share information regarding program development, implementation, and evaluation strategies. Once funding was obtained, SDC began devising an implementation plan.

Recruitment for OWLs was conducted through the SAIT My Career Hub, which is

an online platform where jobs and volunteer opportunities are consistently posted. Additionally, there were emails sent to other SAIT departments who work closely with students once the posting on the SAIT My Career Hub was live. At the time, there was a preference for students to meet specific criteria, including academic criteria, having successfully completed at least one semester at SAIT or having previous post-secondary experience, and an interest in the topics of mental health and well-being. As a part of the application process, students were asked to submit a resumé. Interviews with candidates were held with staff from SDC before the final team was selected. In August 2018, the OWLs were trained in a day and a half on various dimensions of wellness, SAIT's values, self-care, and other health promotion topics. SAIT Residence Advisors and SAIT Students' Association Peer Support Workers joined the OWLs for the general wellness training components.

The OWLs and OWL Facilitator have weekly group training and supervision meetings to discuss upcoming initiatives and brainstorm new resources or events based on interest. On occasion these meetings are used as dedicated time for the OWLs to pilot new online resources, as per the request of counsellors. These meetings are also a time of reflection for the OWLs to give feedback about a particular offering and discuss future improvements.

Post launch, the OWLs were permitted to create their own logo to showcase on campus. This was a key step in ensuring that events were branded as OWLs initiatives

and to gain more recognition on campus. This logo was printed on all OWLs resources and is the logo printed on the uniforms that OWLs are given and asked to wear during outreach. Simultaneously, the communications department has since published a number of articles about the OWLs on front-facing websites.

EVALUATION

Most of the evaluation components of the OWLs program focus on the structure of the program. Post-training in August, OWLs are asked to complete a survey regarding their level of interest in the training facilitators' topics and whether the content has increased their confidence in speaking about that particular subject. At the end of the academic year the OWLs are asked to complete another survey which asks them to reflect on the past year and share examples of their growth as a result of the program and ideas on how it can be improved in subsequent years. In regards to content delivered by OWLs, there is an opportunity to develop the initiatives during the weekly meetings and then debrief after an event has taken place. In preparation for the mental health promotion initiatives, counsellors are invited to the weekly OWLs meetings to train the OWLs on the rationale, key messaging, and tools they will be promoting, to ensure they are equipped to deliver the content. OWLs record metrics from each event, such as event attendance.

SUCCESSES

The OWLs Facilitator and SDC team are most proud of creating an opportunity to

meaningfully engage with students. The creation of the OWLs program has increased the innovation of health promotion and mental health outreach on campus. For example, the OWLs have been successful at engaging students in conversations by approaching them at tables on campus. This is better received than when implemented by a staff member. Counsellors will often be present or will collaborate with the OWLs at specific events, which has increased their ability to meaningfully engage with students.

NOTED CHALLENGES

One of the challenges the OWLs program faced was clarifying the differences between the roles of the OWLs versus other student leader groups on campus in the broader SAIT community. Logistically, the sustainability of the program is a recurring challenge because of high turnover of graduating students and condensed semesters at SAIT. Most students complete their academic programs in two years, and their capstone projects and practicum requirements can impact commitment to OWLs partway through their role. This poses a particular challenge when trying to recruit more senior students who have experience with the campus.

Another challenge to the sustainability of such a program is that the OWLs are currently paid hourly for their time. Moving forward, SAIT may need to change this role into a volunteer role where students would be able to obtain a co-curricular record for their contribution.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

SAIT's vision for the OWLs is to become integral members in all the mental health education and outreach programming in which SAIT departments engage. This includes collaborating with the various departments to offer a holistic, balanced approach to positive mental health and well-being to all SAIT students. In the future, the creator of the program hopes that the OWLs can take more of a leadership role in the development and implementation of events. Currently, OWLs primarily support the health promotion endeavours identified by staff, however, there are immense benefits in encouraging the OWLs to spearhead their own initiatives based on their interests and what they are hearing from students. ●

PEER HEALTH EDUCATION TEAM

MacEwan University

Figure 14. A PHET volunteer interacting with students at a mental health promotion display.

THEMES

MOBILIZING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

EVIDENCE-INFORMED

ACCESS

THE PROMISING PRACTICE

The MacEwan University's Peer Health Education Team **(PHET)** is a team of seven student volunteer Peer Health Educators on campus that work to create and deliver mental health-focused health promotion offerings. Planning for the PHET began in 2017/2018, and content is created exclusively by students, using credible resources that have been vetted by the health and wellness staff at MacEwan

University. This is done to ensure students are creating relevant and informative offerings that appeal to the student perspective. The program began as a paid student opportunity in the 2018/2019 school year but transitioned to a volunteer-based program for the 2019/2020 academic year.

Throughout the year, the PHET engages MacEwan University's student population through facilitating educational table displays and other wellness activities in multiple accessible locations on campus. Each PHET member is expected to commit to volunteering five hours per week, and team meetings are held with the program co-ordinator as a means of support and to confirm that the program is running as intended. The PHET focuses on creating and sharing content built on existing campus resources that also meets students where they are at, using a non-judgemental and inclusive approach.

RATIONALE

The PHET was created at MacEwan University after a review of the needs of their student population, informed by their 2016 National College Health Assessment (NCHA) data. There was recognition that MacEwan University needed to be creating health and wellness content for students that was accessible and relevant to the student experience. As part of a needs assessment to identify best practices for health promotion strategies, an environmental scan and literature scan were conducted. Research revealed the existence of multiple peer health education teams across North America, as well

as the benefit of using students to create and deliver health and wellness content to the rest of the student population.

PURPOSE

The PHET program is created for students by students in order to maximize the benefits of peer health models when sharing health information and resources with students.

GOALS

1 To assemble a group of peer health educators to facilitate discussions and experiences regarding wellness topics.

2 To leverage the benefit of implementing a peer health model and having peers speak to peers.

3 To create a system that ensures MacEwan University wellness offerings are relevant to the target student population.

4 To provide sustainable health promotion programming.

IMPLEMENTATION

Based on the success of the creation of MacEwan University's myHealth, the university realized that the health and wellness

content being created could be better shared with students in a way that was more relevant and accessible. In 2016 an environmental scan was conducted of other institutions in North America, specific to peer health education teams. The University of Toronto, University of Manitoba, and University of British Columbia were consulted in relation to how their peer health education teams were developed. All those contacted graciously shared considerations and guidance for setting up a similar program at MacEwan University. This involved the sharing of a training program, program handbooks, and webinars for how to create a peer health team. After additional research on the sustainability of a PHET, MacEwan University was excited about the prospect of creating their team.

Early on, there was an intent to involve students in the creation of the PHET. Over the summer of 2018, two students were hired under the title of Summer Peer Health Educators. They spent the summer creating a structure for the program, developing PHET training, and creating health and wellness content for the academic year. Part of their role involved reviewing NCHA results to ensure that content being created was relevant to students. There was increased emphasis on bringing a mental health perspective to all content. Additionally, rather than create brochures and lectures, the hired students were encouraged to create handouts and structured activities using credible information. It was decided that content delivery would be aligned in relation to the student life cycle. At the time, the program co-ordinator was also receiving feedback from Wellness and Psychological Services regarding what they saw students struggling with most on campus. This informed the direction and creation of new offerings and strategies for the PHET.

In summer 2018, recruitment began for the PHET. Recruitment was done primarily online, through social media, and posting the position on MacEwan University's career/job posting page. A requirement for the position was that students had to be in at least the second year of their program. After holding group interviews, five students were hired, each expected to commit 10 hours per week.

