

# **PSCYHOLOGY 1400**

## **Mental Health and Wellbeing Credit Course**

**Margaret N. Lumley, Ph.D., C.Psych.**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Dept. of Psychology**  
**University of Guelph**  
**[mlumley@uoguelph.ca](mailto:mlumley@uoguelph.ca)**

**June 9, 2015**

**UNIVERSITY  
of GUELPH**

**CHANGING LIVES  
IMPROVING LIFE**

# Workshop Overview

UNIVERSITY  
of GUELPH

CHANGING LIVES  
IMPROVING LIFE

What would you do?

Course Development

Course Framework

Course Description

Outcomes

Project Example

# TASK: What would you do?

1. What would you include in a for credit course on mental health designed for students with mental health challenges?
2. How would you recruit students for the course? What would your selection criteria be?
3. What challenges would you anticipate for this kind of course?
4. Do you think such a venture a good idea for your setting?

# Course Development

- Joint project including Student Accessibility Services, Student Life, Dept. of Psychology
- Modeled on extant course for students with learning disabilities
- Careful consultation during development process: mental health advisors, Director of Student Accessibility Services, mental health professionals and students with mental health challenges

# Student Focus Group

Participants: 25 students registered with mental health challenge



## Student Views on Goals of Course:

- Understand not a fraud for receiving supports
- Flexibility in course for students to follow maximally self-relevant path
- Awareness and knowing how to access campus, community and online supports
- Communication with peers, parents, profs
- How to manage self-disclosure and self-stigma

# Course Approval Process



Presentation to Psychology Dept. and approval granted from all faculty

Detailed application submitted to undergraduate approval process

Registration for course handled through mental health advisors at SAS so able to fast-track addition to undergraduate calendar

# OVERARCHING GOALS

UNIVERSITY  
of GUELPH

CHANGING LIVES  
IMPROVING LIFE

To promote both scholarly and applied understanding and enhancement of mental health and wellbeing for undergraduate students on campus.

Decrease self-stigma, and increase positive coping

To provide an additional opportunity to orient students to important supports available on campus, in the community and online.

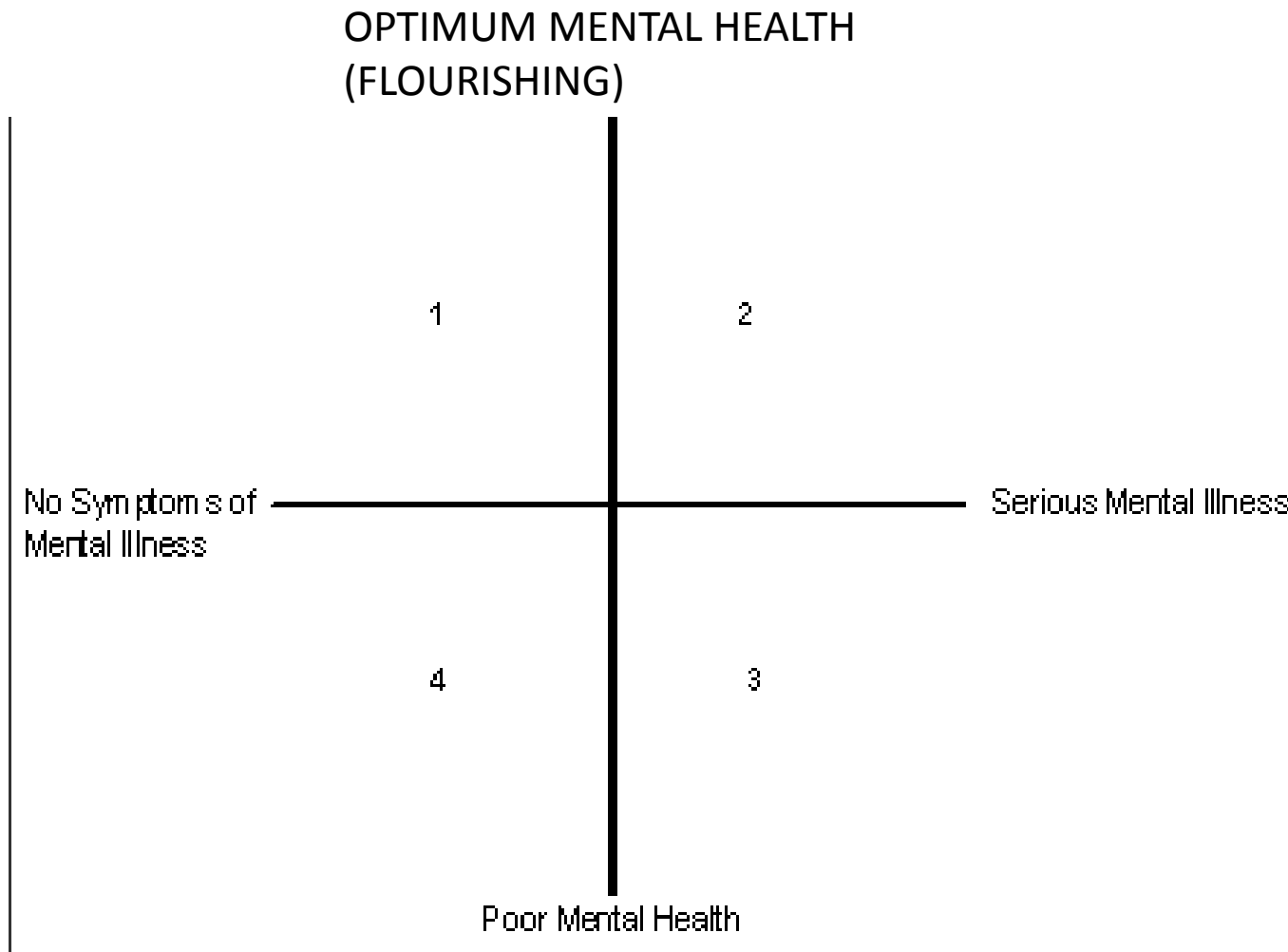
# How is this course is different from therapy or other mental health supports?



