

# Leadership in Creating Healthy Campus Communities

Healthy Campus Community is a foundational, award-winning initiative by SFU's Health Promotion team that has been internationally recognized for leadership in advancing systemic health promotion within a university context. It takes a systemic, institution-wide approach to enhance conditions that are conducive to well-being. Creating healthy settings ensures that policies, processes, learning environments, physical spaces and other aspects of the institutional environment, are designed to enhance and support student mental health and well-being.

View the team's [mission, vision and core principles](#) to learn more about how the Health Promotion team advances student health and well-being at SFU.

## ***The Significance of the Okanagan Charter***

In 2015, SFU's Health Promotion team led the [Charter development process](#) and has since been international leaders in this work. Since the release of the [Okanagan Charter](#) in 2015, hundreds of post-secondary institutions, spanning 40 different countries and across [12 international networks](#), have become signatories of the Charter and adopted initiatives and programming to ensure student health and well-being are prioritized within their core mandate. This includes a recognition of the important impacts that student mental health and well-being have on institutional outcomes such as student retention ([Eisenberg, Ketchen and Posselt, 2016](#)), student experience ([American Council on Education, 2019; Finley, 2016](#)), and learning ([Keeling, 2014](#)).

## ***Connections with post-secondary institutions nationwide and internationally***

The team has been featured by [EAB](#), [Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health](#), [Healthy Minds | Healthy Campuses community of practice](#), and leading institutions like Princeton have [referenced our work in their online materials](#). The following is a list of post-secondary institutions who have reached out for information about programming or who have developed initiatives based on the Health Promotion team's work: Augustana College, British Columbia Institute of Technology, California State University, Central Washington University, College of New Caledonia, Columbia University, Cornell University, Lethbridge College, Jacksonville University, Kings College London, Gonzaga University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, McGill University, New York University, North Island College, Princeton University, Toronto Metropolitan University, University of Alberta, University of Auckland, University of British Columbia, University of California, University of Central Lancashire, University of Colorado Boulder, University of Oregon, University of Regina, University of Sheffield, University of the Sunshine Coast (Australia), University of Texas at Austin, University of Victoria, and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

## Student Well-being and SFU's Core Mandate

By enhancing well-being, individuals and groups engaged in this work contribute to the health and success of the institution and its community members. The Healthy Campus Community Initiative supports SFU's strategic vision as an Engaged University. Post-secondary institutions are increasingly expected to provide students with the experiences and skills they need to succeed in a complex and ever-changing world. This goes beyond simply educating students and includes creating equitable and healthy systems and environments that foster students who are healthy, resilient, creative, collaborative and engaged citizens. Health and well-being are essential for student success, engagement and retention and as such, are integral to the core business of SFU.

Watch a brief [3-minute video about the purpose of the Healthy Campus Community initiative.](#)

### ***The need for prioritizing mental health and well-being***

Student mental health and well-being are closely tied to student retention ([Eisenberg, Ketchen and Posselt, 2016](#)), student experience ([American Council on Education, 2019](#); [Finley, 2016](#)), learning ([Keeling, 2014](#)), and overall functioning ([CMHA, n.d.](#)). Thus, they are central to the core business of higher education. Mental health and well-being are shaped by the social determinants of health – the non-medical factors, forces, and systems that shape the conditions of daily life, which in turn, influence health outcomes ([WHO, n.d.](#)). Certain groups are disproportionately impacted by the social determinants of health, with individual and structural barriers contributing to health inequities and lived experiences ([National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health, 2018](#)). As a result, international students and students from equity deserving communities may experience greater stressors that impact their mental well-being, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic ([Moyser, 2020](#); [Slemon et al., 2022](#))

Student well-being continues to be a concern at SFU, with 50% of SFU students reporting severe or moderate mental distress ([Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey, 2020](#)). Only 39% of students reported that SFU provides them with a supportive environment that reduces unnecessary personal and academic stress ([UGSS, 2021](#)), and only 33% of students felt that SFU holds their mental and emotional well-being as a priority ([Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey, 2020](#)). Furthermore, it has long been documented that stress is one of the top factors that students report as negatively impacting their academic success, and that academics are one of the top factors that students report as being traumatic or difficult to handle ([National College Health Assessment, 2016](#)). Additionally, pandemic fatigue “showed significant associations with anxiety, social isolation, financial stress, and increased academic load” ([Rashid and Di Genova, 2022, p.7](#))

all related to mental well-being. A recent study commissioned by the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) and the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) showed that 3 in 4 students reported experiencing negative mental health during their studies ([CASA and HMCC, 2022](#)).