When the 2019 NCHA was released, third year nursing students completing their community rotation course requirement over the summer
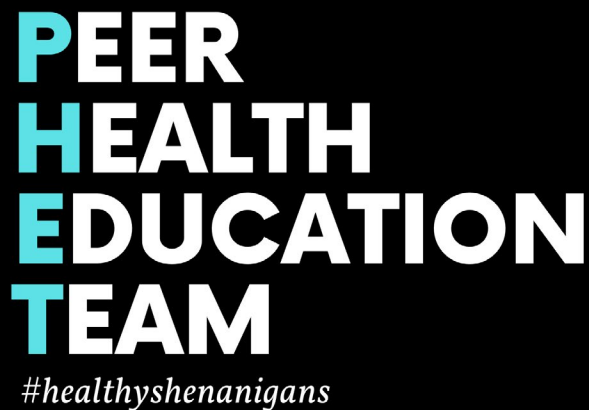

Figure 15. The Peer Health Education Team logo.

of 2019 created new resources, ensuring that information being disseminated the following year by the PHET continued to be relevant to the student population. In order to ensure that the program remains sustainable, the PHET transitioned to a volunteer program for the 2019/2020 academic year. Recruitment efforts were increased by posting the position on volunteer boards and through the use of posters and promotions on campus. All PHET communication is reviewed to ensure it meets accessibility and institutional design guidelines.

EVALUATION

There are multiple ways in which the PHET is evaluated. Each PHET member is expected to complete training upon commencement of the role. Post training, the PHET members have opportunities to provide feedback on their confidence with key skills and on what topics they hope to gain more training. At this time, PHET members are asked to set short, medium, and long-term goals for themselves in the program.

For PHET programming, students, staff, and faculty are asked to provide feedback to the PHET at different events and activities. A feedback form is used to capture information on demographics of participants and their level of interest in the event and mental health topics. At the end of each event, the PHET members collaboratively complete an event debrief form. Usually an average of 15 feedback forms are completed per session, but larger events in high-traffic areas will collect more feedback than smaller-scale events. Otherwise, attendance is tracked at each event,

as well as how much "swag" is handed out and the number of invitations the PHET receives to special events on campus. These forms are entered into a spreadsheet that is managed by the PHET co-ordinator. Feedback is often very positive, and students enjoy many of the larger activities that PHET facilitates, such as setting up colouring spaces on campus. Additionally, students suggest more frequent offerings on topics such as stress and time management.

SUCCESSES

A very obvious success for the PHET has been relationship building between students in recognition that there is power in seeing that others share similar experiences. There has also been a great effort to connect the MacEwan University community to external stakeholders. The Eating Disorder Support Network of Alberta, the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, the United Way, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Camp Firefly, the Family Centre, and local psychological agencies have all since collaborated with the PHET on the creation and implementation of initiatives.

NOTED CHALLENGES

Recruitment for the PHET was initially a challenge but was explained by the infancy of the program and the confusion of how to differentiate between PHET and another peer education team on campus at the time. Additionally, it was important to develop an appropriate communication strategy to engage students. There was a considerable amount of time spent creating a communication strategy that would meet students where they

are at, while navigating and complying with institutional procedures.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Future development of the PHET at MacEwan University is envisioned as the implementation of different 'streams' to divide students based on their interests. There is interest in recruiting more students to increase programming and offerings, such as facilitating activities in classes. For this upcoming year, the PHET co-ordinator hopes to implement an exit interview for all PHET volunteers to promote reflection of growth within their roles, as well as how they are using and applying skills learned from the PHET into their everyday lives. There is also interest in streamlining training with other leadership opportunities on campus to foster building connections between programs and ultimately offer more comprehensive training. ●

AT-RISK GATEKEEPER TRAINING

Southern Alberta Institute of Technology

BUILD REAL-LIFE SKILLS ON A VIRTUAL CAMPUS
Assume the role of a student and learn about mental health by interacting with four virtual students and talk with one virtual student in distress. Try different approaches to see what works best.

CONVERSATION MENU

USERS PLAY VIRTUAL PEER

VIRTUAL STUDENT

VIRTUAL COACH

Figure 16. Screenshot of the student version of gatekeeper training. © 2010 Kognito Interactive.[9]

THEMES

MOBILIZING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

EVIDENCE-INFORMED

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY & COLLABORATION

THE PROMISING PRACTICE

At-Risk gatekeeper training is an external mental health training program created by **Kognito** that teaches users how to appropriately identify and engage in difficult conversations, and then refer a student with a mental health concern to on-campus counselling resources. It consists of an online simulation and can be used by the entire campus population at any time with an institutional licence. Employees are presented

with slightly different training than students. For employees (staff and faculty), there is a training session that teaches boundaries and how to have difficult conversations. This is followed by an interactive simulation in which the user is coached on how to engage in difficult conversations with three emotionally responsive student avatars. For students, the training is the same, however, the simulation section coaches the user on how to have difficult conversations with four emotionally responsive "friend" avatars. During the simulations for both employees and students, users are coached to select the most appropriate responses to the avatar based on the context of the conversation. If the user chooses to respond in a manner that is not sensitive or in keeping with the teachings, the training explains why that response is not the most appropriate. At the end of the training, the simulation is summarized and a reference sheet is provided that gives an overview of the training, a summary of key mental health takeaways, and an institution-specific list of appropriate mental health and community resources.

The employee version of gatekeeper training is meant to be 30 to 40 minutes in length, and is followed by a 25-question survey. The student version of the training is approximately 30 minutes long. Each user that completes the training is able to print a certificate of completion.

RATIONALE

The necessity for gatekeeper training at SAIT was realized when employees began to inquire about the availability of additional mental health training on campus. At the time, SAIT was hosting other forms of mental health training for employees, however, these trainings did not give the opportunity to apply the concepts through role play. There was an understanding of the benefit of being able to practise and apply teachings in regards to uptake of those learned skills. During an attempt by SAIT to develop such a training, they came across gatekeeper training, which had all the identified components.

Additionally, SAIT's National College Health Assessment (NCHA) 2019 results showed there were fewer students aware of counselling services on campus than there were students that were interested in counselling. One of the top five concerns highlighted was that students wanted more information on how to help others. This indicated to SAIT that there were more students experiencing mental health concerns
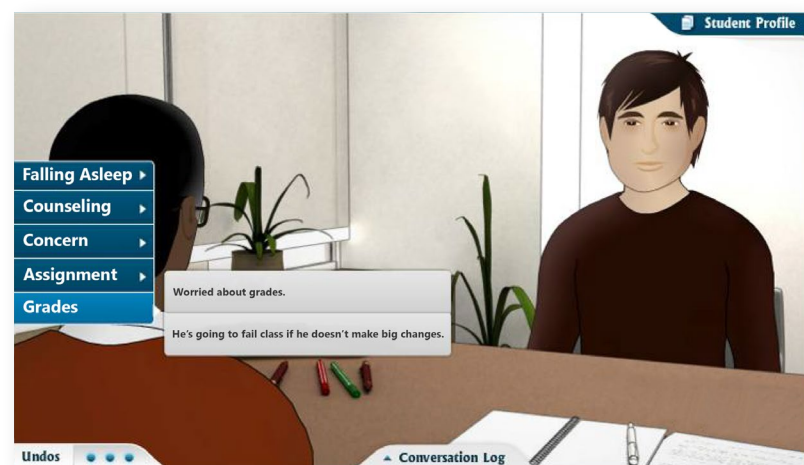

Figure 17. Screenshot of the instructor/staff version of gatekeeper training. © 2010 Kognito Interactive.[10]

than were visiting counselling, and that there was a need to train students and instructors on how to approach and refer students.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the online training is to help students, staff, and faculty to identify students with a mental health concern, be more confident when engaging those students in difficult discussions, and refer those students appropriately to resources.