1. ***It is evaluative***
2. Earn a credit!
3. Greater education focus
4. Different levels of disclosure (not a place for working through most challenging issues)
5. Potentially a greater focus on mental health promotion – positive mental health



# Framework for Course: Dual Continuum Model



# Seligman's Theory of Wellbeing



**P**

**Positive  
Emotions**

**E**

**Engagement**

**R**

**Positive  
Relationships**

**M**

**Meaning**

**A**

**Accomplishment**

# PSYCH 1400

UNIVERSITY  
of GUELPH

CHANGING LIVES  
IMPROVING LIFE

Fall Semester 22 students, Two seminars (one for first years one for upper years)

Winter Semester 30 students, Two 1.5 hour lecture/seminars with entire group

52 Students completed pilot versions of this course

# Outline Overview

UNIVERSITY  
of GUELPH

CHANGING LIVES  
IMPROVING LIFE

## CENTRAL GOALS:

- ✓ Increase positive mental health
- ✓ Gain self-relevant knowledge and coping strategies
- ✓ Decrease self-stigma
- ✓ Increase academic self-efficacy

## Major Assignments:

1. Individual Learning and Wellbeing Plan
2. Final Presentation/Project on Mental Health

*Note: Syllabus available upon request*

# How different from typical courses?



- Small Size
- Evaluation component is participation based – pass/fail format
- Main focus is on positive SELF development vs. knowledge acquisition
- Very experiential: told they would benefit more if participate and engage more!

