

2017–2019

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS OUTCOME OF THE TOWN HALL



INTRODUCTION

The University of Guelph has committed to improving wellness of students, staff, and faculty on campus. In 2016, the University launched the Mental Health Strategy. Over the last year the University has also been engaging with students and the rest of the University community to better understand mental health and wellness needs. This Action Plan is a commitment to continue that work. It provides a renewed focus to the overarching goal of improving the mental health and wellbeing of our campus as the second year of work on the Mental Health Strategy begins.

On May 15th, 2017, the Mental Health Strategy subcommittees came together with student, staff, and faculty representatives

to develop this Action Plan. The group worked together using a consensus-building method that leveraged the wisdom of all participants. The plan was built by envisioning the future the group hopes to create, examining the reasons why that future is not yet possible, and then generating specific ideas to respond to each one of those reasons and achieve the desired future.

This document captures the Action Plan developed through this process. It provides an overview of the committee's goals for the following 2-3 years, and a set of Action Streams that will guide the work towards those goals as we continue working towards improving mental health and wellness on campus.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SWOC Analysis | 04

The group reviewed documentation regarding wellness on campus and reflected on current strengths, weaknesses, future opportunities, and challenges.

Goals | 06

Together, the group built a set of goals for the University that represent the wellness aspirations of everyone present.

Action Streams | 10

Finally, the group worked together to build out a number of Action Streams documenting the action needed to achieve the goals. These actions streams provide a focus for each subcommittee's efforts towards realizing the goals.

Conclusion and Next Steps | 12

SWOC ANALYSIS

The group started the day grounding themselves in the previous and ongoing work already occurring in the realm of mental health and wellness at the University of Guelph. The group reviewed several documents, including the Mental Health Strategy, the Student Affairs Integrated Plan, the University of Guelph National College Health Assessment, and a summary of the recent “UofG We’re Listening” student engagement.

The group divided into a series of small groups to develop a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats or challenges) analysis of the campus community. Participants were asked to draw on their personal experience within a campus role as well as the provided documents to complete the activity.

Participants used these categories to conduct their SWOT Analysis

Strengths: current assets, things that are working well

Weaknesses: things that are having a negative impact, things that need to improve

Opportunities: exciting future possibilities, potential new things to take advantage of

Challenges: things happening now that might negatively affect the future, potential new things that could cause trouble

Following is a summary of the themes and ideas the groups developed.

OUR STRENGTHS

- Students and peers are supportive, empathetic, and want to be part of the solution
- We recognize the importance of student wellness and have made a good start to address it
- We're forming communities and creating safe spaces
- We are sharing the responsibility of improving wellness and mental health on campus
- Staff want to be part of the solution and we are equipping more staff with training and resources
- Students have identified improvement in receiving information on depression/anxiety

OUR WEAKNESSES

- Services available aren't communicated clearly or effectively
- Mental health is a growing need and we aren't meeting the increasing and changing needs of our campus
- Difficulty collaborating across departments and across campus
- Lack of holistic and preventative health supports
- Accessing services is not easy, timely or consistent
- We spend a lot of time planning and not enough time doing
- Academic culture can be high pressure and does not facilitate wellness
- Students feel like their needs/concerns are not recognized, heard, or acted upon
- We have some information, but there are still gaps and unanswered questions
- We need more thorough outreach and collaboration with students
- Confusion about the role of Staff/Faculty

OUR CHALLENGES

- The complexity of measuring progress and knowing what's working
- Changing needs that will cause new challenges to emerge
- The complexity of providing more flexible and responsive supports
- Lack of empathy for how hard mental health issues can be
- Lack of space and other resources to support change
- The difficulty of disseminating and monitoring information
- Balancing supportiveness with reality of failure
- Stigma around seeking help—different experiences/perceptions in different groups (e.g. male vs. female students)
- The time it will take to see the impact and build trust
- Influence of drugs and alcohol on mental health
- Difficulty spreading awareness of our services

OUR OPPORTUNITIES

- Improving communication about our strategy and services
- Focusing on whole health and wellbeing
- Building on an already strong foundation
- Supporting needs for belonging and social connection
- Collaborating more effectively across departments and with the community
- Collaborating with students to create solutions
- Improving support for faculty and staff
- Improving our built environment and access to nature
- Sharing coping skills and tools with everyone
- Reviewing current strategies and support systems to ensure needs of diverse student population are addressed
- Increasing training and education about health for students and staff
- Focusing ourselves on the goal of a healthy campus

GOALS

What do we want to achieve over the next 2-3 years to improve wellness on campus?

After reflecting on the current state and considering future opportunities and challenges, the group worked together to develop a set of goals for improving wellness on campus over the next 2-3 years. These goals were generated by answering the question: “What do we want to achieve over the next 2-3 years to improve wellness on campus?”

Establishing goals is an important exercise. Goals describe the ideal future state we hope to create. They help us visualize

future success and understand what we are working toward. This set of goals was created using a consensus-building method that honoured the input of everyone in the room. Individual ideas were clustered into groups, which then became the overall set of nine goals the University of Guelph can work toward to improve wellness on campus.

These goals are outlined on the following three pages.



RIGHT SERVICE, RIGHT TIME

We will better match our wellness supports to the need of the university community. Our students need access to services, whether they are on or off campus and at any time of day. It is our goal to ensure that students receive the appropriate level of care, in a timely manner.



INTEGRATED WELLNESS EDUCATION

We will explore ways to embed wellness strategies in the curriculum and as part of student life. We will look for practical ways to spread awareness of wellbeing and build capacity for self-care. We want to promote resiliency across campus and throughout the student journey—when preparing to transition from high school, as an undergraduate or graduate, and when transitioning to life after graduation.