GOALS

1 To equip students, staff, and faculty with the tools to identify, approach, and refer students/peers with mental health concerns.

2 To provide a standard model of training on how to talk about mental health with students and how to refer them to resources as appropriate.

3 To provide a tool that empowers and improves the confidence of staff and faculty to speak with students about mental health.

IMPLEMENTATION

Gatekeeper training has been offered at SAIT for approximately eight years to date. The licence for the training includes access to the

simulation training, a pre- and post-training survey, as well as a guide for implementing the training on any campus. Upon purchase of the licence, SAIT made the tool available online and facilitated a series of in-person faculty trainings. Participants were impressed, resulting in uptake of the training that was promoted by the then Dean of Information and Communications Technology. Since that time, monthly gatekeeper training sessions have been held in computer labs across campus in addition to being available online 24/7.

The in-person training is tailored to staff and faculty or students and includes an overview of mental health and the mental health continuum. Following the brief presentation, participants log into and complete the gatekeeper online simulation, followed by a brief group discussion. In terms of communications, the online simulation is available on the SAIT employee intranet, and the student version is accessed through the sait.ca website. Additionally, the training has been made mandatory for some departments (e.g., Learner Services). SAIT is exploring the potential to make the training a mandatory part of new employee onboarding. A student version of the gatekeeper training was purchased prior to the start of the 2018 academic year. SAIT hopes to continue to market it to the student population for usage beyond peer leader groups on campus.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of gatekeeper training is primarily done through the pre- and post-training surveys built into the gatekeeper program.

The questions asked in these surveys align well with the types of information required by the Post-Secondary Student Mental Health Grant Reports. Kognito sends each user a follow-up email 60 days after a user has completed the training, but there is an attrition rate for completion of the surveys of about 50 per cent. However, users are able to re-access the training at any time after an initial completion. SAIT has seen that some employees choose to re-familiarize themselves with the training at the beginning of the fall semester. Historically, the employee surveys have seen users report high confidence in talking to students in the pre-survey. However, now that the value of the tool has been acknowledged, there is a larger gap between pre- and post-scores, showing that the training has increased confidence of users to have difficult conversations with students. The employee training and survey now has a completion rate of 70 per cent.

Kognito also shares a monthly engagement summary, which condenses and collates all the survey responses specific to SAIT, including captured qualitative feedback. For example, a report from March 2020 shows that 81.3 per cent of employee users (n=48) would rate their ability to recognize when a student's behaviour is a sign of psychological distress as high or very high. The same report shares that as a result of the training, 74.5 per cent of student participants (n=47) can recognize when a fellow student is experiencing signs of psychological distress. For both employees and students, the recommendation rate for this tool exceeds 95 per cent. Between 2018 and 2020, 68 employees and 56 students have completed gatekeeper training.

In terms of the monthly group gatekeeper trainings, SAIT also conducts their own pre- and post-training evaluation in order to capture information on whether the training was useful and on the quality of the presenter. All training is conducted online, but SAIT uses the monthly group training to gather its own feedback that is not captured in the Kognito evaluations.

SUCCESSES

SAIT is proud to have implemented training that has increased the confidence of students, faculty, and staff to identify students of concern, engage in conversations with these students, and know how to refer these students to counselling services. The training has been praised by staff and faculty for setting boundaries and helping with the recognition of when to involve a counsellor. At the same time, the training helps ease worries that staff or faculty may have regarding how to have difficult conversations without assuming a counselling role. Finally, SAIT has also praised the coaching component of the training as it allows the user to apply the teachings. This has overall contributed to a more mentally aware campus environment and community.

NOTED CHALLENGES

One of the initial challenges of the training was gathering buy-in from various stakeholders. Gatekeeper training comprises a 30- to 40-minute training session, followed by a 25-question survey. Such a large time commitment has proven to be challenging for faculty given multiple demands. With competing departmental commitments, it took longer than anticipated to get more consistent

uptake of gatekeeper training among staff and faculty. However, more managers have begun to see the value of the training and have made it mandatory for their groups.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

With the recent securing of the At-Risk gatekeeper licence for students, there has been an uptake of the training for campus student leaders (e.g., Outreach and Wellness Leaders, SAIT Residence Advisors, and Peer Support Workers). SAIT hopes to encourage increased use of the training to the larger student population. ●

References

9, 10   Kognito Interactive. (2010). *At-risk gatekeeper training simulations* [Photograph]. New York. NY.

ACCESS OPEN MINDS

University of Alberta

Figure 18. *Inside of the ACCESS Open Minds drop-in space.*

THEMES

EVIDENCE-INFORMED

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY & COLLABORATION

MOBILIZING LOCAL COMMUNITY

THE PROMISING PRACTICE

ACCESS Open Minds is a **national research project** originating from the Douglas College at McGill University as a means to fundamentally change how youth mental health services are provided. The project ultimately seeks to provide high-quality mental health support in a timely manner to meet the range of mental health needs an individual may have. The service has been constructed in partnership with students to ensure that the range of services meet their needs. The resources developed are not meant

to be solely clinical and can include the referral of youth to a range of social supports, such as financial, food security, social services, and/or housing supports. Recognition of the need for such varied and non-traditional supports emphasizes the need for building students' practical competence in resilience skills from a holistic perspective. These skills help not only during transition to post-secondary but offer life skills beyond PSI to navigate available support within the greater community. The University of Alberta has been a contributor to this project since 2015 with the research project coming to a close in September 2020. After September, the service will continue to operate and is currently being expanded. The University of Alberta first began the project by striking an ACCESS steering committee comprised of students, service providers and campus community stakeholders. This committee began its work by creating a virtual hub for student mental health and social support resources. The steering committee has since transformed this virtual vision into a drop-in centre staffed by two **Community Broker** Social Workers and a Research Assistant to help connect students to various services on campus. This is a welcoming, casual, drop-in space where students are able to study, connect with others, have tea or coffee, and access the Community Brokers, who possess a clinical social work background. The intent of the broker role is to foster non-clinical mental health relationships in partnership with the students. These Community Brokers are the first point of contact for students. They assess student needs using a mental health and social wellness protocol (prescribed by the National Research Team) and create a care

plan for the student, including bridging them to appropriate internal and external supports. These supports will help the student learn a holistic skill set of coping and resilience that will allow them to manage the demands of student life and beyond. Simultaneously, the student will become more confident in their ability to cope with stressors and to self-identify when to access professional mental health care if required. Additionally, the ACCESS Open Minds Team has worked with the campus ACCESS Network to develop a tool called the Access Network Wellness Assessment. This assessment tool is informed by validated assessment tools and is intended for campus partners to use in assessing the needs of students and informing care plans and referrals.

RATIONALE

The University of Alberta was fortunate to have been approached to participate in the ACCESS Open Minds national research project. The decision to join the project was influenced by the identified challenges students had navigating complex campus and community mental health services. The University of Alberta saw ACCESS Open Minds as an innovative opportunity with particular focus on engaging their students — referred to as youth in the national project — in decision-making and breaking down silos in student support services. Students are co-creators of the ACCESS Open Minds model, moving beyond consultation to assist in the development of contextually relevant mental health supports for the campus community. The decision to join the national project was also influenced by

the emphasis for evidence-informed service delivery practices. Many of the tools that ACCESS Open Minds provided to participating sites were heavily researched.

