

Subtheme 1: Creating a Campus-Wide Strategy

How can post-secondary campuses advocate for and strengthen health at the institutional level?

The breakout sessions around “Creating a Campus-Wide Strategy” were facilitated by Kevin Friese, Lois Hayward, and Gina Marandola. Kevin is the Assistant Dean of Students, Health and Wellness at the University of Alberta. Lois is a Registered Psychologist and supervisor of SAIT’s Student Development and Counselling services, and Gina is the Post-Secondary Mental Health Grant Coordinator at SAIT.

Celebrating and Learning from Successes

- Attendees discussed a number of successful approaches, including using technology to engage more students and having a campus mental health committee
- PSI mental health was identified as a community responsibility. This encourages a whole-campus approach (e.g. engaging leadership, finding mental health champions, and cultivating partnerships/inviting involvement from various departments) and highlights the importance of engaging the community to develop the framework.
- One strategy for engaging the whole campus is tying the mental health framework into institutional strategic plans. Another is developing a common understanding of key terms (e.g. wellness) and identifying mental health and wellness champions on campus.

Acknowledging Challenges

- Some identified challenges included limited resources, limited student/staff capacity, and barriers to collaboration (e.g. separate student and staff strategies, multiple campus locations, separate funding sources/competing priorities across campus, etc.)
- Although campus needs may be rapidly shifting, a mental health strategy is an opportunity to provide common language and emphasize the campus-wide responsibility to support success and wellbeing. Having a set of shared goals is important.
- While there may be hesitancy to start large projects due to annual cycles of funding, this can inform evaluations strategies (e.g. gather data so can create the story about the impact/value of initiatives and build a case for the institutional impact assessment)
- Another strategy for operating with limited/shifting funding is to engage key stakeholders to ensure institutional support. This requires finding what motivates your institution and executive, as well as finding common language. Look at institutional documents (e.g., institutional plan or strategy) and identify main focuses, values, and language/key words (e.g. talk about the negative effect of stress on academic success)

Emerging Opportunities and Next Steps

- Strategic engagement with student government (e.g. asking to be included in handover materials between representatives, meet regularly to discuss collaboration, funding, etc.) and with the broad student body (e.g. informal conversations about initiatives, student representation on regional committees/engage with current student representative)
- Strategic engagement with other PSIs (e.g. invite students/staff from other institutions to workshops/trainings, participate in regional committees, share best practices, coordinate interconnected programming and resources between PSIs)
- Cultivate external partnerships to support the strategy
- *Note:* Some standards for [post-secondary student psychological health and safety](#) are in development (anticipated launch in 2020)