

# Healthy Campus Community Initiative at SFU

## Summary

The Healthy Campus Community (HCC) initiative at Simon Fraser University (SFU) was launched in early 2012 with the intention of taking a systemic, campus wide approach to enhance health and well-being. The initiative links health with learning and student satisfaction, and therefore integrates health into the core business of higher education. The initiative draws heavily on healthy settings literature, and emphasizes the need to work collaboratively and strategically in creating campus environments that support well-being. The initiative is evidence based, and a number of diverse areas for action were identified through a literature review, including a review of best practices in workplaces, elementary and secondary school settings that could be adapted and expanded to the higher education context.

## Aims

- Adopt and implement a Health Promoting University approach
- Work directly and intentionally with faculties, departments, administration and university initiatives where relevant in order to create a healthy campus community
- Integrate health and well-being into the core business of SFU
- Broaden the definition of health and highlight the role of the campus community in enhancing well-being
- Increase the awareness and understanding of student health and well-being and its impact on student success
- Increase the awareness and understanding of the settings approach to create a healthy campus community to improve student well-being
- Strategically and systematically create a campus environment that fosters well-being
- Apply evidence and best practice in the creation of healthy higher education settings
- Contribute to evidence and best practice through evaluation, research partnerships and publication

## Overview

### Context / background

The Health Promotion team within SFU Health and Counselling Services was founded in 2006. Initially the team prioritized health behaviour change through health outreach and education on a number of common student health issues such as sexual health, nutrition, sleep, physical activity, illness and injury prevention and mental health. Numerous resources were developed to support individuals and improve their personal health practices and skills. These resources were then moved primarily online to create easier access and outreach was transitioned to student Peer Health Educators. The Health Promotion team began to explore how they could strategically impact well-being through a more systemic and sustainable lens.

Broader institutional and contextual factors also played a role in the development of the initiative. The well-being of students in higher education (particularly with regard to mental well-being) has been a growing concern internationally. In addition, local and national pressures on higher education institutions to provide

students with the broad based skills and resources needed to succeed in a complex and challenging world led to a recognition of the need to create learning environments focused on more than just academics. Environments conducive to social and emotional learning, engagement and personal development were required as well. This was an impetus to explore literature and theories as well as change the work of the Health Promotion team to systemically address these concerns and needs.

### **Drivers / levers for change**

The drivers of change included a university context that included budget cuts. In addition, with stress being the largest barrier to academic success, this pointed to the need to align the work of SFU Health Promotion with the university Mental Health Strategy. There was also a need to demonstrate the value of Health Promotion on campus to the institutional vision and academia.

Health promotion theory and the vast literature that conceptualizes the impact of the setting on health encouraged this change, in particular the 1998 World Health Organization document entitled, "Health Promoting Universities: Concept, Experience and Framework for Action". Growing interest and literature on the potential of well-being to contribute to positive outcomes for individuals, organizations and societies overall was also leveraged.

The director of Health and Counselling Services saw the value in this approach and dedicated additional temporary staff resources to the Health Promotion team, and actively advocated for and supported the change. The director also articulated the value of this work within the context of broader organizational issues on a consistent basis.

A local organization, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) also saw the need for adapting a systemic approach at post-secondary institutions and offered grants for using the socio-ecological approach as a means to enhance student well-being.

### **Who led the work internally and externally?**

This work is led by the Health Promotion team at SFU. Health Promotion is integrated in Health and Counselling Services, a part Student Services.

### **Who was the strategic lead, who was the operational lead?**

SFU Health Promotion is the operational lead. As a key focus of this work is building momentum and engaging diverse stakeholders to see their role in the creation of a Healthy Campus Community, multiple strategic partnerships have been established. These include a formal partnership with the Teaching and Learning Centre, partnerships with faculty in relation to research projects, and Health Promotion representation on diverse campus committees including the Strategic Enrolment Management Committee and the Classroom Renewal Project Committee. The Health Promotion team has also partnered with external agencies including the Canadian Mental Health Association British Columbia Division. The Director of Health and Counselling Services has played an important role in strategically positioning this work in alignment with broader university goals and objectives.

### **How we are set up (working / steering groups)**

The HP team is a 2.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) team which has had additional resources added to be a 4.0FTE team temporarily. Participation and feedback on the initiative is encouraged through various partnerships, advisory committees and student engagement opportunities.