PURPOSE

ACCESS Open Minds is meant to provide high-quality mental health support in a timely manner and meet the range of resources and mental health needs an individual may have. This involves working with students to identify their needs and connect them to appropriate resources in a timely fashion. These resources are not all meant to be clinical and can include other systemic supports, such as housing services, for example. ACCESS Open Minds is meant to support a youth on their journey.

Figure 19. The ACCESS Open Minds Space from various angles.

GOALS

The ACCESS Open Minds Service Framework was developed by the ACCESS Open Minds National Network, and aims to mitigate where services usually fail youth and their families in their time of need. The ACCESS Open Minds Service Framework has the following parts:

1 Early Identification: youth in need get help as soon as possible; youth and families know where they can get help

2 Rapid Access: help is offered right away & can be accessed through multiple ways (walk-in, phone, email)

3 Appropriate Care: youth and their families are connected to the right services for them and are fully supported until they receive the right care

4 Services for anyone 11-25: no age cut-offs at 18

5 Youth and Family Engagement: youth and families/carers are engaged in the design of services and are partners in their own care

6 Continuous Evaluation: evaluation is integrated into services to understand their impact, respond to community needs, and to inform return on investment

IMPLEMENTATION

After signing on as a contributor to the national ACCESS project, the University of Alberta was interested in focusing on the youth hub model. The national project encouraged relationship building with families, Indigenous communities, and youth. As such, a working group for each of these groups was struck with the intention of working alongside clinicians in the development of this hub. In the case of the University of Alberta, the definition of family was changed to "carer" in consideration of how varied the definition of a family can be on a university campus (e.g., Residence Association, Indigenous Elders, etc.). Additionally, rather than create a new Indigenous working group, the University of Alberta chose to liaise with the First Peoples House on campus. These working groups were accountable to the campus ACCESS Open Minds steering committee, which was responsible for communication with the national project. Each of the working groups had representatives who also had a seat on the steering committee. Originally, the vision for the youth hub took the form of a virtual online meeting space, as the steering committee was aware that students already had numerous in-person gathering spaces on campus. That vision required extensive consultation with various student and service provider stakeholders on campus. Therefore, another working group was struck, which consisted of representatives from support services, residence, and chaplain services. This working group, along with the steering committee, worked to identify the needs of students and service providers, and determine how the ACCESS Open Minds model would address those needs to create a seamless

approach for students who were unsure where to go for help. With time, other working groups were formed to address related projects. For example, one working group was tasked with researching the implementation of an online resiliency tool, while another was struck to develop standards for a potential mentorship program in the university.

By the end of year two, consultation and knowledge sharing with the national project resulted in the transformation of the vision of the virtual hub into a physical social hub. By this time, the university was ready to hire its first community broker social worker. At the beginning of year three, the steering committee focused on building relationships with clinicians and talking about the benefits of ACCESS Open Minds. Shortly afterward, a second community broker was hired and the team began to seek out a physical space. It was important that the space was located near other campus clinical and social support services for ease of continued relationship building and student referral. The ACCESS Open Minds Youth Council was critical in the development of the space in order to contextualize it and the model for the University of Alberta's student population.

EVALUATION

There are a few sources of evaluation for the ACCESS Safe Space. Metrics, such as how students heard about the service, are tracked. The Community Brokers use the same electronic records system as University of Alberta's counselling department, which facilitates a seamless experience for students

accessing counselling and the ACCESS team. Likewise, there are a variety of psychosocial assessments students are asked to complete over time with regards to assessing initial needs, services, and progress in support. Using the same system as the counselling department eases information sharing protocols and lessens the navigation challenges of students accessing multiple services. Building such relationships has shown ACCESS Open Minds to be successful in supporting students beyond just mental health.[11]

In terms of the ACCESS steering committee, the different committees and working groups introduce varying levels of accountability. Working groups are expected to report regular project updates to the steering committee, whereas the committee reports to the national ACCESS program and the Dean of Students. When the working groups were dissolved after their work wrapped up, the steering committee and ACCESS Open Minds National Youth Council became the major liaison between service providers and the national project. After the national project ends, the university intends for the Youth Council and service providers to continue to communicate for assessment purposes. What's more, the University of Alberta ACCESS Open Minds service will continue with an expansion of service currently underway in the summer of 2020.

SUCCESSES

The University of Alberta believes that the success of ACCESS Open Minds is in its ability to improve mental health support for the community. Most students who use ACCESS

Open Minds are able to access services within 48 to 72 hours of reaching out for support. ACCESS Open Minds is able to identify the complex needs of students that would extend psychological and social support. Due to the inter-departmental collaboration, ACCESS Open Minds has facilitated the breaking down of silos and barriers between traditional (e.g., clinical) and non-traditional mental health supports and services. Students are now being referred to service they may not have previously accessed, as well as being connected to non-mental health resources. This collaborative approach has been a critical step forward in efforts to decrease vulnerability to mental health issues and ensure that students have access to supports that help build effective coping mechanisms and resilience to manage the demands of their unique journey.

NOTED CHALLENGES

The most notable challenge that the University of Alberta had to overcome was garnering the buy-in of campus mental health clinicians. Prior to ACCESS Open Minds, there were clinical areas of support that were operating at full capacity and predicated on traditional clinical models of care. The introduction of the ACCESS Open Minds model initially involved challenging conversations with clinicians about students' perception of the lack of accessible services and the value in co-creating mental health services with students. These conversations were especially challenging as they involved working with health professionals to collaborate with others to co-care for clients. However, these challenges began to give way to close collaboration and

a fundamental shift in mindset as clinicians were introduced to the model and began to see its significant impact on the quality of care provided to students.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

As the national funding comes to an end in September 2020, the University of Alberta has an opportunity to build upon and further contextualize ACCESS Open Minds for the campus. This involves the creation and utilization of tools from the national team that have been successful with the campus population, while discarding those assessments that have not proven to be successful or relevant. The University of Alberta is interested in expanding the ACCESS Open Minds model on campus. The campus envisions an expanded space in which students can drop in to continue conversations with the Community Brokers, but can also drop in for a snack, to participate in a workshop, or complete homework. While students may not access the space for help-seeking purposes, the wrap-around nature of the space makes reaching out for support more readily accessible. Long-term, the university hopes to expand ACCESS to connect students across all student services (e.g., mental health, academic, social, etc.). The ACCESS Open Minds Safe Space would become a hub students can visit in order to be connected to the services they need and mitigate the confusion of navigating multiple services. Although a student might not know exactly which services they need, the job of ACCESS would be to determine their situation and redirect the student appropriately. ●

References

11   Vallianatos, H., Friese, K., Perez, J. M., Slessor, J., Thind, R., Dunn, J., . . . Shah, J. L. (2019). ACCESS Open Minds at the University of Alberta: Transforming student mental health services in a large Canadian post-secondary educational institution. *Early Intervention in Psychiatry*, *13*(S1), 56-64. https://doi.org/10.1111/eip.12819

LGBTQ2S+ STUDENT CONSULTATION & SERVICE RESPONSE

Mount Royal University

THEMES

ACCESS

EVIDENCE-INFORMED

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION

THE PROMISING PRACTICE

To inform positive change within Wellness Services, an in-person consultation was conducted with LGBTQ2S+ students on campus as an opportunity to assess the needs for more inclusive, responsive, and appropriate services. This needs assessment was a collaborative effort, co-developed and hosted by Mount Royal University's Wellness Services and the Student Association's Pride Centre.

