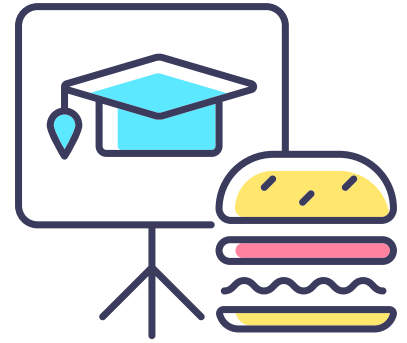


## HEALTHY CAMPUS ALBERTA

# Winter 2025 Student Lunch and Learn

HCA hosted its 4th Student Lunch and Learn on March 14th, 2025, from 11 am to 12 pm, over Zoom. The Lunch and Learn was attended by 24 students from the University of Alberta, Bow Valley College, MacEwan University, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, Northern Lakes College Student Association, Lakeland College and Mount Royal University.



### Event Summary

The event started with a brief introduction to Healthy Campus Alberta, providing information about the community of practice. Representatives from the Student Outreach Wellness Leaders (OWLs) team at SAIT then introduced the day's topic of Optimism.

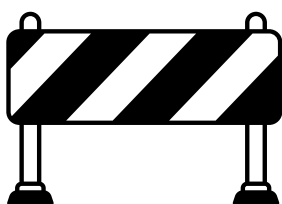
Facts from the most recent CCWS survey on student optimism were shared, and the impact of optimism discussed before providing some practical approaches to daily optimism. The OWLs then shared a [gratitude resource](#) with students that can be found at the end of this report.

Students then reflected on barriers to optimism, and ways in which their campus community could help facilitate optimism for them:



### Examples of barriers to optimism for students:

- Stress and overwhelm
- Academic pressure (e.g. midterms)
- Workload and balancing life's demands
- Getting stuck in a negative thought cycle or environment
- Comparison to others
- Perfectionism
- Self-doubt, low self-confidence, negative self-talk or self-criticism
- Mental health diagnoses
- Trauma
- Lack of support and loneliness
- Financial stress



### How the campus community can help:

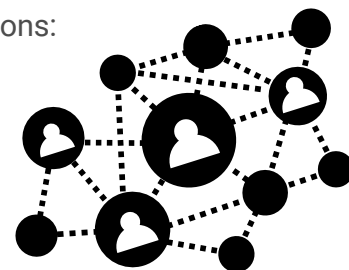
- Mental health supports and group counselling opportunities
- Student leadership
- Regular workshops
- Building a culture of optimism
- Posters around campus that promote optimism
- Flexibility around testing, deadlines and/or modes of demonstrating knowledge
- Relaxing activities and sensory-sensitive spaces
- Support from staff and faculty
- Opportunities to connect with others



Students then discussed the differences between ideal and grounded optimism in breakout rooms. Some takeaways were that grounded optimism recognizes challenges and focuses on one's capability to overcome or navigate difficulties. It encourages recognizing small wins and celebrating progress. Ideal optimism, or trying to find a "bright side" in every situation, can sometimes cause one to ignore issues and suppress feelings commonly categorized as "negative" such as anger or sadness. Practicing grounded optimism therefore builds resilience and promotes gratitude, patience and self-compassion. Students then discussed what optimism in action looks like to them, and how they could start spreading optimism in the people around them.

Students were then sent with a journaling activity with the following three questions:

- What are three things this week that brought you joy?
- Who are some people in your life who help you stay grounded in optimism?
- What is a positive affirmation that you can incorporate in your daily routine?



### Some takeaways shared about the event were:

"These workshops help students from different post-secondary institutions connect."

"...optimism can be used as a way to give yourself hope rather than minimize your problems."

"Unfortunately, optimism & positivity - as concepts - are frequently weaponized against people, including trauma & abuse survivors. I think it's important to draw more clear lines between what were presented as "ideal" versus "grounded" optimism."

"Learning more about optimism and the worksheet that the SAIT OWLS provided to help practice that every day."

"This was a great session and I really enjoyed it. Thank you for taking the time out of your day to create this event. Your efforts are appreciated!!"

### Resources:

- **8 Dimensions of Wellness Video:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NR4\\_5dt7JA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NR4_5dt7JA)
- **Stress Strategies:** <https://www.stressstrategies.ca/>
- **Mental Health Meter:** <https://cmha.ca/find-info/mental-health/check-in-on-your-mental-health/mental-health-meter/>
- **Self-Assessment Health Tools:** <https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/resources/self-assessment-health-tools>
- **BounceBack:** <https://bounceback.cmha.ca/>
- **Resources of Accessing Support:** <https://www.mymentalhealth.ca/category/get-help/>
- **Access wellness supports on your campus, or community supports from 211 Alberta:** <https://ab.211.ca/>
- **First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line:** <https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>
- **Anxiety Canada: My Anxiety Plan:** <https://maps.anxietycanada.com/courses/anxiety-plan-for-adults/>
- **SAIT OWLS Optimism and Gratitude resource:** <https://www.healthycampusalberta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Gratitude-for-Optimism-HCA-share-file.pdf>

### Next Steps:

The HCA Student Lunch and Learn event will return in the fall of 2025, and we want **YOU** to showcase what your club/organization/student association is doing to promote student mental health and well-being!

Reach out to HCA at [hcaadmin@healthycampusalberta.ca](mailto:hcaadmin@healthycampusalberta.ca) to connect with us.



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*Mental health for all*

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