



# Healthy Campus Initiative Backgrounder

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Human Resource Services

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# Overview and Purpose

Universities play a key role in creating the conditions to support the wellbeing and success of its people; students, faculty and staff. Increasingly, the wellbeing of campus communities has become a focal point for action across colleges and universities provincially, nationally and internationally.

While, many other Canadian campuses have taken steps to develop strategies for a healthy campus, most approaches have focused on either student wellbeing or staff wellbeing. The unique and innovative aspect of this proposal resides in the approach to include faculty, students, and staff as the primary audience of the Strategic Plan. The sponsors believe the wellbeing of students, faculty and staff is vital to creating and sustaining a healthy campus community where all have the opportunity to excel professionally/academically and personally. In taking this approach, the initiative will stand as a leading edge exemplar for other post-secondary institutions and contribute to a growing knowledge base of best practise for healthy universities.

The concept of a health-promoting university is one that aspires to embed health into the culture and social norms of everyday interactions, operations, business practices and academic mandates. In Canada, many post-secondary institutions have taken steps to develop healthy campus strategic plans to support the wellbeing of students and staff. (See more on 'Best Practices in Appendix 1.)

The University of Alberta has a long history of offering health and wellness services for campus community members with significant actions being taken by stakeholders over the last twenty years. Previous efforts have been influential in raising awareness of campus health issues resulting in new programs, initiatives and approaches to service delivery.

Building on the work being done across our campuses, the creation of a healthy campus strategic plan provides an opportunity to improve the effectiveness and coordination of activities as well as build on current achievements in campus health. Currently, health and wellness services and program offerings at the University do not have an institutional plan to guide activities or strengthen efforts. As a result, these activities are provided by a wide variety of departments and faculties and are seen as fragmented across the institution creating confusion among students and staff about the various resources, providers and initiatives available.

Recognizing the value of existing health and wellness resources at the University of Alberta, the initiative intends to engage the community of service providers in a collaborative effort to strengthen linkages between these resources and provide a common strategic framework for addressing the identified health priorities of our population

The intention of the healthy campus strategic plan is to develop a cohesive, campus-wide strategic approach to fostering a healthy campus community. It is not intended to replace current accountabilities and strategies of critical health and wellness resources active within the university community. The benefit of developing and implementing such an initiative contributes to optimizing resources across campus.

# Sponsors and Governance

The Sponsors of this initiative are advocates of a systems approach to achieve sustainable outcomes. A systems approach recognizes that all members of the campus community play a role in creating the conditions needed for students, faculty and staff to flourish. Universities are increasingly shifting away from isolated and ad-hoc individual level health interventions and moving toward systemic interventions consistent with the Healthy University model. Such models are illustrating the effect of the overall environment on student and staff retention, academic success, and staff productivity.

Working in partnership, Human Resource Services (HRS), the Office of the Dean of Students (DoS) and the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation (Phys. Ed. & Rec.) - departments/faculties with primary accountability in their mandates for faculty, staff and student wellbeing - are initiating a collaborative effort with the many existing campus resources that provide health and wellness related services or who have included health and wellness in strategic priorities such as the SU and GSA.

The Executive Sponsors of this initiative are;

- The Vice Provost & Dean of Students,
- The Vice-Provost & Associate Vice President Human Resource Services
- The Dean of the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation

These offices are also the members of the Healthy Campus Steering Committee which reports top the Provost. (Please see Appendix 2, 'Governance Structure' for this initiative.)

# Goals and Outcomes

The long term goal of this initiative is to establish health and wellness as a central priority and value for the institution through the development of an overarching Healthy Campus Strategic Plan that harnesses and integrates the efforts and resources across campus optimizing outcomes and making effective use of limited resources.

Key desired outcomes of an overarching strategic plan include:

- focusing efforts and resources on priority evidence-based issues/needs,
- improving the reach and coherency of programs, messaging, and engagement,
- strengthening strategic outcomes and cost effectiveness for the Institution, and
- making health a key priority in all aspects of campus life, policy development and practice.

# Benefits

This initiative is particularly timely in an environment of ongoing budget constraints and reductions that are expected to continue. Specifically, it:

- Enhances the awareness and reach of preventative and supportive resources available to the community during a period of increased stress and pressure due to the significant change and reduced financial and staff resources.. These conditions often manifest in increased overwhelm and stress resulting in illness related absences and at risk behaviours. All of these conditions can negatively impact our faculty, students and staff and compromise the achievement of individual, team and institutional goals.
- Encourages the effective and creative use of limited resources and innovative service delivery models in providing health and wellness services and programs predicated on evidence-based priorities of the campus community.

## Process

The initiative Sponsors have undertaken the first task; securing the commitment of the University’s Senior Administration to prioritize the health and wellbeing of students, faculty and staff by supporting the development of a Healthy Campus Strategy.

As key stakeholders and contributors to the Healthy Campus Strategy, offices/departments that have a core accountability to provide health/wellness services to students and/or faculty and staff will be invited to participate in what is envisioned as the first of a forum for ongoing collaboration and planning.