WELLNESS SERVICES is committed to ensuring our **services and programs are inclusive** for **LGBTQ2+ Individuals**

Hello my pronouns are:

Activated a pronoun preference question on the demographic form

Held a focus group within the Pride Centre to understand facilitators and barriers to well-being among LGBTQ2+ individuals

Facilitated the inclusion of student voices on AHS' Provincial Advisory Council focused on healthcare delivery and services for LGBTQ2+ individuals

mru.ca/**wellness**

We want to hear from you on how we can continue to improve our services and programs

Monday, November 5 | 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Drop in to the new Pride Centre to share your thoughts

MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY 1910

Figure 20. The promotion created and disseminated for the LGBTQ2S+ student consultation in the Pride Centre.

RATIONALE

The interest in creating a consultation with LGBTQ2S+ students resulted from feedback from an institutional well-being survey and a subsequent consultation conducted in 2017. Noting specific concerns regarding service provision for the health and well-being of the LGBTQ2S+ population, Wellness Services saw the benefit in conducting a joint-collaboration consultation to discern opportunities to make Wellness Services at Mount Royal University more inclusive, responsive, and appropriate.

PURPOSE

To co-develop meaningful conversation with LGBTQ2S+ students at Mount Royal University and respond appropriately by building connections between this population and service providers. This process was done to improve trust and accessibility of on-campus mental health services, as well as use feedback to inform change in processes, programs, and services accordingly.

Figure 21. The Pride Centre on Mount Royal University's campus.

GOALS

1   To ensure that MRU Wellness Services and programs are inclusive, responsive, and appropriate.

2   To encourage access and increase accessibility of Wellness Services to LGBTQ2S+ students.

3   To build relationships with other institutional stakeholders and diverse students through co-facilitation.

IMPLEMENTATION

Throughout the implementation of this initiative, employees ensured that voices would be heard and that an accurate record of the dialogue was created. After the institutional well-being survey in 2017, Wellness Services discussed the idea of a joint-effort student consultation with the Pride Centre and Students' Association in order to connect with LGBTQ2S+ students on campus. The Pride Centre was sought as a collaborator due to the accessible nature of the space; it was already a high-traffic safe space that LGBTQ2S+ students were utilizing. There was a clear benefit in meeting with students where they felt most safe to foster a trusting relationship.

In preparation, employees in Wellness Services conducted background research on how to

consult with this particular group, including considerations of confidentiality, potential barriers, and how to incorporate inclusive language. Employees wanted to create an environment that was accepting, safe, and knowledgeable of the diversity of experiences in the LGBTQ2S+ community. As the format of the consultation and questions were developed, all resources were piloted with the Pride Centre Co-ordinator and a Students' Association representative, and their feedback was incorporated. The final guiding questions for the consultation were as follows:

A. What are some of the barriers you may have experienced in accessing MRU Wellness Services?

B. What specifically can Wellness Services do to make their services more inclusive of the needs of LGBTQ2S+ folks?

C. In past group discussions, we've heard that it may be important for Wellness Service offerings to be promoted to LGBTQ2S+ folks in a targeted way. How can this be done so that it's not tokenizing?

D. What can Wellness Services do to make the Wellness Services space (physical or social/emotional) itself feel more comfortable for you to access?

E. How can we demonstrate that we are committed to supporting the LGBTQ2S+ community?

F. What else would you like us to know? Other suggestions?

It was decided that the consultation should be held in the Pride Centre. Promotion for this

event was done mainly through Pride Centre communication channels. The final decision to be made concerned the moderators and support personnel in the room; a Healthy Campus Team Lead within Wellness Services would moderate the consultation, supported by the Wellness Services Administrator of Health Services and Optimal Therapy, and the Chair of Student Counselling. The intention behind the presence of these individuals was to answer questions related to service delivery in real time.

There were four ways in which students were invited to participate. As the moderator guided discussion among students, there were chart papers set up in the space with the same guiding questions for students to respond to as an alternative to the discussion. A room was set aside where students could have private one-on-one interaction with either the Wellness Services Administrator or Chair of Student Counselling. Additionally, a Google form was shared after the consultation for students to give final thoughts. Prior to commencement, all participants were given the opportunity to introduce themselves and their pronouns to the group through an oral introduction and name tags. The consultation lasted a total of two hours, during which time students were able to drop-in and participate as they could.

EVALUATION

Immediately following the consultation, Wellness Services staff held a debrief meeting during which staff reflected on their service delivery from an inclusivity perspective.

The consultation data was summarized into themes, which were then transformed into actionable items and assigned to different units based on capacity and type of service provision. For example, it was the responsibility of Health Services to find local physicians who offered services specific to the LGBTQ2+ community, and start conversations about building connections between that individual and MRU.

It took approximately one week for all action items to be confirmed. These were shared with the Pride Centre Co-ordinator, thereby setting up a system of accountability for Wellness Services. Since this time, Wellness Services has maintained a relationship with the Students' Association and the Pride Centre, through consistent commitment to these action items. For example, the consultation resulted in a counsellor being made available in the Pride Centre weekly.

SUCCESSES

The ability of all those involved to listen to what people were saying was critical to the success of this case study. By facilitating, listening, and creating a safe place for difficult conversations, Wellness Services was able to understand gaps in offerings and how to respond appropriately. Having various levels of Wellness Services' leadership in the room was also beneficial, as many questions were directed to leadership, and students appreciated having a direct line of contact. Additionally, this project ran smoothly largely due to pre-existing relationships between Wellness Services, the Students' Association, and the Pride Centre.

NOTED CHALLENGES

The nature of the consultation resulted in challenges in advertising. When asking for individuals to share their personal experiences, it is critical to be mindful that a person is willingly being vulnerable. There should be an effort to give something back to that person directly. This was achieved through the sharing and execution of action items by Wellness Services. Conversations with stakeholders emphasized the benefit of the consultation for all parties involved, rather than focusing on the benefits only for Wellness Services.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Mount Royal University's Student Counselling Services is open to the possibility of a bookable hour with students using the Pride Centre in the near future. Based on identification of themes, Student Counselling Services would be interested in exploring the expansion of mental health programming into the Pride Centre, such as anxiety groups. There is also a sustained relationship between Wellness Services and the Pride Centre. ●
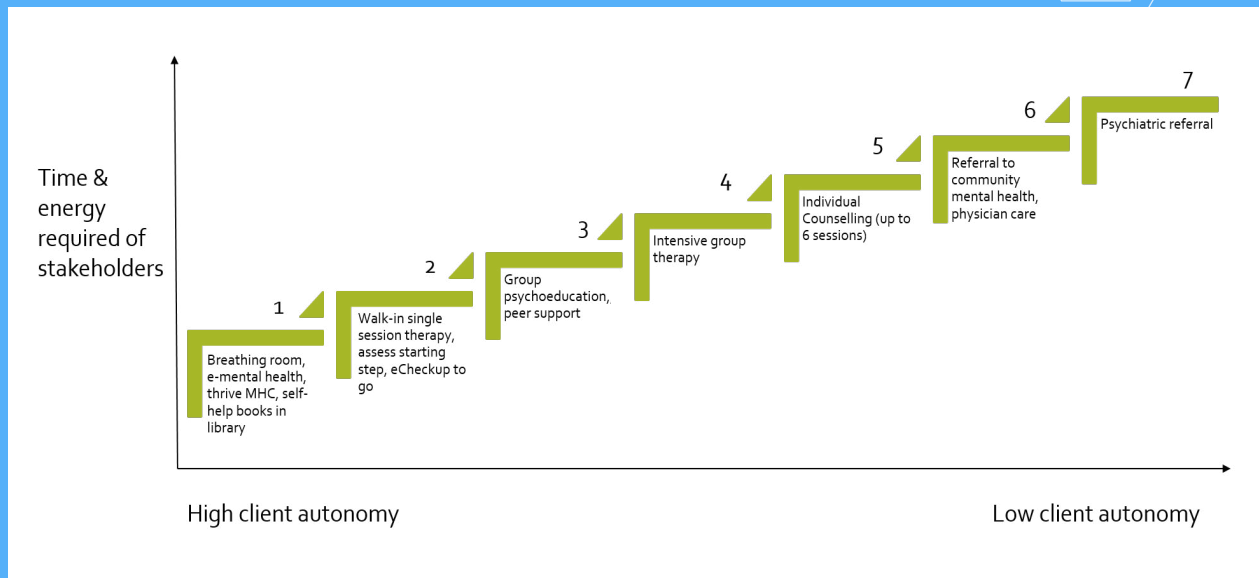
STEPPED CARE MODEL
Medicine Hat College

Figure 22. A chart demonstrating the various levels of care and examples available as per the stepped care model.