### **How the work fits within our organisational structure**

The team reports to the director of Health and Counselling Services. The department includes health clinics and counselling services and is overall a part of Student Services at SFU. Student Services under the Associate Vice President of Students' portfolio, which falls under the Vice-President Academic's portfolio. By taking a systemic approach to health and well-being, this initiative helps to integrate health within the core business of the institution. The initiative also aligns well with the institution's recently adopted vision of being the "leading engaged university defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research, and far-reaching community engagement".

### **Resources needed**

To begin the adaptation of this settings-based approach additional staffing resources were required. During

the planning and initial implementation phase, four full time staff have been dedicated to creating a healthy campus community at SFU.

The Director, the Marketing and Communication Coordinator and students in cooperative work placements within Health and Counselling Services also support the initiative.

### Existing resources used / budget

As described above, a 2.5FTE Health Promotion team was temporarily increased to 4.0FTE.

The Health Promotion budget is dedicated primarily to labour costs (88%) with a small amount for programming (10%) and office supplies (2%).

Additional funds were required for projects within the initiative that helped to communicate key messages with community members. For example, an animated style video was created in partnership with CMHA to help describe the approach. SFU Health Promotion dedicated \$5000 of their program budget to this video. In addition, approximately \$2500 was needed for the Champions program described below, of which \$1500 was secured through a successful grant application with CMHA.

### What we did

- Strategic planning to broaden the focus of Health Promotion at SFU beyond individual health
- Realigned outreach and health education to be delivered online and through student Peer Health Educators.
- Conducted a literature review of best practices from various settings to identify areas for action within the higher education context to create a Healthy Campus Community. These areas for action are: learning and working environments, policies, personal growth and development, services and supports, physical spaces, social interaction and community engagement.
- Built relationships while meeting with key campus stakeholders about creating a Healthy Campus Community
- Provided feedback as part of campus community consultations on the academic plan and university vision
- Purposefully aligned the work with institutional priorities with consideration to the language that would resonate with others across campus.
- Conducted literature review to support the rationale for this work, and used various marketing channels and materials to make key messages resonate with various campus audiences.
- Presented to campus committees to introduce the initiative and seek collaborative opportunities
- Developed marketing materials to articulate the Healthy Campus Community concept
- Co-produced an innovative, animated video entitled, "Designing Healthy Campus Communities"
- Led the 2012 Champions for a Healthy Campus Community project which included the production of two campus Champion videos that highlight and celebrate the contribution of different groups in creating a Healthy Campus Community
- Hosted the 2012 Healthy Campus Community Reception to showcase the videos described above and build momentum for the initiative
- Developed the Well-being in Learning Environments project (see separate case study)
- Built support for this work through the direct reporting relationships up to the VP Academic, through faculties and through other senior executive relationships.
- Built off of successes by creating a number of concrete projects that would begin to affect positive change within the various identified areas for action. These include: Student Health Advocacy Committee, Well-being and Learning Environments Project (see separate case study), and research partnerships.
- Thought strategically about the development of indicators of success that could be used for evaluation purposes and the development of positive measures of well-being on campus that could be measured

through research partnerships within SFU.

### Methods of communication

Various communication channels were used including in person, one on one meetings, group presentations, emails, phone calls and even informal conversations on campus were used to communicate the approach. Partnership building and a relational approach was essential.

The animated video and other videos highlighting Champions were shared within the campus community via standard marketing approaches.

A website is now developed that houses all of the information on the initiative. In the preliminary stages a hand-out was used that highlighted the evidence base and objectives of the Healthy Campus Community initiative.

A semesterly report of the Health Campus Community was distributed both online and in print.

### How we made the case for action

- By drawing on the evidence from workplaces, schools and other places that have successfully implemented a systematic settings-approach to health
- Connecting our goals to the academic mission and institutional vision
- Using SFU specific and Canadian student health statistics
- Partnership building and aligning with the priorities of others across campus

## Monitoring and Evaluation

### Critical success factors

At the onset of this initiative several themes for success were identified. These included working collaboratively with others across campus, ensuring the work is evidence based, understanding the priorities of others on campus and aligning initiatives accordingly, building off of success and celebrating success, strategic planning and evaluation, focusing on a broad, holistic and positive definition of health, helping others across campus to see how they can play a role in supporting well-being, and integrating health into the core business of the institution.