Beginning January 2016, campus community members will be invited to participate in a multi-phased engagement process to provide input on the priorities and direction of the plan for campus health.

Findings from the engagement processes, along with best practice literature review and data already collected and available across the institution will be used to inform and frame a Healthy Campus Strategic Plan that is predicated on evidence-based priorities of the campus community.

### Project Phases and Activities Outline

Phase 1:	<u>Secure Senior Administration (Sponsorship) Support</u> Secure commitment from university administration to prioritize the health and wellbeing of students, faculty and staff by supporting the development of a Healthy Campus Strategy.
Phase 2:	<u>Engage Other Health/Wellness Providers</u> Engage other providers of health/wellness services who have these functions as a core accountability.
Phase 3:	<u>Formalize Governance Structure</u> Formalize a Steering Committee and Working Committee. (Establish a stable, sustainable governance structure.)
Phase 4:	<u>Engage the Community</u> A variety of engagement mechanisms appropriate to the audience/ participants will be

	implemented.
Phase 5:	<u>Develop the Vision, Strategy and a 3-5 year plan</u>
Phase 6:	<u>Secure support from the Steering Committee for the Vision, Strategy and 3-5 Year Plan</u> Working Committee: Provide the strategy and 3-5 year plan, resource/budget document to the Steering Committee for communication to Dean's Council
Phase 7:	<u>Implement</u> Provide quarterly and annual progress updates and reports to the Steering Committee during the Strategy development and implementation phases.
Phase 8:	<u>Ongoing Monitoring, Evaluating and Reporting</u> Conduct regular evaluations on the outcomes and efficiency of the strategy and quarterly and annual progress updates report to the Steering Committee.

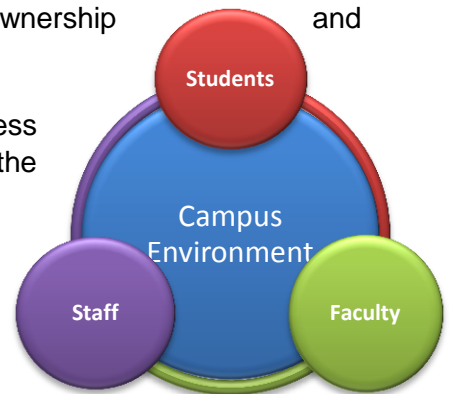
# Best Practices

# Appendix 2

In recent years, a significant body of work and experience has emerged on ‘health promoting universities.’ Among the core components of a health-promoting university initiative, the university environment itself plays a vitally important role in the health of students, faculty and staff, and the community as a whole.

Using a systems-thinking approach, the concept underpinning a healthy university emphasizes the ability to create supportive environments for students, staff and faculty to succeed in school and/or work and life and acknowledges the impact universities have within the broader community. This framework emphasizes community engagement, ownership and partnership in development of a healthy campus.

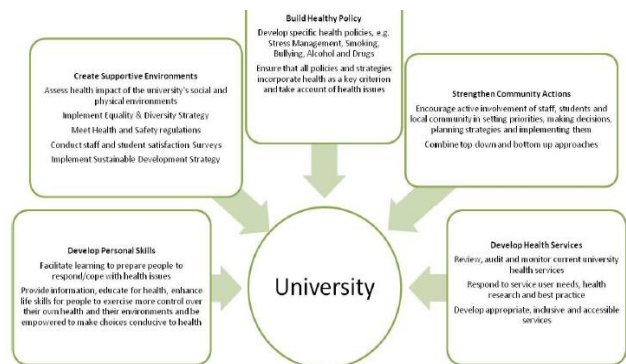
Universities are uniquely positioned to integrate health and wellness into the core practices and processes of the organization. In 1998, the World Health Organization (WHO) introduced the concept of a health promoting university following the success of the Healthy Cities movement in the UK, a settings-based approach to health promotion predicated on the strategies from the Ottawa Charter of Health Promotion. Health promoting university initiatives have gained international recognition for acting as a mechanism to advance the strategic goals and priorities of the organization.



The concept of a health promoting university has been shown to be influential in drawing the connection between the context of one’s environment and the effect on student and staff retention, academic success, and staff productivity. Rooted in a systems approach whereby all members of the campus community are seen to play a role in creating the conditions needed for students and staff to flourish, universities are increasingly shifting away from isolated and ad-hoc individual level health interventions and moving toward systemic interventions across consistent with the Healthy University model. Such an approach requires individuals, groups, and the university as a whole to come together and take action across five strategies:

- Develop Personal Skills
- Create Supportive Environments
- Strengthen Community Actions
- Build Healthy Policy
- Develop Health Services

Student health surveys such as the National College Health Assessment (NCHA) have increasingly been used across Canadian campuses to better understand and respond to the changing needs of the student population.



Similarly, Employee Family Assistance Program utilization reports are being used to track and monitor the health behaviours of staff.