# Seminar Assignments

Mock Exam Questions

Hypothetical Advocacy Email

Mental Health Website Critique

Understanding Personal Strengths

Compassionate Letter to Self

Dialogue with a Peer

UNIVERSITY  
of GUELPH

CHANGING LIVES  
IMPROVING LIFE



# PROGRAM EVALUATION



## PARTICIPANTS

45 Participants (several at only 1 time point), Age range: 17-25 years, plus two mature students

46% in first year, remainder upper year

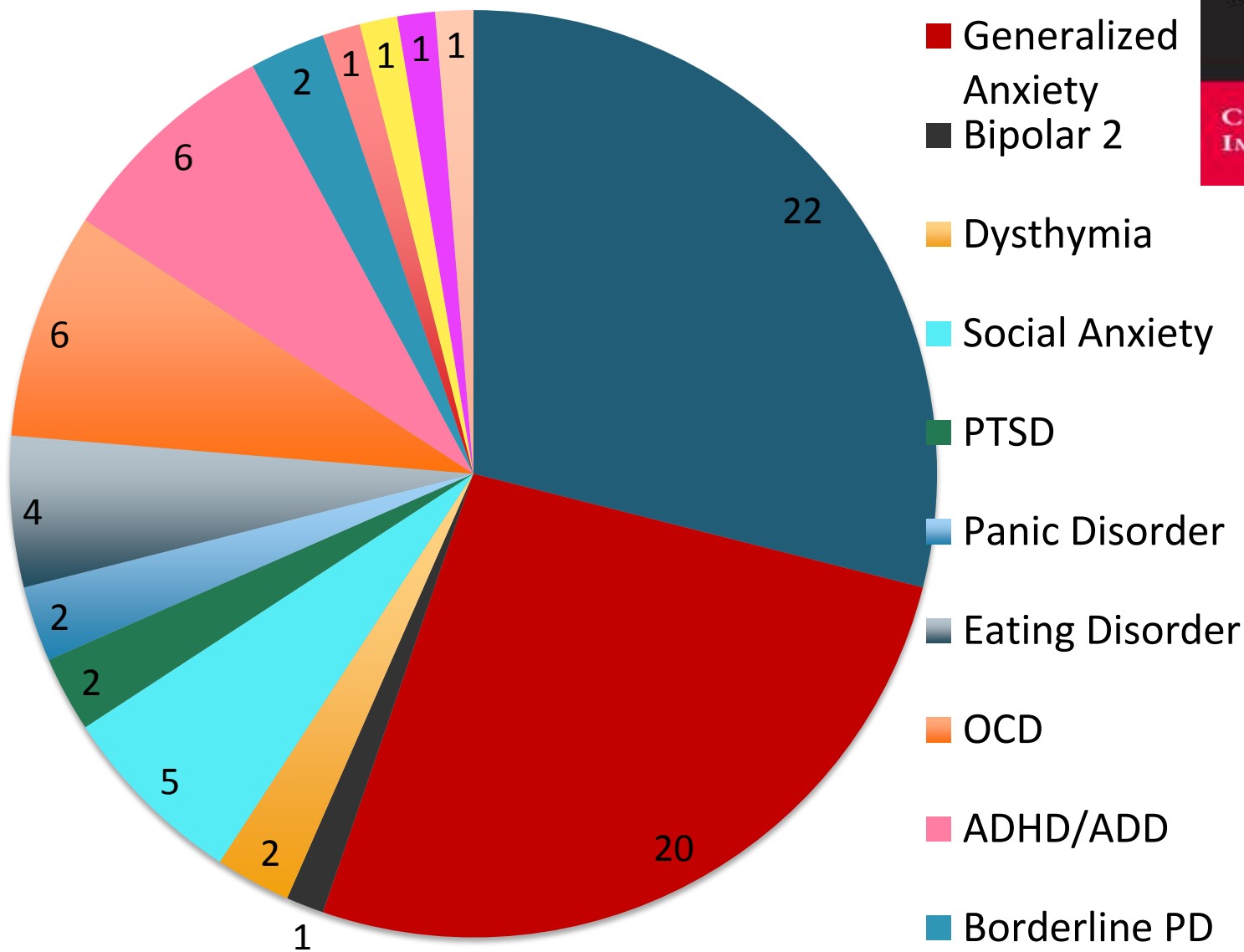
90% had taken psychoactive medication

36% had been hospitalized with their MHC

96% reported a DSM diagnosis



# Diagnoses



# METHOD

Time 1 – First Class (Sept, Jan), Time 2- Last Class (Dec, April)

Participants completed a quantitative survey about their mental health, self-stigma, resilience, coping and self-efficacy. Participants were also asked qualitative research questions about their experience with the course.

Participation was voluntary, participants received \$10 for their time

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

UNIVERSITY  
of GUELPH

CHANGING LIVES  
IMPROVING LIFE

Would participating in the class be associated with:

- 1 Improvements in student wellbeing (positive self-concept, resilience, mood, life satisfaction)?**
- 1 Improvements in coping strategies, including accessing needed resources?**
- 2 Reductions in self-stigma?**
- 3 Improvements in academic self-efficacy?**