The Champions project marked the launch of the initiative and was strategic in that it builds off of existing positive contributions and successes within the community, and promotes involvement. Campus community members are not overburdened with another task to create a Healthy Campus Community, rather they can showcase their current contribution.

### How we measured impact

Because the Healthy Campus Community initiative is focused on enhancing well-being in a broad, holistic and positive way it is important to create indicators of success that reflect this definition of well-being. The Health Promotion team is currently partnering with SFU researchers to create measurement tools that will contribute to the evaluation of this initiative and to the evidence base around enhancing well-being systematically in post-secondary contexts. The formal evaluation plan is still in development, but will be available on the SFU Healthy Campus Community website when complete. The evaluation will emphasize both process and outcome indicators. Where possible indicators of success are being drawn from surveys already conducted at SFU including the National College Health Assessment and the National Survey of Student Engagement. Key indicators taken from these surveys form a basis from which to track progress over time.

#### Some key indicators will include:

% students who are satisfied with the sense of community at SFU

% students who report SFU provides them with the support they need to thrive socially

% students reporting that academics have been traumatic or very difficult to handle in the last 12 months

% students very satisfied with their overall experience at SFU

% students satisfied with the level of interaction between faculty and students

In addition, to learn more about which aspects of the psychosocial environment are impacting well-being, a partnership has been established with researchers in SFU's Faculty of Health Sciences to adapt a measurement tool previously designed for the workplace setting so that it can be used in the higher education context. The tool helps identify which aspects of the psychosocial environment are impacting well-being so that positive changes can be made. The pilot test of the tool in the SFU higher education context was completed in the Fall of 2012 and findings are being submitted for publication. The tool is intended to be part of the long term evaluation strategy as it provides insight into the effectiveness of creating an environment that supports well-being.

For specific projects process and outcome measures are developed specific to the project objectives. For example for the WLE project we are partnering with researchers from SFU department of Education to measure impacts of positive learning environments on well-being.

Process outcomes are also being tracked, which act as markers of internal progress towards broader goals.

Some current process indicators include:

- Number of relationships built both on and off campus
- Number of opportunities to share/present HCC at SFU meetings or training sessions
- Opportunity to present sessions linked to HCC at SFU Teaching Assistant Training, Summer Institute Conference, Teaching and Learning Symposium
- Opportunity to share work at external conferences including: CMHA Healthy Minds Healthy Campuses Provincial Summit, Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS) Annual National Conference and Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Annual National Conference
- SFU Health Promotion team featured on national CACUSS webinar focused on systemic approaches to mental health
- Invitations to provide a well-being perspective on cross campus committees
- Number of views of the three videos produced
- Page views and other web statistics on the SFU Healthy Campus Community website
- Number and composition of campus stakeholders in attendance at the HCC reception
- Number of nominations received for the Champions program

### **Outcomes /outputs**

Informal feedback from community partners that SFU Health Promotion is a leader within Canadian post-secondary institutions in adapting a systemic approach to health.

Support from the Vice President Academic and the Associate Vice President Students in endorsing certificates presented to Champions, addressing the group at the Healthy Campus Community Reception to emphasize the importance of the work.

Some of the concrete outputs of the initiative so far include the development of the Well-being and Learning Environments research project and website component (see separate case study), the 2012 Champions for a Healthy Campus Community videos and reception, as well as the animated video on "Designing Healthy Campus Communities" and research findings resulting from academic partnerships.

### **Did you do any cost benefit analysis?**

Not yet

## Key Learning Points

### What were the challenges or barriers? What helped you achieve success?

Health Promotion's role in universities is often relegated to focussing on student outreach and health education for the purpose of positive behaviour change. Creating the comfort level that this work was still possible while having a primary focus on strategic contextual change was difficult and important. Creating this perception was important for support at several levels of the university and the result of the commitment of key senior administrators.