At the University of Alberta, reports from these assessments mirror trends seen across Canada:

- The top three factors influencing student academic success are stress, sleep, and anxiety
- The mental health of students is an emerging priority
- The U of A EFAP utilization rate has been consistently 20% or higher for the last several years.
- Help-seeking behaviour of students and staff at U of A is on the rise with 76% of students indicating they would seek help for psychological counseling, 69% of the total EFAP services utilization for staff were for psychological counseling and 31% was used for nutritional, financial, fitness, and career counseling. (This is a positive finding. High rates of help-seeking behavior are indicative of a workplace in which individuals are able to self-identify and seek help.)

Findings from these assessments have stimulated a dialogue about campus health and spurred several efforts across the University of Alberta to find innovative ways of leveraging the existing health services and programs to better serve the needs of students and staff.

Currently, these efforts have been seen through:

- Special Provost Fellowship report on mental health: Student Mental Health at the University of Alberta
- Satellite mental health offices
- Community Social Work Team
- Wellness Grant Seed-Funding
- Strategic Planning: Human Resources, University Wellness Services, Graduate Student Association, Students' Union, Office of Sustainability have all prioritize campus health in their strategic plans.
- Phys Ed and Rec. LiveWell
- Assistance Plan services (EFAP, PDAP and GSAP)
- Wellness Alert Residence Health Reporting System
- Student Group Wellness Events
- Access (Transformative Student Mental Health Project)

While promising interventions, the impact of these actions may be lost without securing a formal upstream commitment to develop a strategic plan for the University of Alberta.

Student, staff and faculty health and wellbeing operate in a dynamic system and are inextricably interdependent. The concept underpinning a healthy university emphasizes the ability to create supportive environments for students, staff and faculty to succeed in school and/or work and life, as well as the impact universities have within the greater communities. This framework emphasizes community engagement, ownership and partnership in development of a healthy campus. For example:

- the Edmonton Charter for Health Promoting Universities (2005) included specific goals including institutionally modeling a health promoting culture and a sustainable working, living and learning environment and encouraging both staff and students to accept

responsibility for their own health and wellbeing, ([http://www.gesundheitsfoerdernde-hochschulen.de/Inhalte/E\\_Gefoe\\_HS\\_internat/2005\\_Edmonton\\_Charter\\_HPU.pdf](http://www.gesundheitsfoerdernde-hochschulen.de/Inhalte/E_Gefoe_HS_internat/2005_Edmonton_Charter_HPU.pdf))

- the Ottawa Charter of Health Promotion (1986) ascribes to a community health framework that espouses the empowerment of people “to increase control over, and to improve, their health” (<http://bit.ly/1uBBtiy>).

To date, a number of progressive Canadian higher education institutions have been successfully implementing healthy campus strategies:

- Simon Fraser University (student focus): <http://bit.ly/1GtfLpr>
- University of British Columbia (student focus): <http://bit.ly/1H40g9n>
- Dalhousie University Organizational Health Strategy (faculty and staff focus): <http://bit.ly/1219XBZ>

Concurrently, there are also Alberta institutions committed to developing their own campus strategy:

- Mount Royal Mental Health Strategy (student focus) <http://bit.ly/1vmasCr>
- University of Calgary (student and staff focus) <http://bit.ly/1LkxEcT>

These institutions share the distinction of being early adopters, promoting a settings-based approach to health promotion that integrates existing resources and addresses health in all aspects of campus life. The limitation currently associated with most strategies is that they tend to be singularly focused on either students or staff. The unique and innovative aspect of this proposal resides in the approach to include faculty, students, and staff as the primary audience of the strategic plan. Campus environmental factors such as student engagement, academics, building design, staff recruitment and onboarding, and study/work life balance are wholly encompassed in effective healthy campus strategies that follow best practice research.

Reports from universities who have taken steps to develop a healthy campus strategic plan have seen benefits of encouraging widespread uptake and ownership of campus health through various types of interventions. For the University of Alberta, possible outputs of the Healthy Campus Strategic Plan may include:

Level	Individual	Groups	Campus
Intervention			
Develop Personal Skills	Information on opportunities to access health services or participate in health programming includes both students, faculty and staff  On-line screening tools are available for students and staff	Skill development education sessions/programs are made available to students, faculty and staff (i.e. Community Helpers, Mental Health First Aid)	Centralized web presence to access information about health and wellbeing among all health /wellness service providers  Early Alert Systems & Referral systems
Level	Individual	Groups	Campus
Intervention			



Create Supportive Environments			<p>Physical Environments consider elements to improve health and learning (building design, classroom design).</p> <p>Social/cultural environments are inclusive.</p> <p>Skill development resources are integrated into faculty resources for students and workplace.</p>
Strengthen Community Actions		<p>Strong linkages are created between university providers in communicating health services to students and staff &amp; partnering on initiatives.</p> <p>Create Working Group/Committee Structure to increase participation in wellness strategies among university members.</p>	<p>Sustainable Funding is made available to health/wellness services.</p> <p>Strong linkages are created between the university and community health partners.</p>
Develop Health Services			<p>Assessment tools are coordinated.</p>
Build Healthy Public Policy			<p>University Administration supports integration of health/wellness into university policies.</p>

