

HEALTHY CAMPUS ALBERTA 2025

Online Regional Gathering Report

The Online Regional Gathering was held on February 27, 2025, virtually over Zoom. The event was attended by **20 participants** from **10 Alberta campuses** and **5 community organizations**.

Event Summary: Collaboration Activity Part 1

The first part of the **Collaboration 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:

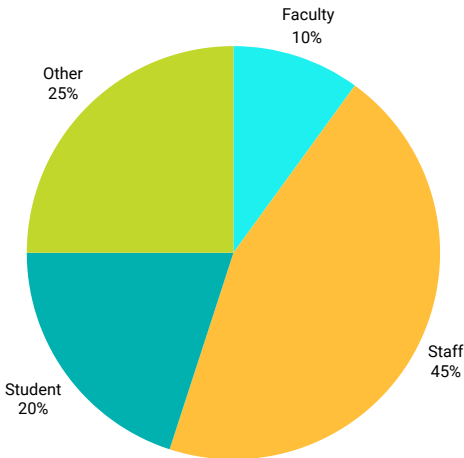


Chart showing the **roles** of the participants at the Regional Gathering.

Successes

- Collaborative initiatives such as mental-health-focused committees, student mental health networks for discussing opportunities, and events for local mental health awareness, addiction awareness, and healthy relationships contributed to community-building and inclusivity on campus.
- Student voice and peer leadership are central, with advisory committees, student councils, and recovery-based peer programs shaping responsive supports and fostering shared ownership of mental wellness.
- Increasing the connection between students and Elders, by highlighting the importance of language as a key part of identity, having indigenous-led nature walks focused on mental health and partnering with Siksika Health Services to support wellness, is helping to build a sense of belonging for indigenous students on campus. Special lounges for indigenous students to engage in their ceremonial practices, indigenous student unions and liaison programs to Elders also helped build community.
- Campuses celebrated diversity through spirit days and events like Diwali and "Taste of Diversity," fostering a welcoming and connected community. The LGBTQ+ community was supported through on-campus LGBTQ+ communities and Pride Week initiatives. International students could find support at the International Student Centre, which offered language brokers and facilitators with lived-in experience.
- Grants from the Government of Alberta provided support to mental health initiatives on campuses, reducing the need to rely on campus resources only. Shared resources from larger campuses helped build capacity as well.
- On-campus workshops provided LinkedIn-recognized certificates, alongside mental health literacy training for staff and faculty to support students in crisis. Programs like SafeTalk, QPR, and mandatory mental health assessments for athletes enhanced support and screening initiatives. Mental health rooms served as a resource for student programs, while instructor learning circles and classroom presentations helped raise awareness and reduce stigma around mental health.

Challenges

- Cross-campus collaboration is difficult due to geography, organizational silos, communication gaps and high staff turnover, making it hard to build and sustain relationships.
- Staff capacity is limited, with many managing mental health and well-being initiatives off the side of their desks, contributing to burnout and reducing time for collaboration and planning.
- Time constraints are a challenge for both staff and students who tend to be oversubscribed themselves, making scheduling difficult especially for shorter programs and students not living in residence at some campuses. Space to connect is also lacking.
- COVID-19 has impacted collaboration with the community, creating challenges in maintaining connections.
- Stigma and a lack of culturally-relevant programming and low diversity among counselling staff are continued barriers to access and inclusion. Students from equity-deserving groups are frequently asked for input without sufficient support or compensation, leading to engagement fatigue.
- Financial and systemic barriers prevent some students (especially international or out-of-province students) from accessing needed mental health services.
- Accessing off-campus support can be a challenge for students without appropriate health coverage.
- Faculty engagement is a barrier, with mental health not always seen as a priority in the academic context; burnout among faculty also limits their involvement.

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.

Most Significant Takeaways:

- There are a lot of great people in this line of work.
- We are doing great things!
- There should be intentionality in our actions
- Peer support seems to be a much more needed resource and is becoming much more recognized!
- I need to collaborate with other institutions to [apply] their ideas.
- Importance of education about addictions and mental health

Some common problems and their proposed solutions include:

Issue	Solution
Student Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frame mental health as a resource for academic success, with an addictions counselor available weekly and free food to increase student interest. Explore the possibility of class presentations on substance use and mental health.• Offer grade bonuses for participating in mental health training to incentivize students to access training.• Encourage faculty to promote class visits from the wellness team and have monthly inter-departmental meetings to discuss student mental health.• Provide certificates for completing and attending mental health presentations as an incentive for students to learn more about mental health and resources.• Ensuring the quality of facilitators can significantly impact and improve the effectiveness of mental health promotional training and learner engagement.• Use a systemic approach to identify structural and process stressors and incorporate mental health promotion directly into the classroom to meet students' needs.• Improved learning supports could free up more time for students to engage with mental health training and promotion.• Use multiple communication platforms to connect and share information with students.
Capacity - reaching students to get the care they need	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand the campus peer support team for more immediate support when needed.• Provide peer support availability at the Student Success Centre main desk.• Conduct 30-minute intake appointments for triage, assessment, and resource diversion, or utilize dedicated intake staff and an online form for initial assessments.• Address the challenge of student engagement in mental health promotion, especially for working adults with limited time.• Offer daily drop-in single-session appointments (30-45 minutes) focused on solutions.• Modify the community helpers programs to a more accessible and shorter format.• Reduce length and cost of training programs (e.g., Mental Health First Aid), prompting the need for shorter to increase accessibility.• Focus on early intervention through the case management model.• Provide support from academic advisors and the student conduct supervisor.

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



enthusiastic
excited
energized
happy
informed
validated

Participant Feedback: Do you feel inspired to take action?

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Yes. I felt inspired to learn more about less cost and time intensive mental health training options for learners

Yes. I heard some great ideas on ways to improve access to counselling and other MH supports. I will look at creating some walk-in appointment times and will look at creating a shared space where students can access support (single access point for all/most resources)

Yes. I would propose educational sessions in classroom and for faculty

Yes. Talk to the wellness advisor about some substance use ideas

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What's Next?

HCA 2025 Wellness Summit

“Reimagining Campus Culture”

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

Registration opening April 15th, 2025!

For more information, visit:
<https://www.healthycampusalberta.ca/events/hca-2025-wellness-summit/>

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