



Embedding wellness in post-secondary learning and experience: For-credit wellness courses

Student services across Canada struggle to reach students with messages about wellness and mental health support. So what if students were offered wellness courses as an integral part of their post-secondary experience? For-credit wellness courses accompany and help accelerate a paradigm shift in higher education institutions' priorities, services, and curricula. Embedding topics of mental health, wellbeing, and identity into the core curricula of post-secondary institutions helps generate a campus-wide culture of wellbeing and sets students up proactively for success.



Why deliver this as a for-credit course?

- Reach a large number of students
- Low cost to the university/college
- Reduce barriers to utilization of services
- Opportunities for social engagement
- Address wellbeing needs from a skills-based perspective
- Communicates institutional priority of mental health and wellbeing
- Equitable for diverse students
- Potential for improved health, academic success and increased retention



Wellbeing as an equity issue:

- Inequitable to assume that all students have the opportunity to learn self-management skills
- Supports that are only offered outside of the curriculum pose accessibility issues, particularly for commuter and low-income or working students



Example of a for-credit wellbeing course:



Core Course Components

- Background and content education
- Skills Practice: In-Class Activities
- Skills Practice: At-Home Participation
- Reflection, Discussion, Peer Engagement



Example Session Topics

- Stress
- Mindfulness
- Time-use and self-management
- Emotions and regulation
- Effective communication
- Substance use
- The impact of movement and food



Process for Implementation:

- 1. Understand need**
 - a. Conduct a needs assessment to gain insight into the specific needs on your campus
- 2. Develop appropriate format**
 - a. Tailor the structure of the curriculum or program to specific needs
- 3. Pilot and data**
 - a. Offer a pilot version of the course, collect data, and adjust accordingly
- 4. Growth**
 - a. Offer larger courses and multiple sections, and recruit students to engage



Strategies and Troubleshooting:

- 1. Distinct value**
 - a. Learn about the specific roles, services, and supports provided by existing campus units to carve out distinct role
- 2. Evidence**
 - a. Produce impact data to demonstrate value and need
- 3. Collaboration**
 - a. Partner with academic departments, campus units, & other related initiatives.
 - b. More champions = greater sustainability
- 4. Build demand**
 - a. Generate buzz around course: student groups, orientations, workshops, flyers



Watch the Webinar

To learn more about supporting international students, be sure to watch the webinar recording at: <https://campusmentalhealth.ca/webinars/for-credit/>

Credits for this collaborative webinar and content go to our speaker: Leah Goodman, a Clinical Instructor at the University of Illinois at Chicago.