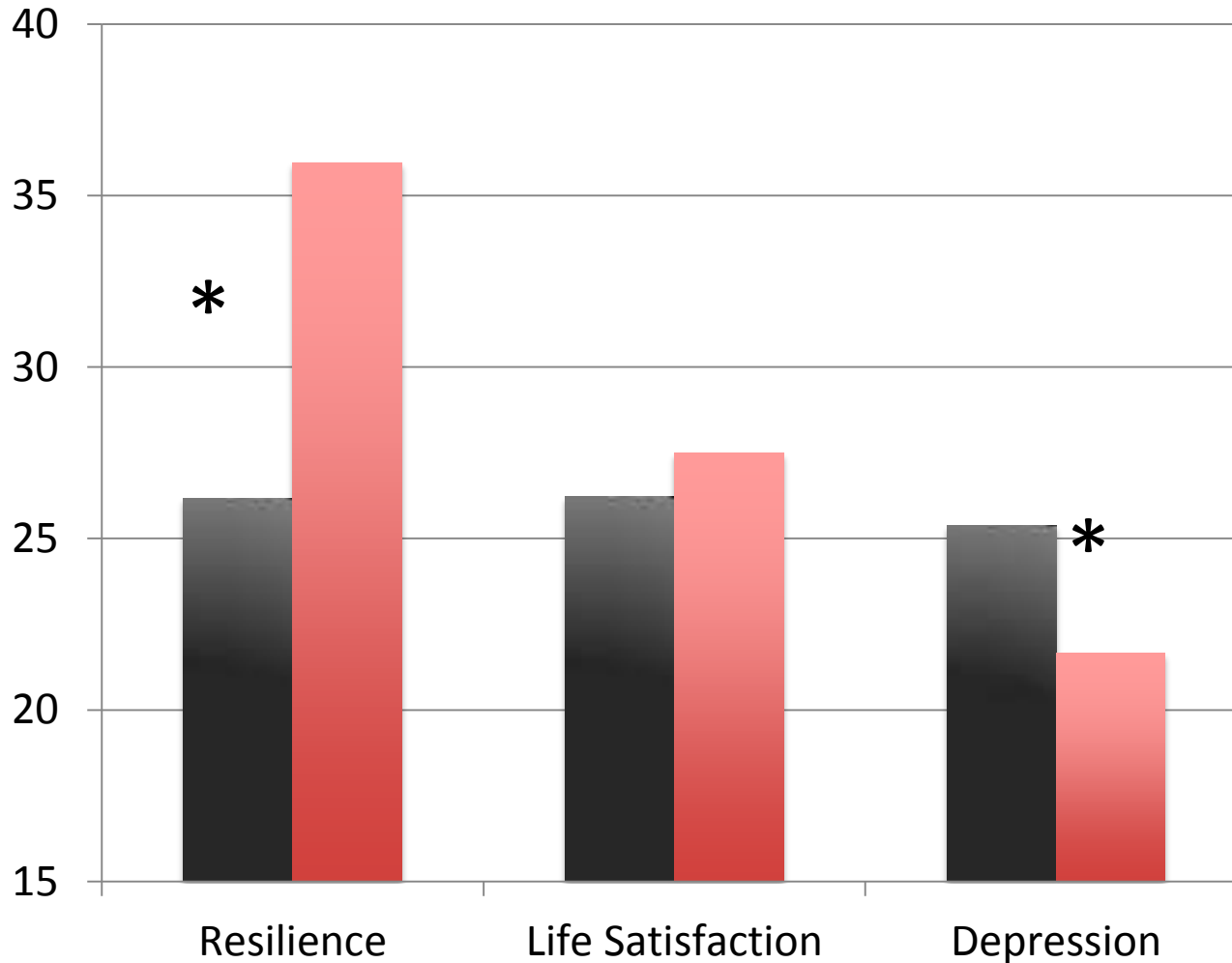
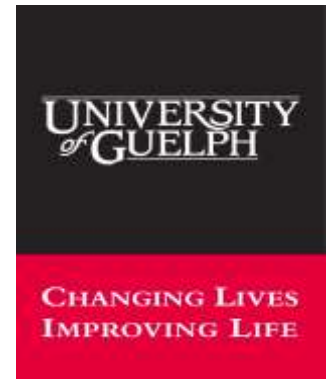
# RESULTS