THEMES

ACCESS

EVIDENCE-INFORMED

MOBILIZING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

THE PROMISING PRACTICE

The stepped care model was developed by Dr. Peter Cornish from Memorial University as a means to provide a framework of care for individuals seeking mental health support. The model demonstrates how limited resources can be used efficiently to their greatest effect. The stepped care model consists of seven steps. As steps progress, the autonomy of clients decreases, while the time and energy required of stakeholders increases. For example, step seven would comprise psychiatric referral, whereas step one would be a referral to online resources. Having lower-level resources for students is meant

to relieve pressures on the counselling and wellness team at a given institution, thereby ensuring that counselling appointments are accessible and timely for those requiring an increased level of support. For those accessing lower steps of care — such as online resources or group support — students learn coping and resilience skills that may be adequate for their needs, so they may not need to seek out formal one-on-one counselling.

In the case of Medicine Hat College, counsellors also use the Behavioural Health Measure-20 (BHM-20)[12] assessment tool to track client progress with varying levels of support. This tool consists of 20 multiple choice questions that assess the severity of client needs, readiness for therapy, and resources that client has. The assessment is based on how the client has felt in the last two weeks or since their last appointment. After voluntarily completing the BHM-20 in an intake session, the counsellor manages their caseload by determining if the student is in need of counselling services or can be referred to a more appropriate resource. Each time a student returns to counselling, another BHM-20 assessment is completed so that their progress can be monitored and support can be adjusted as necessary.

RATIONALE

In 2017, Medicine Hat College's counselling department was faced with how to respond to increased need for services with very limited resources. While there was a 46 per cent increase in students using counselling services, the counsellors available to students fluctuated between 1.5-2 full-time equivalent. Previously, all students were allotted a one-hour counselling slot with little referral to the external community. This resulted in increased caseloads for counsellors and increased wait times for students. When the counselling department appealed to administration for increased funding, they were awarded additional funds for the short-term, but counsellors were acutely aware they would need to devise a sustainable system of providing support to students. Counsellors took the initiative to conduct research on how to more effectively manage their limited resources, leading them to the stepped care model.

PURPOSE

The model of care is used in co-ordination with the BHM-20 assessment tool to more effectively manage the caseload of counsellors, and to provide students with varying levels of support more appropriate to their needs.
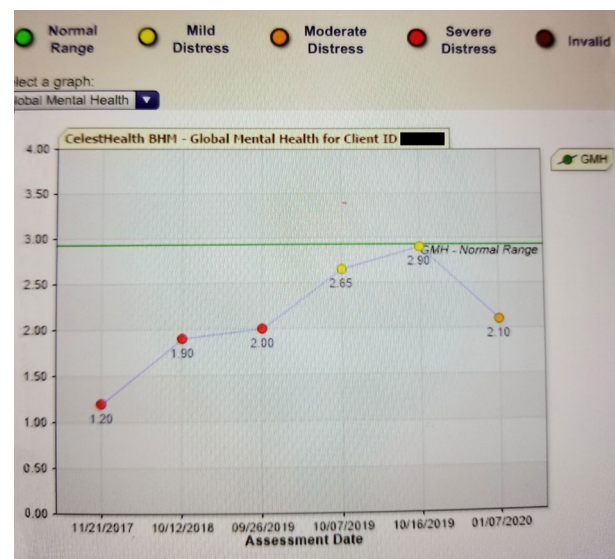

Figure 23. A sample of the charting of BHM-20 scores and results per client.

GOALS

1 To offer care that is flexible but evaluates changes in outcomes at every point of contact.

2 To empower students to take responsibility for their health by maximizing the involvement of students in the decision-making process.

3 To employ a framework that distributes students among varying levels of support based on their need, including the utilization of counselling, psychological, and psychiatric services.

4 To identify the severity of students' symptoms, students' readiness for therapy and resources they already have.

5 To provide outcome measures and evaluation.

IMPLEMENTATION

In 2017, one of Medicine Hat College's counsellors came across the stepped care model when conducting research on sustainable ways to use their limited resources. The counsellors consulted with the creator of the model — Dr. Peter Cornish — regarding the use of stepped care in small colleges and the benefits of using the model. Dr. Cornish also suggested that counsellors use CelestHealth's BHM-20 in conjunction with stepped care. As per his advice, the counsellors contacted CelestHealth to obtain literature and costs for the BHM-20. A proposal was developed and presented for college leadership shortly thereafter. It was proposed that the licensing for the BHM-20 would cost less than hiring an additional counsellor. Funding was approved for the tool, and it was decided that the BHM-20 would be conducted during an initial intake session with a new client. As such, communications were sent out to the college about the change. It was the responsibility of the front-line staff to book a new client in for a 30-minute assessment, rather than the previously standard 50-minute appointment.

Simultaneously, conversations began around what lower step resources would entail. After discussions, counselling decided on a mix of self-help books, group therapy, and e-resources. In order to reach students who do not access support themselves, Medicine Hat College has incorporated use of the BHM-20 into their early alert programming. Originally, this system was structured such that anyone (e.g., staff, students, or parents) could report a student they believed was at risk. Each referral is primarily directed to the counselling department, who then reaches out to offer support to the identified student. If the student is receptive to meeting with a counsellor, a BHM-20 is conducted at the first session to determine the severity of risk, and identify the appropriate supports. With grant funding

in 2017, counselling put forward a Mental Health Programmer position, who would be responsible for planning group therapy and conducting the BHM-20 at intake. In addition to conducting the BHM-20, the Mental Health Programmer also created and facilitated knitting groups, art therapy, and animal therapy groups. These groups may create a more approachable opportunity for students to connect with others in a meaningful way.

The BHM-20 was officially rolled out in September 2017. Student reception to the new change was very positive and counselling received no pushback. Counselling aimed to do all intake and the BHM-20 at the start of the semester so students could be directed to the appropriate services as required and still have time to access a higher level of support if necessary.

EVALUATION

The BHM-20 is a comprehensive evaluation tool for counsellors, as it tracks client progress. If students move up through the steps of the model, it shows that the previous level of support was not meeting their specific needs. Use of the BHM-20 has allowed for students who need one-on-one counselling or psychiatric referral to receive support sooner. The BHM-20 has also been used to inform service provision in counselling, such as the addition of walk-in counselling slots.

Prior to implementing the stepped care model and the BHM-20, counselling administered an annual satisfaction survey in the winter semester to all Medicine Hat College students.

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AT MEDICINE HAT COLLEGE

An Environmental Scan and Strategy to Support Planning and Action

January 2017
MHC Mental Health Committee

Figure 24. The strategy to support mental health at Medicine Hat College includes support for use of the stepped care model.