Student mental health and well-being programming, services and initiatives need to be prioritized, particularly given growing mental health concerns related to the global pandemic, the world financial crises, climate change, international conflicts and other global challenges. Thus, providing appropriate, accessible, and inclusive support for mental health and well-being is central to student success and retention. Engaging in strategic and coordinated efforts at the institutional level would increase the likelihood of sustaining change, allowing for greater long-term impacts and continuous improvement.

It is therefore essential that we work together across the institution, through initiatives like the Healthy Campus Community initiative, to create environments, conditions and experiences of well-being for students within the academic and non-academic environments.

## Strategic Alignment

The SFU Healthy Campus Community Initiative is grounded in foundational documents such as the [National Standard for Post-secondary Mental Health & Well-being](#), the [Okanagan Charter](#), and the [Scarborough Charter](#), and is continually informed by current literature, research projects from SFU Health Promotion and SFU Institutional Research and Planning, UGSS data, the Keeling Report, and SFU's commitments to [Reconciliation and Decolonization](#). The initiative also aligns with current provincial and national initiatives to enhance well-being in post-secondary institution such as The Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division's [Healthy Minds | Healthy Campuses](#), [BCcampus](#), and the [Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health](#).

## Awards, Publications, and Endorsements

The Health Promotion team has authored many publications related to the Healthy Campus Community Initiative, and has presented this work at numerous conferences across Canada and internationally. The initiative has also been featured in reports, webinars and newsletters both nationally and internationally, and has received several awards. Below are some key highlights.

## Publications

2019	Journal Article in Innovative Higher Education	<a href="#">Design and Validation of a Tool to Measure Associations between the Learning Environment and Student Well-Being: The Healthy Environments and Learning Practices Survey (HELPS)</a>	This is an original peer reviewed publication by SFU Health Promotion and research partner from the Faculty of Education
2019	Feature in Report	<a href="#">Expanding Well-being Initiatives Through Faculty Partnerships</a>	SFU's Well-being in Learning Environments was Featured by EAB
2018	Book Chapter	Impacts of Learning Environments on Student Well-being in Higher Education.	In partnership with Dr. David Zandvliet (SFU Faculty of Education), SFU Health Promotion has authored a chapter in the book: <i>Thirty Years of Learning Environments Research: Looking Back and Looking Forward</i> , Fraser, B., & Zandvliet DB (Eds.). Netherlands: Brill.
2017	Book Chapter	Health promoting universities: Shifting from health education to social innovation.	SFU Health Promotion, in collaboration with Paola Ardiles (SFU Faculty of Health Sciences), authored a Chapter in the 4 <sup>th</sup> edition of the book:

			<i>Health promotion in Canada</i> , I. Rootman, A. Pedersen, K.L. Frolich, & S. Dupere (Eds.), (p. 268-285). Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Scholars.
2017	Endorsement	<a href="#">Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health Toolkit on Mental Health and the Learning Environment</a>	SFU Health Promotion's work is featured by the Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health
2016	Journal Article	<a href="#">Building partnerships to enhance student well-being and strategic enrollment management.</a>	Published in the Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly, this publication shares SFU Health Promotion's experience developing partnerships with faculty.
2016	Journal Article	<a href="#">Understanding Students' Experiences of Well-being in Learning Environments</a>	SFU Health Promotion and research partner Dr. David Zandvliet publish this article in Higher Education Studies. It provides a qualitative exploration of students' lived experiences of well-being in learning environments within a Canadian post-secondary context.
2016	Article	<a href="#">Well-being in Teaching and</a>	A project led by SFU's Health Promotion