UNIVERSITY  
of GUELPH

CHANGING LIVES  
IMPROVING LIFE

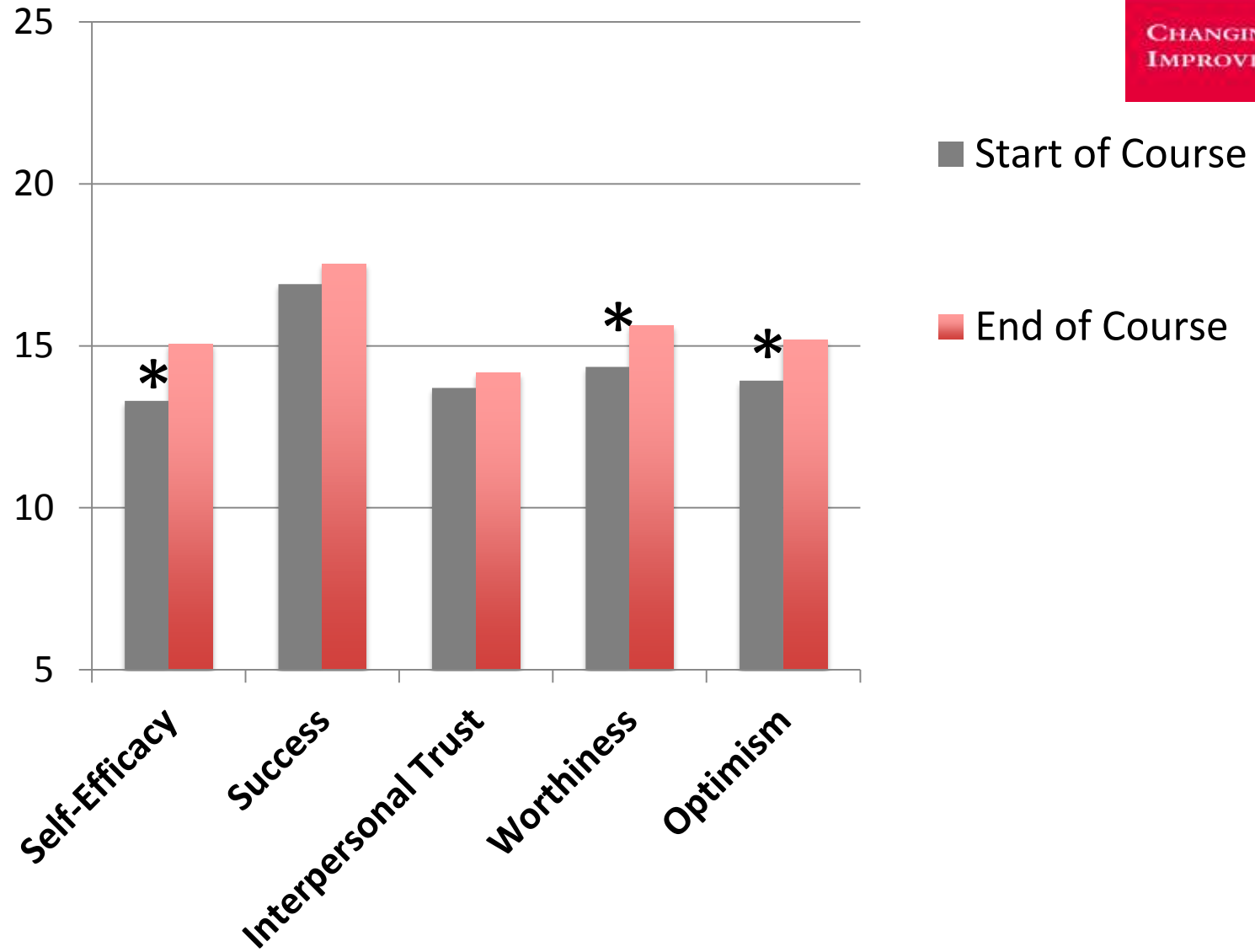
*“This course had a great impact on me. This is because it helped me learn coping strategies and I felt like I belonged. I feel I fit in with the other students in the course and everything we did in the course was relatable. My marks in other courses were higher this semester because of the things I learned in PSYCH 1400. I loved the course and the instructor. The assignments really helped me develop and I can see improvements in me. Thank you for offering this course.”*