This survey was used to discern the number of students that access counselling services and the overall experience of students with counselling services. Although counselling consistently received high satisfaction rates, the questions pertain more to the quality of the counselling service at that moment in time. The BHM-20 is able to determine if specific resource utilization has led to student recovery. On an annual basis, counselling is able to generate BHM-20 reports, which shows the percentage of students that have deteriorated, improved, or recovered in various areas. For example, counselling saw that of the 46 clients that participated in the BHM-20 in 2019, 54.35 per cent of clients improved in the anxiety category of the tool.

SUCCESSES

Medicine Hat College's counselling department is pleased they have been able to provide varying levels of service depending on student need. Since implementation of the stepped care model and the BHM-20, counselling services are able to accommodate more students with different needs and provide more options for care. This experience has shown them the benefit of flexibility in service provision.

NOTED CHALLENGES

The BHM-20 tool is voluntary for students to complete, however, whether the counsellor speaks to the quality and benefit of the tool is a contributor to student uptake. Therefore, it is important that staff are on board and well-educated in regards to use of the BHM-20. Through experience, Medicine Hat College has seen that if a staff member is not receptive to using the BHM-20, use of the tool can decrease.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Medicine Hat College is interested in using this stepped care model to reach those students who do not reach out for support on their own or who are not interested in receiving counselling. Already counselling had made strides with students through their early alert programming but hopes to conduct additional outreach, particularly focusing on online outreach promoted to the entire student population. Counsellors identify the value in online resources and tools, and recognize the need to develop these "lower level, broader reach" options on the stepped care model. ●

References

12   CelestHealth Solutions. (n.d.) *The CelestHealth system for mental health and college counselling centres (CHS-MH).* https://www.celesthealth.com/chsmh.asp

PRACTICAL TOOL FOR IMPLEMENTATION

This toolkit seeks to support PSIs to develop and implement policies, systems, programs, and initiatives that create healthy campus communities and improve the mental health of students. This deconstructed **logic model**[13] from Ontario Public Health is meant to be used as a tool to facilitate the planning, implementation, and evaluation of effective mental health initiatives, such as those in this toolkit.

NAME OF INITIATIVE:

PART A – NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1   Is there a need for this initiative at your institution? What are the indicators that demonstrate this need? What gap in programming will be filled through the implementation of this initiative?

2   How do you anticipate this initiative will fill the current gap or need?

PART B – PLANNING

1   What is your vision for this initiative? What is the intended impact? (refer to part A)

2 List 3-5 measurable goals that this initiative will work to achieve.

3 Inputs:

    A Create a detailed list of what needs to be invested into implementing this initiative. This includes resources and stakeholders. For stakeholders, list exactly which personnel/departments will be involved in the initiative and their corresponding roles or level of involvement.

4 Outputs:

    A Who is the intended audience for this initiative? How will they be reached?

    B What does the final version of this initiative look like upon implementation?

C   What are the steps necessary to achieve this initiative?

5   Impacts:

   A   List 1-3 **short-term** measurable outcomes that your institution hopes to achieve through this initiative within the first six months of implementation.

   B   List 1-3 **medium-term** measurable outcomes that your institution hopes to achieve through this initiative within the first year of implementation.

   C   List 1-3 **long-term** measurable outcomes that your institution hopes to achieve through this initiative.

6   Where has this initiative been implemented elsewhere? How will it be adapted to fit your institution's context? Is there anyone that can be connected with to provide guidance or support?

7   Using bullet points, begin to draft an evaluation plan for this initiative. Think about how outcomes will be met, and how the initiative will remain accountable to any guiding themes (see Part C).

8   If any, what are the external factors affecting implementation?

9   What assumptions can be made about the target population that support the implementation of this initiative?

PART C – THEME ALIGNMENT

1 Which themes of the promising mental health practice do you want to focus on the most? (Institutional Leadership, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Mobilizing Local Community, Shared Responsibility and Collaboration, Access, and Evidence-Informed Practice).

2 Why? Take time to brainstorm how exactly this initiative is aligned with the themes selected above and why that is important to student mental health at your institution.

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13   Abdi, S., & Mensah, G. (2016) *Focus On: Logic model - A planning and evaluation tool*. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). **https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/F/2016/focus-on-logic-model.pdf?la=en**

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Appendix — Additional Case Studies

This section is dedicated to the additional submissions to the toolkit. These promising practices are meant to encourage institutions to connect and learn from one another and learn more about the promising practices displayed here.

INSTITUTION	Red Deer College
INITIATIVE	Wellness Workshops Wednesdays
CACUSS DIMENSION	3 – Mental health awareness
PROMISING PRACTICE	Wellness Wednesday Workshops occur on a bimonthly basis and are open to all RDC students, alumni, faculty, and staff. In two hour sessions, participants are engaged through resources that are in accordance with the Alberta Health Services Community Helpers Program, with the aim of gaining practical skills, expanding knowledge of mental health issues, and bridging supports. During the workshops, participants are provided with a folder with a workbook pertaining to the topic, a list of campus and community resources, and a list of stress management techniques. These workshops take place in partnership with the Alberta Health Services Community Helpers Program, as the workshops focus on one of the 21 modules of the program. These workshops provide practical skills that individuals can use in their day-to-day life. The modules aim to expand knowledge of mental health issues, bridge "formal" and "informal" support for young people, reduce stigma and labelling of mental health issues, focus on prevention and early identification for individuals who may be at risk, provide extensive training in managing crisis situations effectively and ethically, and improve interventions for those who may be at risk of suicide. Moreover, students are eligible to receive certification and co-curricular notion for the Wellness Wednesday Workshops when specified criteria are met. ●

INSTITUTION	Lakeland College
INITIATIVE	Inquiring Minds for Instructors/ Staff
CACUSS DIMENSION	3 – Mental health awareness
PROMISING PRACTICE	Lakeland College offered the Inquiring Minds to a large number of students through a unique approach. Working with faculty, they were able to embed mental health training within the learning environment.

Two hundred students in Human Services, Energy Sciences, Foundational Learners, Business, University Transfer, and Agriculture participated in the Inquiring Minds training in the fall of 2019. During the previous spring, an additional 150 students also participated in the training. Prior to this time, a counsellor had offered mental health training to staff, administrators, and faculty based on training received from the University of California. ⬣

INSTITUTION	Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
INITIATIVE	Wellness Check
CACUSS DIMENSION	3 – Mental health awareness
PROMISING PRACTICE	Student Development and Counselling and Lamb Learner Success Centre staff engage students in a Wellness Check after midterms and prior to the institutional withdrawal deadline. A key feature of the initiative is for

students to access tools from both counselling and academic coaching staff to reinforce that academic and personal well-being are interconnected.

The mid-term point in the semester is a key time for students to reflect on their academic portfolio as well as on their personal well-being. SAIT's Student Development and Counselling, with the support of the Lamb Learner Success Centre, encourage students to support their success by:

- Checking in on their personal and academic well-being;
- Identifying strategies they could use for the rest of the semester to be psychologically and academically successful;
- Finding out about the people and resources available on campus to help them succeed in maintaining positive well-being;

The Wellness Check was first run as a pilot in November 2016, during which time students provided a wealth of positive feedback about the program. This pilot garnered significant institutional support and interest from departments, including Communications, Learner Services, and Academic Service areas. Since the pilot, the project has been repeated annually.

Additional link:
1. **Wellness Check** ●

INSTITUTION	Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
INITIATIVE	Therapy Assistance Online and 7 Cups
CACUSS DIMENSION	3 – Mental health awareness
PROMISING PRACTICE	Therapy Assistance Online (TAO)-Self Help is an online collection of interactive wellness tools designed to help students navigate challenges commonly faced by students. 7 Cups connects students to anonymous and confidential online chat with trained listeners around the globe. This helps to gradually build new skills, gain confidence and learn to focus on the positive.

