Healthy Campus Alberta Community of Practice Charter

Introduction

There has been an increasing amount of attention given in recent years to the mental health and wellbeing of post-secondary students. Recent data demonstrates a large number of students are experiencing mental health problems, with many students reporting high levels of psychological distress, emotional difficulties and substance misuse (American College Health Association, 2013).

The post-secondary environment is more than a place of education. It is a key environment to advocate for the development of healthy and engaged people. There are well-defined links between academic success and student mental health. Research shows that settings like post-secondary institutions can be structured to have a positive impact on the mental health of students (Dooris, Dowding, Thompson, & Wynne, 1998).

In Alberta, there are currently 26 publicly funded higher education institutions and more than 265,000 students enrolled. In light of these numbers and the research, it follows that Alberta’s advanced education sector is well positioned to have a positive impact in promoting healthy and resilient campus communities and shaping the development of contributing citizens (Government of Alberta, 2014).

Over the past few years, several Alberta post-secondary stakeholders have been engaged in dialogue and collaboration to support student mental health and wellbeing on our campuses. The rationale for action has been solidified through prior provincial wellness summits and the development of the Alberta Post-Secondary Mental Health and Addiction Framework. Out of this dialogue, there has been a movement to establish a community of practice to promote knowledge exchange among post-secondary stakeholders and to ultimately enhance mental health promotion on Alberta campuses using a synergistic approach.

November 26th, 2015 marked our first Healthy Campus Alberta CoP meeting. A total of 57 participants representing 27 different organizations and post-secondary institutions attended this meeting. Strong student representation was present through ASEC, CAUS, and our Alberta GPAC. The discussion focused on the establishment of a unified vision, mission and identifying potential next steps. This was followed up with a second meeting on January 28th, 2016, in Edmonton to introduce the newly formed Healthy Campus Alberta CoP Design Team and to collaborate on actionable items with a six-month timeline.

Vision

To educate, collaborate and advocate to transform culture and create caring campus communities throughout the province of Alberta.

Mission

The Healthy Campus Alberta Community of Practice strives to create an inclusive, collaborative, and community-integrated approach to mental health and wellness.

This will be achieved through accessible and sustainable program ideas; sharing best practices and research; and fostering a culture of support and compassion for all post-secondary institutions across Alberta, all while recognizing their unique needs for success.

Values

1. We value the voice of students and recognize the importance of giving this voice priority in addressing issues relating to mental health and addiction on Alberta post-secondary campuses in a meaningful way.
2. We recognize the importance of using the lens of a 'whole campus' approach.  This lens acknowledges that post-secondary campus communities are composed of administration, service providers, faculty, staff and students, all of whom play a role in achieving mental health for all.
3. We recognize and value the intersection of community and campus services as a critical piece in meeting the mental health needs of all members of our Alberta post-secondary campus communities.
4. We recognize and celebrate the diversity of post-secondary campuses across the province.
5. We are committed to inspiring a cultural change in the way that mental health and addiction are viewed and constructed on post-secondary campuses.
6. We are founded upon the principles of collaboration, sharing, and inclusion with the intent to leverage our resources in the best interests of all within our provincial post-secondary communities.
7. We are committed to sharing ideas, evidence-informed practices and fostering a culture of support and compassion.
8. We seek to reduce student barriers to accessing services and to shift the focus to mental health for all.
9. We are committed to promoting equity in student access to services and programming relating to mental health and addiction on all Alberta post-secondary campuses. This involves the provision of timely, consistent, baseline services on all post-secondary campuses across the province.
10. We are committed to advocating for the ‘mental health of all’ on our Alberta post-secondary campuses at the provincial, community, and institutional level. We recognize the value of a unified voice in achieving meaningful change.

Objectives

*Six Month Objectives*

1. Secure community of practice (CoP) funding
2. Establish online home for the CoP
3. Hire a director/coordinator for the CoP
4. Facilitate one Healthy Campus Alberta CoP planning meeting
5. Facilitate first community learning event in June 2016
6. Establish a communication strategy
7. Develop a calendar of events for the CoP

*Year One Objectives*

1. Establish an online inventory of resources, contacts, and needs to connect post-secondary campuses across the province
2. Organize a community-wide face-to-face meeting
3. Develop an evaluation framework
4. Develop a sustainable funding strategy
5. Evaluate the health of our community of practice and adapt future objectives to match our evolving and changing needs
6. Develop a flexible five-year plan

Design Team

The design team represents a group of dedicated volunteers from a variety of institutions and organizations, committed to the goal of creating caring campus communities throughout the province of Alberta.

**Beverly Eastham** Executive Director, CAUS

**Jessica Turowski** Project Manager, ASEC

**Fatima Dhooma** Student, Vice President of Student Affairs, Keyano College

**Debbie Bruckner** Senior Director, Student Wellness, Access and Support, University of Calgary

**Kevin Friese**  Executive Director, University Wellness Services, University of Alberta

**Keith Dobson** Professor of Clinical Psychology, University of Calgary

**Rachelle McGrath** Healthy Campus Team Lead - Wellness Services Mount Royal University

**Jodie Jeworski** Manager, WellBeing and WorkLife Human Resources University of Calgary

**David Grauwiler** Executive Director- Alberta, CMHA

**Leah Berger** Program Consultant, Addiction Prevention Unit, AHS

**Ashley Humeniuk** Manager, Health Promotion & Outreach, University of Calgary

**Terra-Lynn Zosiuk** Acting Manager Health Services, Lethbridge College

**Danielle Stewart-Smith** Provincial Mental Health Initiative Coordinator, University of

Calgary

Involved Stakeholders

CMHA, AHS, ASEC, CAUS, ab-GPAC, government, multiple post-secondary campuses and campus professionals from across the province.

Factors for Success

1. Student leadership and engagement
2. Stakeholder buy-in and involvement
3. Identification of campus champions
4. Relevant communication strategy
5. Sustainable funding
6. Consistent collaboration and consultation with the CoP
7. Regular evaluation to adapt to the changing needs of the CoP