# Changes in Overall Wellbeing

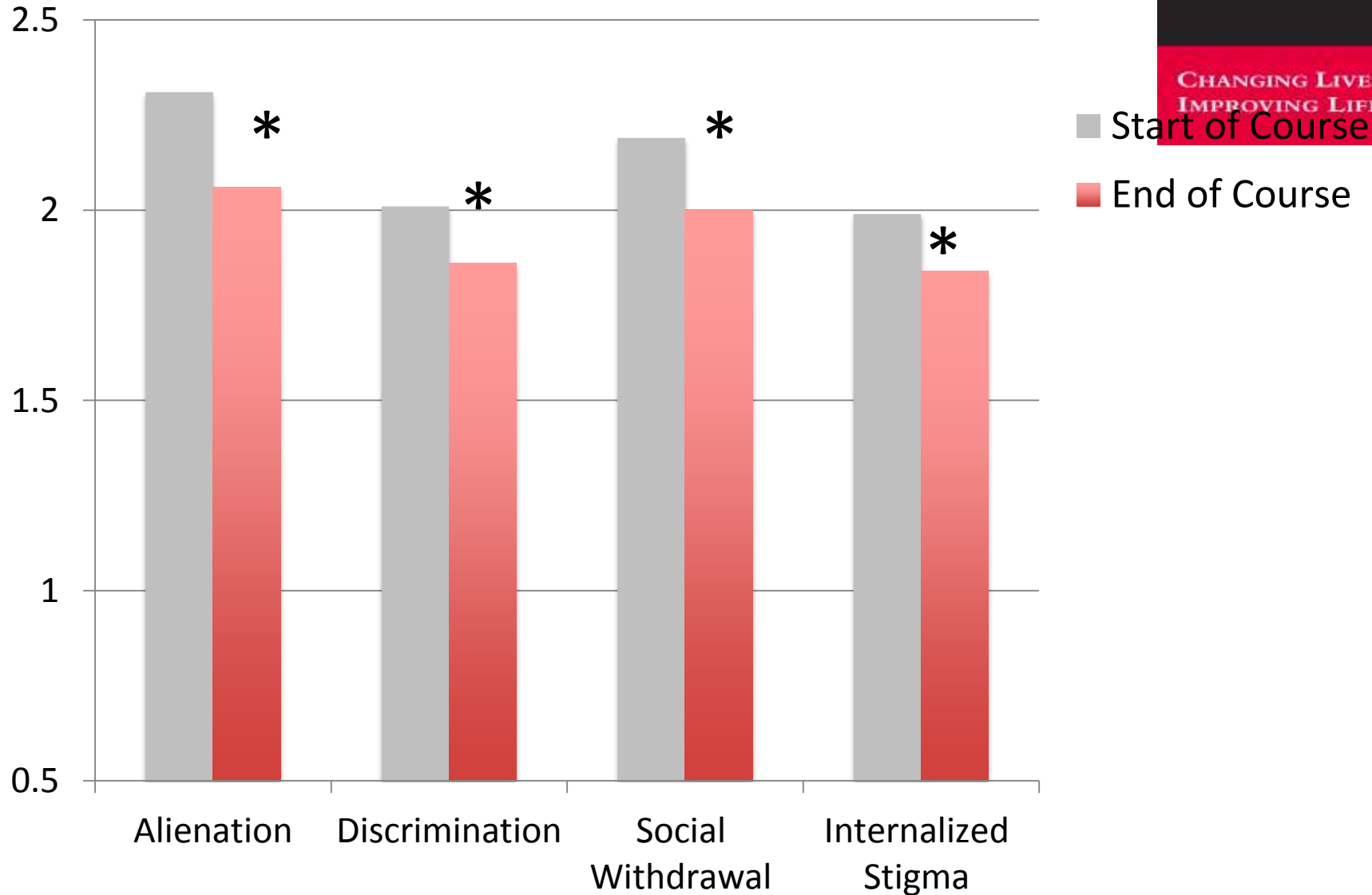


■ Start of Course  
■ End of Course

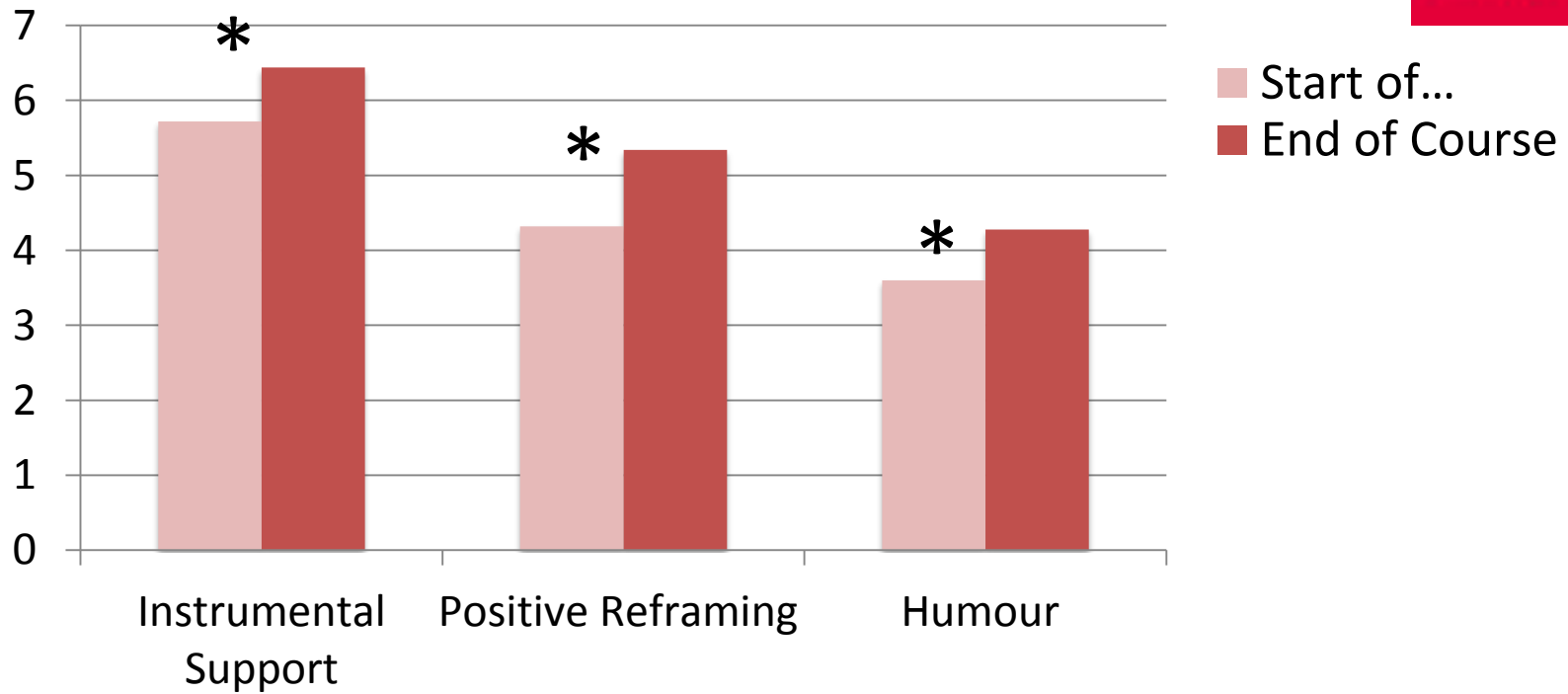
# Changes in Positive Self-Schemas



# Changes