		<a href="#">Learning: Healthy Universities UK</a>	team and Teaching and Learning Centre, Well-being in Learning Environments, was featured in the UK Healthy Universities Network Newsletter.
2016	Article	<a href="#">Engaging Faculty in Creating Conditions for Well-being in Learning Environments at SFU</a>	The development of the Well-being in Learning Environments project was showcased in the American College Health Association (ACHA) newsletter.
2015	International Charter	<a href="#">Okanagan Charter: An International Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges</a>	SFU's Health Promotion team lead the Charter Development Committee, and the Design Lab Process and were represented on the writing team.
2014	Video	<a href="#">Well-being in Learning Environments Webinar</a>	SFU Health Promotion shared their expertise in a national webinar hosted by the Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health and Healthy Minds Healthy Campuses.
2013	Journal Article	Building Healthy Campus Communities: the adaptation of a workplace tool to understand better student well-being	This is an original peer reviewed publication by SFU Health Promotion in partnership with a student and their supervising faculty members from the

			SFU Faculty of Health Sciences.
2013	Article	<a href="#">The Well-being and the Flourishing of Students: Considering Well-being and it's connection to learning and civic engagement as central to the mission of higher education.</a>	SFU's Well-being in Learning Environment's project is featured in the American Association of Colleges and Universities Bringing Theory to Practice (2013) publication on pg 17.
2012	Report	<a href="#">Healthy Minds Healthy People: A 10 Year Plan to Address Mental Health and Substance Use in British Columbia – Annual Report</a>	The BC Ministry of Health 2012 Annual Report on "Healthy Minds, Healthy People: A Ten-Year Plan to Address Mental Health and Substance Use in British Columbia" references the SFU Healthy Campus Community initiative on page 10.

### Awards & Endorsements

2014	Innovation Award for Well-being in Learning Environments Project	The Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS) awarded the Well-being in Learning Environments Project the Innovation Award.
2015	Best Practice in College Health Award	This award is offered annually by the American College Health Association to for exemplary, innovative and inspirational practices in college health.

2016	Golden Gull Award for Best Health Education and Promotion Practices	"Bouncing Back", SFU's online resilience course received the PCCHA Golden Gull Award for Best Health Education and Promotion Practices.
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## Reports, Outcomes and Evaluation

SFU's Healthy Campus Community initiative is being evaluated through the collection of qualitative and quantitative progress markers. Outcomes are being tracked through the collection of student health data and indicators from other institutional surveys.

The following [reports](#) outline the outcomes of the Healthy Campus Community to date.

## Historical Background

Planning for the initiative began in 2010, and the first iteration of the initiative was launched in 2011 with the intention of taking a systemic, campus-wide approach to create conditions that enhance health and well-being. The initiative is based on the World Health Organization (WHO) Healthy University Framework which involves working collaboratively to create campus environments that positively influence the health and well-being of students, staff and faculty.

SFU's original [Vision for a Healthy Campus Community](#) was co-created in 2014 with input from over 300 campus members. The vision outlines the goals, principles and calls to action of the Healthy Campus Community initiative and was formally endorsed by President Andrew Petter in 2015.

*"I am pleased to present SFU's Vision for a Healthy Campus Community, an important part of our commitment to be Canada's Engaged University. At SFU, we care deeply about the physical and emotional well-being of our students, faculty and staff. That's why we have been a leader in the Healthy Campus Community movement. In doing so, we have strived not only to create a supportive campus community that benefits our own members, but also to provide an example that can be looked to by others"*



- Andrew Petter, SFU President and Vice Chancellor

For more information about the theories and rationale behind SFU's Healthy Campus Community Initiative and its key projects please see:

- [Well-being in Learning Environments Rationale, 2013](#)
- [A Rationale to Address Physical Spaces and Well-being in Post Secondary Settings, 2014](#)
- [Rationale SFU's Healthy Campus Community Initiative, 2012](#)
- [Rationale for Embedding Conditions for Well-being in Academic Settings, 2015](#)