There is sometimes the perception that health promotion work comes second to care delivery and crisis intervention. As noted, university statistics often point to poor health leading to a conclusion that resources should be spent on care delivery and treatment of symptomatic health issues. These statistics can also create unhelpful dialogue about the necessary role of stress at university. However data showing how the university is encouraging flourishing and wellbeing of students is lacking. Reframing this as a need for systemic and strategic change, better data, and as work that complements and adds value to both classroom success and health outcomes helped to overcome this barrier.

Another challenge is demonstrating the value of the Health Promotion team in leading this initiative while also asking other campus community members to contribute. The task of creating a successful, thriving Healthy Campus Community cannot be completed alone by a 4.0FTE Health Promotion team.

Health Promotion was able to leverage hidden assets throughout the university through aligning their work with both the language of other areas of the university and their desired outcomes, goals and visions. As well, the comprehensive literature review and research opportunities and partnering with external organizations (i.e. CMHA), helped to create better relationships and credibility within academia.

In many of the projects within the HCC initiative, the Health Promotion team took a collaborative approach. This was a large asset in achieving success and helped to build the reputation of the Health Promotion team.

## How did the work contribute to the three key focus areas of healthy universities?

### 1. Create healthy and sustainable learning, working and living environments

One of the primary areas of action identified through the Healthy Campus Community initiative was creating healthy learning and working environments. This objective has led to the creation of the Well-being and Learning Environments (WLE) project which is outlined in a separate case study ([link](#)). While the WLE project focuses specifically on learning environments within courses and departments, the HCC initiative overall focuses on influencing policies, structures and systems on campus in order to create a campus environment that enhances well-being.

Evidence of the influence of the initiative on campus policies and systems includes multiple invitations for the Health Promotion team to sit on cross campus committees including the Classroom Renewal Committee (CRC), and the Strategic Enrolment Management Committee. As a result of health promotion involvement on the CRC, student volunteers within Health & Counselling Services sought and summarized student feedback on study space on campus. These results were shared with the CRC in order to inform and plan upcoming renovations.

In the Champion recognition program, the existing healthy learning environments on campus were featured and act as a motivator for others to apply similar principles. One of the recognized Champions in 2012 was the First-Year Learning Communities which help students transition successfully into university. In the 2013 call for nominations many other programs which create a healthy learning and working environment for students have been nominated.

## 2. Integrate health and sustainability into core business

At its core, the Healthy Campus Community initiative is about integrating health and well-being into the core business of higher education. The objectives for the initiative have been purposefully aligned with the broader goals of the institution including retention, engagement, student satisfaction and learning. The initiative focuses on engaging diverse stakeholders across campus to learn how they can be a part of creating a healthy campus community through various actions, policies and systemic changes. The initiative has specifically sought the support of the Vice President Academic and the Associate Vice President Students. For example, support from the Vice President Academic and Associate Vice President Students was received, visibly and vocally, during the Healthy Campus Community Reception, indicating the program is an integral part of the academic mission and not solely within the realm of Student Affairs.

## 3. Contribute to the health and wellbeing and sustainability of local, regional, national and global communities

The goal of the Healthy Campus Community initiative is to create a sustainable campus environment that is supportive of student well-being. Changes made to the systems and structures on campus will last for many years to come and will positively impact future generations of students within the institution. Universities offer an important setting for the development of future citizens. Creating an environment that enables these young adults to develop skills and experiences that in turn will allow them to be healthy and productive citizens, will contribute to the long term well-being of local communities. The animated video that describes a Healthy Campus Community was designed to empower other higher education institutions to adopt a settings approach to health. It has since been used at another local college in British Columbia. Ultimately, creating a Healthy Campus Community at SFU can be a model for other communities. Within SFU, the partnership with CMHA has demonstrated that this work is supported more broadly by reputable agencies within the province. Through research partnerships the initiative intends to track outcomes related to the success of the initiative so that these can be shared with other institutions.

## Thematic Categories

Method	Topic	Population Group
Campaign / Event <input type="checkbox"/>	Alcohol / Substance Misuse <input type="checkbox"/>	Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum <input type="checkbox"/>	Built Environment <input type="checkbox"/>	Students <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Project <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Food / Healthy Eating <input type="checkbox"/>	Wider Community <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Policy / Procedure <input type="checkbox"/>	Mental Health <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Whole System Approach <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Physical Activity / Active Transport <input type="checkbox"/>	
Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual Health <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Sustainable Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Tobacco <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

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