in Internalized Stigma

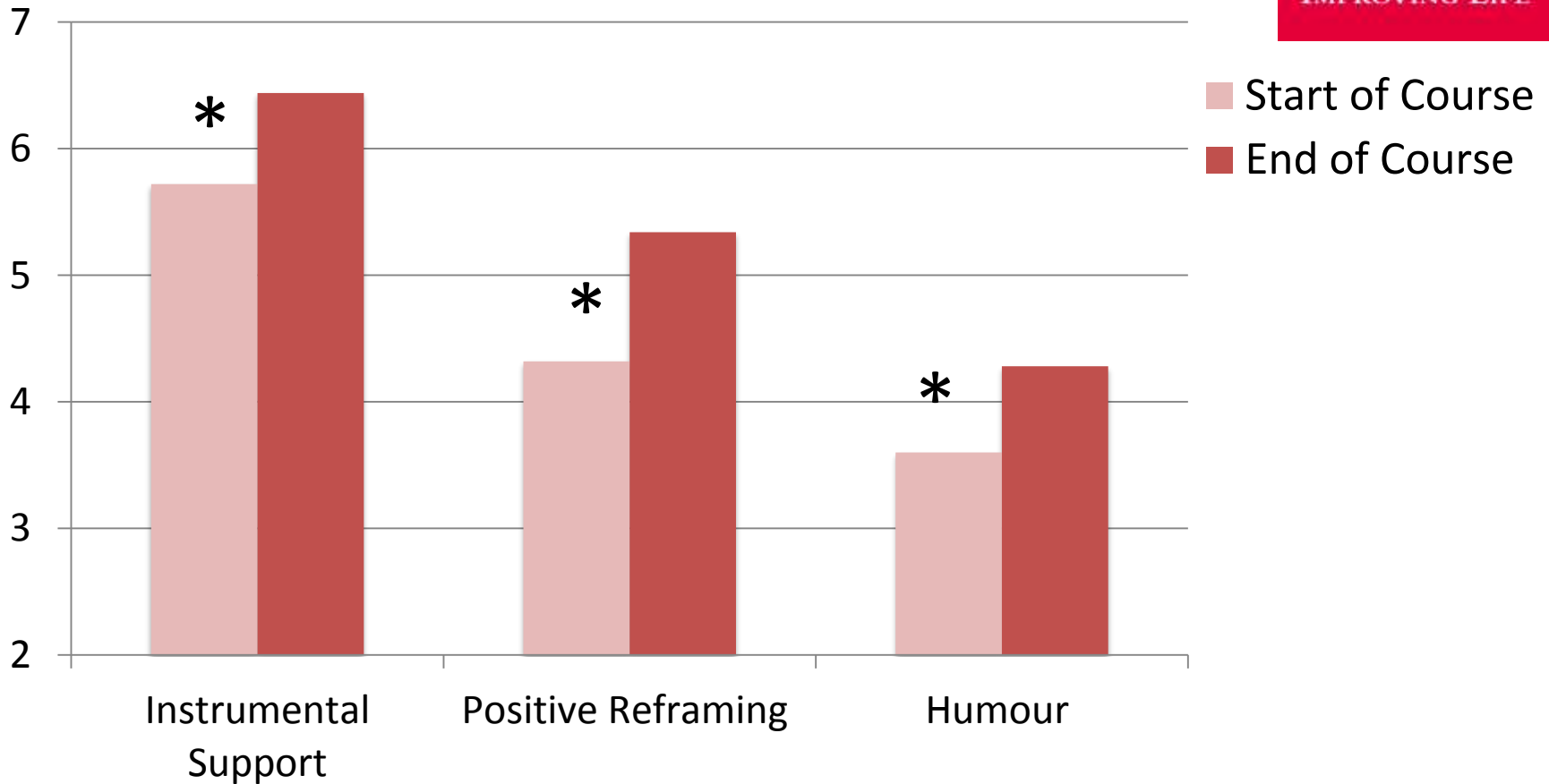


# Changes in Adaptive Coping





# Changes in Adaptive Coping



# Quantitative Summary

Overall a very positive pattern of outcomes!