COLLABORATIVE IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM FOR STUDENTS AT-RISK

We will collaborate more effectively to identify at-risk students. By sharing information across multiple partners, we can offer a more proactive, integrated response. Our goal is to cultivate a culture of shared responsibility for the wellbeing of others, in the hope that students never have to feel alone.



HOLISTIC AND INCLUSIVE CAMPUS CULTURE OF WELLNESS FOR ALL

We need a culture shift to tackle stigma, promote balance and prioritize wellbeing. We will promote a holistic approach to wellness that harnesses the benefits of nature, recreation, social connection and physical activity. Our goal is make wellness a part of our campus culture.



WELLNESS-CENTRED ACADEMIC APPROACH

We want to make wellness an integral part of our academic practice. We need to view our existing academic policies and traditional systems through a wellness lens. Our goal is to evolve existing models and incorporate new ideas that contribute to our development as a wellness-centred university.



A CAMPUS OF INCLUSION AND BELONGING

Our goal is offering every student an avenue to a community of belonging. We recognize that inclusion is part of wellness and we want to create opportunities for all students to be involved in important conversations and in university decision-making. This means providing the resources—trained staff, safe spaces—to make it possible.



CREATE A CULTURE OF SHARED CONVERSATIONS #GRYPHONSTALK

We want to reframe the dialogue around wellness and mental health. We will need a social media strategy and effective all-way communication. Our goal is to create a culture where we welcome open and frank conversation, admire vulnerability and celebrate stories of student resilience.



PROACTIVELY SET STUDENTS UP FOR SUCCESS

We want to do everything we can to set students up for success. We will leverage our connections to partners and connections to promote wellness beyond the university—in K-12 education and the broader community. Our goal is to help students know what to expect and prepare with strategies for wellness before they even reach our campus.



INFORMED, COORDINATED WELLNESS STRATEGY

Our goal is ongoing progress on a comprehensive wellness strategy. This strategy will need to be supported and resourced in a sustainable way. It should leverage the expertise of others and be evidence-based, while remaining flexible as new information is uncovered and reflecting the lived experience in the University of Guelph community.

ACTION STREAMS

These Action Streams provide a high-level starting point for working toward our goals. Each Action Stream includes ideas for tactical planning, which were generated throughout the day. The Action Streams chart a pathway forward and provide specific, actionable ways to begin working towards the goals. These are things that we can start doing right now to begin improving wellness at the University of Guelph.

EMBED WELLNESS EVERYWHERE, WITH A FOCUS ON ACADEMICS

Include wellness info in course outlines and embed wellness in the curriculum for credit. Rather than confining wellness initiatives to specific programs, integrate wellness into all existing programs and classes.

DESIGN THE STRATEGIC PLANNING CYCLE

Establish regular check-ins on progress and a system of accountability. Implement a continual review of plans and outcomes to ensure the strategy remains relevant.

BASE DECISIONS ON EVIDENCE

Research emerging practices and leverage available expertise. Conduct meaningful student engagement to inform decision-making. Share data to support prevention and use the guidelines in the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA) to enable sharing, rather to put up a roadblock.

ADAPT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO CHANGING TIMES

Establish more frequent and efficient process for policy change. Update existing policies to reflect current realities and increase clarity. Standardize their application across different academic review committees.

COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY AND INTENTIONALLY

Use multiple channels and methods to communication with students. Develop consistent, basic branding for stigma reduction. Explain the value of academic accommodations. Prioritize inclusive language and tailor messaging to different student situations and needs.

INITIATE AND LEAD CHANGE

Shift attitudes towards wellness across campus. Finalize our wellness hub and strengthen its role as a catalyst for change. Identify champions to advocate for change at the University and beyond.

BUILD CAPACITY TO ACHIEVE PRIORITIES

Build understanding of the importance of mental health on campus. Support members of the University community to develop skills to care for the wellness of themselves and others. Incorporate education on wellness and inclusion as a mandatory part of onboarding for all staff. Involve many voices in developing training and strive for a diverse group of teachers and facilitators.

ENHANCE STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

Collaborate Equip with the to provide supportive environments as well. Collaborate with external stakeholders such as co-op and graduate employers to promote wellness. Share knowledge and work together to provide wrap-around support for the student experience.

BUILD A COMMON UNDERSTANDING

Communicate across groups to cultivate trust. Align faculty and administration and work closely with students to achieve common goals.

CULTIVATE STAFF WELLNESS

Improve staff wellness. Support staff to model positive wellness practices.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Over the course of the day it took to build out this Action Plan, the group processed a lot of information and ultimately came up with a plan to start working on right away. Many of the goals identified feel pretty audacious, and require action across campus—not only in one department or initiative. While that can feel overwhelming, the set of Action Streams and tactical ideas provide specific ways to get started. Many of these actions streams are already seeing some progress.

The Mental Health Strategy subcommittees are committed to moving forward on this work. This document will help guide us in determining our priorities for the next couple of years. The chairs of the mental health advisory group will help determine those priorities share them with the community. The next step is sharing these commitments widely and engaging other stakeholders. To this end, an annual report will be created and shared to communicate progress. By steadily working together on the Action Streams outlined above, we can achieve our goals to improve wellness for everyone at the University of Guelph.



**“I’M EXCITED ABOUT TAKING A BITE
AND DOING SOMETHING—LET’S DO
SOMETHING! LET’S GET STARTED!”**

-Action Planning Participant

OVERLAP

THIS ACTION PLAN WAS DEVELOPED COLLABORATIVELY WITH OVERLAP.
WE WANT YOU TO BE SUCCESSFUL ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS—IF YOU HAVE
ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH.