HEALTHY CAMPUS ALBERTA 2025

Calgary Regional Gathering Report

The Calgary Regional Gathering was held on January 30, 2025, at Bow Valley College in Calgary. The event was attended by **39 participants** from **6 Alberta campuses** and **4 community organizations.**

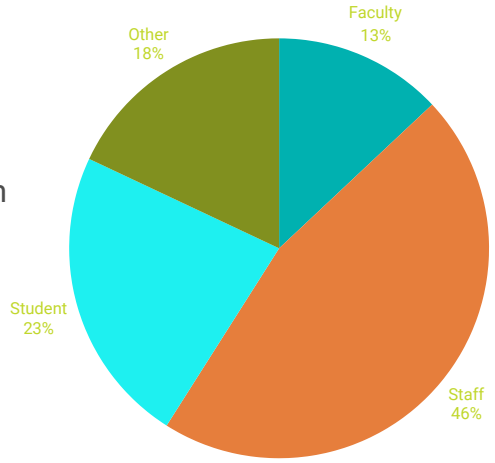

*Chart showing the **roles** of the participants at the Regional Gathering.*

Event Summary-Get to Know You Activity

The **Get To Know You Activity** drove conversations on four core **values** of HCA**: community, collaboration, inclusion** and **education**. Participants were divided into groups and encouraged to share their perspective on the **challenges** and **successes** of each value on their respective campuses or in their communities.

Common **themes** shared by participants during this activity included:

Succeses

- Mental health and wellness initiatives and advocacy campaigns, such as Consent Carnival, Wellness Fairs, Pet Therapy, UFlourish, Stress Less Weeks, Car Smash events, sober events and Bell Let's Talk were mentioned as successful initiatives.
- Peer-led education, groups and initiatives including peer support, peer wellness mentor groups, student-led events and wellness-specific clubs were celebrated, along with collaborations with students' associations.
- Dedicated spaces such as multi-faith rooms, Religious and Spirituality centers, Indigenous Centers, International Student Centers, Pride Centers and Transgender Centers have helped foster a sense of belonging on campus. Indigenization and decolonization efforts, such as having indigenous counselors and focused programs have also contributed to nurturing a sense of belonging on campus.
- Mental Health and Well-being strategies based on student wellness surveys and frameworks have provided campus-wide direction and even shifted the focus of strategies from campus to community-based mental health and well-being
- Trainings and workshops such as ASIST, Safe Talk, MHFA, healthy eating training, EDI, Transgender Allyship training, Recovery Ally, Harm reduction and Naloxone training, as well as workshops and Lunch & Learns being available to students and staff have helped to increase capacity and mental health and addictions awareness on campus.
- Proactive measures such as the First Alert System, providing crisis support for after hours, creating a Mental Health Toolkit and having faculty-wide instructions on making effective referrals were some collaborative and educational successes on campuses.
- The collaboration with external practices and partners helped increase campuses' capacity to provide mental health and physiological support to students.

Challenges

- Departmental siloing and lack of role clarity hinder collaboration, resource sharing and collaboration, sometimes leading to work duplication.
- Capacity issues (burnout, time constraints, staff turnover, and financial limitations) affect collaboration and mental health and well-being education, make it difficult to balance competing priorities and sometimes lead to long wait times for students.
- Low engagement from students, staff outside wellness roles, and executive leadership hinder collaboration on mental health and inclusion efforts and true community-building. Persistent stigma around mental health is an important factor.
- A disconnect between on-campus and off-campus mental health supports in the community was mentioned, with awareness, access and competition rather than collaboration with wellness organizations were mentioned as being key barriers to collaboration.
- Difficulties in keeping up-to-date with community resources and ensuring consistent communication about these resources were noted.
- Challenges in creating truly inclusive policies and equitable programs that address intersectionality while responding to the political climate were mentioned. Additionally, the colonial foundations of academic structures, such as grading systems and traditional course delivery models, continue to create barriers to inclusion.

Event Summary - Collaboration Activity

During the collaboration activity, participants worked together to address some of the concerns mentioned during the first activity. Discussions revolved around navigating existing resources to enhance student support and creating new collaboration opportunities within and between organizations and campuses.

Groups working together during the Collaboration activity

Some common problems and their proposed solutions include:

Issue	Solution
Student Engagement	• Use engaging, diverse outreach methods such as social media, classroom visits, pop-up booths, interactive games, and student-led initiatives. • Incentivize participation through for-credit workshops, certifications, co-curricular recognition, and fun, low-commitment spaces. • Strengthen connections between counsellors, faculty, peer educators, and student groups to enhance awareness, reduce stigma, and build trust. • Integrate wellness into campus culture with faculty involvement, tailored outreach across academic years, and partnerships with student organizations.
Stigma	• Have educational booths, talks and a mentorship program for international students. • Leverage community helpers and diverse facilitators to foster inclusivity, safety, and culturally relevant support. • Create diverse wellness groups to build community and address stigma. • Normalize discussions on mental health by connecting it to physical symptoms and using more culturally appropriate language, such as addressing mental health with overall well-being.
Capacity	• Address high demand for support during peak times with flexible service delivery models, and community partnerships to bridge gaps. • Have burnout prevention and compassion fatigue initiatives for those who support mental health and well-being • Foster campus-wide education and consistency in efforts to increase awareness and ensure all members understand their roles in supporting mental health and wellness.
Internal/ External Collaboration	• Pooling unrestricted funds and fostering cross-group collaborations for joint initiatives and resource sharing. • Developing faculty mental health toolkits, gathering feedback through focus groups, and forming multidisciplinary support teams. • Hosting larger gatherings, virtual peer support groups, and community events to strengthen connections. • Centralizing communication to reduce silos, improve resource navigation, and address turnover and burnout.

Participant Feedback: Participants shared how they felt at the end of the Regional Gathering

Participant Feedback: Do you feel inspired to take action?

"I will reach out to my counterparts to find solutions to shared struggles.

Yes! I have both immediate actionable items like creating circle of care plans and wellness workshops with international students that give them an opportunity to talk about what mental health looks like in their country!

I learned new ideas for programming I can implement from what has been successful for others.

I gathered faculty tools to share with my campus and related research to increase buy in."

What's Next?

HCA 2025 Wellness Summit

"Reimagining Campus Culture"

17th & 18th of June 2025
University of Calgary, MacEwan Ballroom

Invitation to Present open now!

Upcoming Events

Student Lunch & Learn
March 14th, 2025

Campus Peer Support Mini Train-the-trainer
March 26th, 2025

For more information or to register, visit:
https://www.healthycampusalberta.ca/learn-from-others/events/

hcaadmin@cmha.ab.ca
www.healthycampusalberta.ca

Healthy Campus Alberta

Canadian Mental Health Association in Alberta
Mental health for all