- ✓ Improvements in RESILIENCE and POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT, Decreased Depressive Symptoms
- ✓ Improvements in coping strategies, including humour, positive reframing, using instrumental supports, etc.
- ✓ Significant reductions in self-stigma

Improvements in academic self-efficacy not evident in quantitative data but evident in qualitative data

# Qualitative Analysis

## THEME: Sense of Belonging and Stigma Reduction

*“Allowed me to open up and accept who I am –  
Made me feel like I wasn't alone - Felt welcome and  
comfortable”*

*“One thing I found reassuring was to be able to attend  
a class that had some base level of understanding  
between everyone involved. Seeing as we all deal with  
some kind of challenge to our mental health, the  
environment was non-judgmental in that regard and I  
was able to openly discuss any challenges with the  
instructor.”*

*“The small class size and the pass/fail approach helped  
me feel comfortable, I didn't have to feel judged.”*

## THEME: Academic Self-Efficacy

UNIVERSITY  
of GUELPH

CHANGING LIVES  
IMPROVING LIFE

*“This course encouraged me to put my mental health as a priority throughout the semester by learning new coping strategies and tools. The pass/fail nature of the course helped me to focus on my mental health without increasing my anxiety.”*

*“This course helped me find coping strategies that helped for me. It also got me talking more when we did the small group activities, which is what I’ve struggled with.”*

*“You can’t grade peoples’ opinions or struggles. The fact that this class was not graded gave me the confidence to participate and read the book everyday because I knew I was learning on my own past. I could ask questions and write about the questions based on my personal opinion. The class not being graded gave me the confidence to ask question on my own terms and not make them general.”*

## THEME: Personal Development and Coping Strategies

*“This course has provided me with the opportunity to learn about mental health and how to cope and better understand how to be a successful student. The small class size allowed for easy discussion and the pass/fail aspect took a lot of stress off my shoulders.”*

*How has this course impacted you? “- Improved well-being - Learned new coping techniques - Looked at good parts of life rather than focusing on bad parts - Goal was to improve knowledge and have better mindset, rather than get good grades.”*

*“This course gave me insight to many different options available to learn coping strategies. It also allowed me to meet many people on campus that also struggle with mental health.”*

*“Helped me to clearly recognize my strengths, as well as things I need to work on in order to cope with stress in my academic and personal life”*

UNIVERSITY  
of GUELPH

CHANGING LIVES  
IMPROVING LIFE

# CHALLENGES

Soliciting enough interest from incoming first year students in Fall term

Attendance: a chronic struggle for some – understandable given nature of MHCs

Assignment completion – finding appropriate accommodation while maintaining integrity of course

Disagreement on course grading – pass/fail worked for some but not for others:

*“I like the aspect of how grades don't matter here, but completion does. It made me make sure to get things done - however quality of work did drop.”*

Even though most predicted major issues with over-disclosure and triggering did not become an issue for this class

# TAKE HOME MESSAGES

UNIVERSITY  
of GUELPH

CHANGING LIVES  
IMPROVING LIFE

Experiences of instructors in course as well as formal and informal feedback from students, their counsellors and mental health advisors all indicate that this course was a great success for most students.

Outcome data also point to gains in areas of wellbeing, reductions of stigma and improved coping. Hearing in their own words what this course meant to the students has been quite powerful.

University of Guelph is planning to offer PSYC 1400 in Winter 2016

# Acknowledgements



GUELPH STUDENTS FOR PARTICIPING IN THIS PILOT AND GIVING OF THEIR TIME FOR THE RESEARCH – YOU WERE INSPIRING!

MENTAL HEALTH ADVISORS AT UOFG INCLUDING: WENDY WALSH, MELISSA BEACOM, SUE HAHN, PATTY MARROW AND DIRECTOR BRUNO MANCINI FOR HIS UNFLAGGING SUPPORT OF THIS PROJECT

PHD STUDENT SOPHIA FANOURGIAKIS – FOR STEPPING UP TO TEACH THIS COURSE WHEN NEEDED AND FOR YOUR LOVELY WORK WITH THE STUDENTS

ALL THE CONTRIBUTORS TO THE COURSE CONTENT INCLUDING PHD STUDENTS SOPHIA FANOURGIAKIS AND CHANTAL REGIS AND ALL THE WONDERFUL GUESTS SPEAKERS



CENTRE FOR INNOVATION IN  
Campus Mental Health