TAO is self-directed and available anytime, with the purchase of an institutional licence. There is also the option of using TAO as an online counselling platform, with strict training requirements in place for counselling staff. Resilience 101 is a collection of TAO exercises that help students build resilience. Also available online, students can earn Co-Curricular Record for completing the Resilience 101 modules. A number of SAIT course instructors have asked to incorporate parts of the material into their curriculum, which we are able to do with customizable groups.

In regards to 7Cups, there is special content specifically catered for SAIT students available with the purchase of an institutional licence. 7 Cups is available 24/7 in 20+ languages.

Additional links:
1. **Therapy Assistance Online**
2. **7Cups** ●

INSTITUTION	University of Calgary
INITIATIVE	Post Alcohol Support Space
CACUSS DIMENSION	4 – Community capacity to respond to early indicators of student concern
PROMISING PRACTICE	Post Alcohol Support Space (PASS) is a medically supervised, judgment-free space on campus where members of the university community can sleep off the effects of alcohol and/or cannabis. The goal is to try to lower

the risk of alcohol and cannabis-related injury by monitoring intoxicated individuals — keeping them safe and regularly assessing the need for medical treatment.

PASS was developed around three key principles: to make the space supportive, nonjudgmental and consequence free. A stay at the PASS will not be communicated to professors or family members and it does not go on any record — academic or otherwise. Any member of the university community can use the PASS without fear of consequence. The PASS is located in a residence hall, accessible through Safewalk, Campus Security, or the Student Medical Response Team, and is open Thursday evenings and for special events. The PASS is staffed with a registered nurse and Student Medical Response volunteers trained to ensure individuals get the level of care they require. ●

INSTITUTION	Norquest College
INITIATIVE	Student Wellness Climate Survey
CACUSS DIMENSION	4 – Community capacity to respond to early indicators of student concern
PROMISING PRACTICE	The Student Wellness Climate Survey is part of a research project that is meant to be inclusive of the entire learner community at NorQuest. The survey uses an innovative measurement tool and administrative

procedure, incorporating an education component and a pencil-paper survey to gather data on sexual violence and awareness, and various wellness dimensions, from lower literacy level students.

NorQuest College serves learners across the spectrum of English proficiency and academic abilities. However, when it comes to assessing our whole community on concepts such as health and wellness, the literacy level and terminology of common college surveys are limited in their reach. Part 1 of the survey asks about physical health, emotions and stress, time management, finances, and social wellness (e.g., relationships, belongingness, and perception of safety). Part 2 of the survey explores student understanding of and experience with interpersonal violence (physical, sexual, and emotional). Prior to delivery of each section of the survey, there is a brief discussion about relevant concepts and vocabulary. The survey information letter and informed consent documents are available in four different languages. Survey development involved consultation with language learning experts and a pilot in 2018 with our Canadian Language Benchmarks 5 and 6 students. Making this survey available to gauge student wellness, interests, and experience allows NorQuest students as a whole (e.g., not just our post-secondary students) to have a voice and also allows the college to be able to develop evidence-based initiatives for all our students. ●

INSTITUTION	MacEwan University
INITIATIVE	Sexual Violence Support Guide
CACUSS DIMENSION	4 – Community capacity to respond to early indicators of student concern
PROMISING PRACTICE	This campus-wide faculty and staff training program aims to foster understanding on experiences of sexual violence and the impact on mental health and wellness. The program is designed to engage faculty and staff as allies in addressing sexual violence, build their capacity to supportively respond to our campus community needs and allow ownership over everyone's role in creating a culture of consent at our institution. The program includes training on foundational support skills based on the Rogerian method of counselling, and situates the initiative within a socio-ecological model of understanding health. Participants from the training have provided feedback that the skills learned have also been applied to responding to a variety of mental health concerns. ●

INSTITUTION	Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
INITIATIVE	PAWs for a Break
CACUSS DIMENSION	5 – Self-management competencies and coping skills
PROMISING PRACTICE	NAIT has an official wellness dog, which visits various locations on NAIT's main and satellite campuses to give students the opportunity to relieve stress through play. This engagement is also used as an opportunity to connect with students and inform them of other resources on campus that they may find beneficial. ●

INSTITUTION	University of Alberta
INITIATIVE	ACCESS Network: A Campus Connected
CACUSS DIMENSION	2 – Supportive, inclusive campus climate and environment, 4 – Community capacity to respond to early indicators of student concern, 7 – Crisis management
PROMISING PRACTICE	The ACCESS Network is made up of representatives from over twenty campus work units from multiple portfolios and faculties. The main goal of this network is to consolidate and formalize partnerships between

University of Alberta student service providers.

The ACCESS Network facilitates seamless and rapid access to appropriate and relevant student mental health and other services, creates a common language and understanding amongst student service providers, and co-ordinates efforts to provide a spectrum of responses to various student challenges.

Principles include:
1. Intentionality
2. Rapid access
3. Community of practice
4. Identify gaps

Additional links:
1. **ACCESS Open Minds National Project**
2. **ACCESS Outreach Team** ●

INSTITUTION	University of Alberta
INITIATIVE	Suicide Prevention Framework
CACUSS DIMENSION	1 – Institutional structure: Organization, planning, and policy, 2 – Supportive, inclusive campus climate and environment, 4 – Community capacity to respond to early indicators of student concern, 6 – Accessible mental health services, 7 – Crisis management

PROMISING PRACTICE

The University of Alberta Suicide Prevention Framework report is the result of a comprehensive review of support networks and outlines a five-part framework for enhancing suicide prevention. Specifically, this report identifies 36 recommendations across the five categories to build upon student, staff, and faculty mental health and wellness services and to improve the capacity and capability for suicide prevention at the UofA. In addition to the recommendations, suggestions for assessment and sustainability are also provided.

The UofA's Suicide Prevention Framework acknowledges the systemic relationship between members of our community and addresses recommendations across five dimensions:
1. Policy & Implementation
2. Education, Awareness & Communication
3. Supports & Services
4. A Welcoming, Connected & Supportive Campus Community
5. Supports Following A Campus Death

Additional link:
1. **University of Alberta Suicide Prevention Framework** ●

INSTITUTION	University of Alberta
INITIATIVE	Heroes for Health
CACUSS DIMENSION	1 – Institutional structure: Organization, planning, and policy, 2 – Supportive, inclusive campus climate and environment, 4 – Community capacity to respond to early indicators of student concern, 5 – Self-management competencies and coping skills, 6 – Accessible mental health services, 7 – Crisis management
PROMISING PRACTICE	The Heroes for Health Challenge encourages students, staff, and faculty to come together, think outside the box and work collaboratively to propose ideas for a healthier campus in four areas: social connections, physical activity, mental health, substance, and alcohol use. Ideas to support student well-being can be awarded up to $5,000 to make the UofA a better place.

Additional link:
1. **Heroes for Health** ●

INSTITUTION	University of Alberta
INITIATIVE	Wellness Champions Program
CACUSS DIMENSION	2 – Supportive, inclusive campus climate and environment, 4 – Community capacity to respond to early indicators of student concern, 7 – Crisis management
PROMISING PRACTICE	A Wellness Champion makes the campus community a better place. Their efforts positively influence how we experience university life — through academics, work, and play. A Wellness Champion connects people and helps build supportive environments. They may not even know they're a champion for wellness and this is your opportunity to tell them. All efforts — big and small — contribute to creating a culture of wellness and a healthy university environment at the UofA.

Additional link:
1. **Wellness Champions** ● ●