

HEALTHY UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN

 University of Alberta

THEMES



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.”¹ 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.

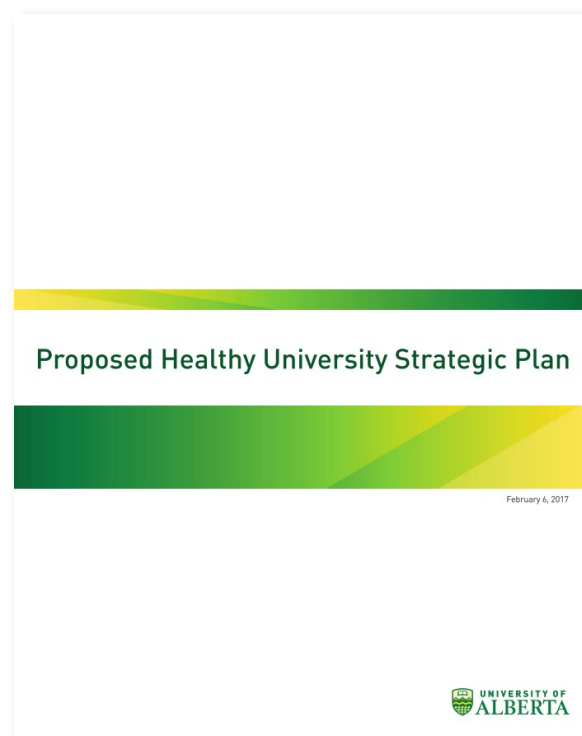


Figure 3. Front page of the final iteration of HUSP.

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."² 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.

SUCCESSSES

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

- 1 University of Alberta. (2016). *For the public good: Institutional strategic plan*. <https://www.ualberta.ca/strategic-plan/index.html>
- 2 Canadian Health Promoting Campuses. (2015). *Okanagan Charter: An international charter for health promoting universities and colleges*. <https://healthpromotingcampuses.squarespace.com/okanagan-charter>