

Lambton College Mental Health Advisory Board: Year in Review 2014

In May of 2013, Lambton College submitted a Mental Health Innovation Fund proposal to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Even though we were not successful in obtaining funding, Lambton College recognized the value of formulating a mental health strategy and so Rob Kardas encouraged the implementation of specific initiatives from the developed framework.

As the fall semester began, Mickey Slood, Mary McHenry, Sharon Berry Ross and Charlene Mahon met to discuss how to build a mentally healthy campus. The need for a Mental Health Advisory Board with representation from faculty, support staff, management and students was apparent. The Board was formed on September 25th with the original four members (Mickey, Mary, Sharon and Charlene) and grew to include: James Grant, Tracy Wilson, Karolina Kulinska, Spencer Dickson, Laura Burke, and students Amanda Wilson and Laura Kernohan in the fall semester, and Lindsay Seguin and Juliann Freeman in the winter semester.

Terms of Reference were created to define our purpose which is to advise and encourage the development and coordination of internal and external resources related to the mental health and wellbeing of Lambton College students and staff. We are responsible to make suggestions to the Executive Director of Student Services and the Director of Student Success regarding mental health curriculum development (eg. HGD 1053 Introduction to Community Mental Health), delivery (eg. [The Jack Project](#) outreach activities such as free hot chocolate and pancake breakfast, flash mob and the use of social media <https://www.facebook.com/#!/JackProjectLambton>), and training (eg. [safeTALK](#), [Mental Health First Aid](#)), as well as creating partnerships within the College and in the community to increase mental health awareness (Blues Day), literacy (new mental health module- *The Lions Roar*), and promotion The Jack Project, Circles, Literary and Photography competitions).

Our monthly meetings generated the following recommendations, resulting in the subsequent actions:

- **Increase awareness through training and educational opportunities for staff and students**
 - Multiple professional development sessions were and will continue to be offered including Mental Health First Aid, [safeTALK](#), and [ASIST](#). Also *Understanding International Student Mental Health* is being offered during the May/June period.
 - Creation of a new 3 hour mental health module entitled: *The Lions Roar: Stomping out the Stigma while Promoting Awareness, Acceptance and Action for Mental Health Care*. This PD is designed to provide practical information about anxiety and depression and to equip participants with a comfort level to open up the conversation about mental health. Several useful tips for how to help someone (student, friend, or colleague) who may be experiencing distress is a key part of this training which will be offered in the May/June period.
 - Development of a one hour online mental health module is also being discussed.
 - The College's support of mental health is further evidenced by the development and delivery of the Community Mental Health: Multidiscipline Graduate Certificate which was first offered this year. An open general elective entitled *Introduction to Community Mental Health* is currently being offered. It also serves as a required course for the graduate certificate. General electives in stress management and wellness are also available to enhance the student experience and strengthen well-being. Future mental health focused general education courses are strongly encouraged and supported.
- **Increase the number of resident mental health trainers on campus**
 - In addition to Joe Cannon, Ruth Guerts ([ASIST](#)) and Sharon Berry Ross ([safeTALK](#)), Karolina Kulinska and Charlene Mahon are now [Mental Health First Aid](#) trainers.

- **Establish a mental health hub**
 - Student Success, Marketing and IT have worked hard to create a portal on myLambton for access to internal and external mental health resources and assistance. It is nearing its launch date. The hub, called S.O.S. (Supporting Our Students) is an interactive site that students and staff can utilize for assistance (when and where to find help), tip sheets, videos, resource links, event information, and volunteer opportunities. Also, visitors to the site will be encouraged to submit their inspirational stories of coping with mental health which will potentially be posted on a mental health blog that is currently under construction.
 - This hub will also serve as a conduit to resources in the community which will help us leverage support for our students.
- **Survey the Staff and Students**
 - With the College Research Ethics Board approval in March, two separate surveys were sent to staff and students to gather opinions of mental health services, needs, and desired changes. This valuable information was instrumental in the final design of the 3 hour mental health module and will help direct future initiatives.
- **Increase supports for students**
 - The Board supported the Mental Health Week called *Unleash the Stress*, November 9-15th involving the activities planned by the nursing, massage, and ECE students, as well as The Jack Project team. This week included: the launch of The Jack Project Lambton College (a student led mental health group), a flash mob involving students, staff and management, bubble-wrapped stress ball and carnation give-aways, free massages and yoga sessions, a mental health information fair to local high school students, walls covered with encouragement post-it notes, a puppy room, and a Walk for mental health down London Road.
 - The Board endorsed the campus mental health resource map constructed by The Jack Project and given to students in residence
 - Another successful Blues Day was held March 12th. Lindsay and Juliann of the Board were instrumental in the development and delivery of this very important educational platform for mental health. Embracing the artistic expression of mental health, a literary and photography competition were held and the winners were announced at Blues Day.
 - Peer support has been researched by Lindsay and Juliann of the Board. Open Doors, a community based group for those with lived experience of mental illness, provided support to students at the end of the winter semester. The Jack Project students also provided support to students following Clara's Big Ride in March.
 - The Green House by the Bridge entrance has been discussed as a possible quiet space for students. The Jack Project students would like to use this as their defined space for opening up the conversation about mental health with fellow students.
- **Encourage the conversation about mental health across the campus**
 - The Board supported [Clara's Big Ride](#) and the coinciding Spin Bike Relay to increase mental health awareness
 - The blue bicycle which Clara Hughes signed now resides in the counselling office. Watch for other blue bikes to be 'parked' around campus as symbols of mental health promotion
 - There is a clear need to become aware of mental health activities and initiatives on campus and in the community. This summary is meant to promote dialogue and discussion and encourage the development of a stigma-free campus. The goal is to equip students with mental health awareness and literacy to provide an added-value educational experience.

- **Ensure policies and protocols are in place and updated**
 - The Board offered recommendations regarding a policy and procedure for responding to the death of a student
- **Improve communication flow of mental health initiatives on campus**
 - This is still a work in progress. Our hope is that with knowledge of the existence of the Mental Health Advisory Board and the mental health hub, all stakeholders in the College will inform the Board of initiatives. It is our goal to increase awareness and promote events and activities that relate to mental health so that we can support each other as we move forward and avoid any duplication or misinformation.
- **Foster community partnerships**
 - Local mental health agencies were present on campus during the Mental Health Week as well as Blues Day
 - There has been discussion with community agencies to provide support on and off campus for our students with formal diagnoses
 - Mental health training offered to community agencies involved in providing placements for our students in the School of Community Services
 - **Intentional engagement with students transitioning from high school**
 - Connection with area high schools is being pursued by The Jack Project students. They have delivered workshops during Campus Tour Days and by invitation to local high school classrooms. The Jack Project students also recently piloted an assembly to grade 12 students in Wallaceburg relating to the stressors of transitioning from high school and the need to develop proactive coping strategies.

The Mental Health Advisory Board exists to promote initiatives that will foster the development and maintenance of a mentally healthy campus at every level – from the students to the support staff, faculty, and administration. Together, we can strengthen the foundation of support and hope in our College and community as a collaborative effort to prepare individuals for the future. Let us keep the momentum going and encourage the continuation of building a vibrant community of care.

