Student Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy

2016–2020

CAMOSUN COLLEGE

Contents

Acknowledgment

The Camosun College Student Mental Health and Well-being Strategy could not have been developed without the endorsement and encouragement of the Camosun Healthy Minds Group, support from the Senior Leadership Council, the Education Leadership Team, the project leadership of Chris Balmer and the thoughtful contributions of students and employees throughout our campus community. I am grateful for your time and efforts. You have played an important role in this worthwhile project!

Nicole Greengoe, M.A.

Director of Student Services and Registrar,
Camosun College
May, 2015

Endorsement

It is exciting to see Camosun College's Student Mental Health and Well-being Strategy develop and take shape in this important document. Camosun's application of many of the key ideas underpinning a systemic approach to post-secondary mental health is a sign of momentum and support for creating the conditions for students to thrive as they learn. Congratulations to Camosun College for taking a key step toward becoming a leading mental health-promoting college!

Jonny Morris, MA

Senior Director,
Public Policy, Research, and Planning
Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division
July 10, 2015

Executive Summary

Camosun's Student Mental Health and Well-being Strategy has emerged from the synergy of evidence-based research, shared knowledge, collaborative dialogue across British Columbia and our passionate on-going commitment at Camosun College, dedicated toward advancing the recognition of the important role mental well-being plays in students' post-secondary experience. This strategy provides a vision and comprehensive plan for continuing to develop the awareness, create the conditions and take the actions necessary to enhance and support the mental health and well-being of students at Camosun College.

The development of this strategy has been informed and inspired by the following documents:

- **Post-secondary Student Mental Health: Guide to a Systemic Approach** Canadian Association of College and University Student Services and Canadian Mental Health Association (BC)

- **Campus Mental Health Vision and Framework** Camosun College

- **Student Mental Health Strategy 2014 – 2017** The University of Victoria

- **Student Mental Health and Wellness: Framework and Recommendations for a Comprehensive Strategy** Queens University

- **Mental Health and Well-Being in Postsecondary Education Settings: Literature and Environmental Scan to Support Planning and Action in Canada.** McKean, G.

- **Mental Health Strategy** Simon Fraser University

- **Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy** The University of British Columbia

- **Student Mental Health at the University of Alberta: Final report** The University of Alberta

- **Campus Mental Health Strategy** The University of Manitoba

- **Student Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy** McMaster University

- **Policy Approaches to Postsecondary Student Mental Health** Ryerson University

- **A Strategic Primer on College Student Mental Health.** Douce & Keeling.

Mental Health and Well-being Defined

The title of our strategy was chosen to reflect the interrelated concepts of mental health and well-being. According to the Government of Canada, mental health can be defined as: "*The capacities of each and all of us to feel, think and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections, and personal dignity*." (Government of Canada, 2006). We know that a person's state of mental health or 'mental functioning' is continuously variable, being influenced by many situational and psychological factors. Viewed on a single continuum – with 'poor mental health' at one end point and 'optimal mental health' at the other end point – one could actually pinpoint a person's current state of mental functioning. Mental health also defines the scope of information, practices and resources from which we each draw. Well-being in this context refers to the interconnectedness of "body, mind and spirit". Our goal is to create an awareness of the many factors in our lives that can positively influence the dimensions of personal well-being. Improving our well-being, which is also referred to as "flourishing" (Corey Keys, 2002), involves learning about and engaging mental health literacy and promotion strategies. Teaching, learning, and applying these mental health strategies will be key action outcomes that flow from our strategy.
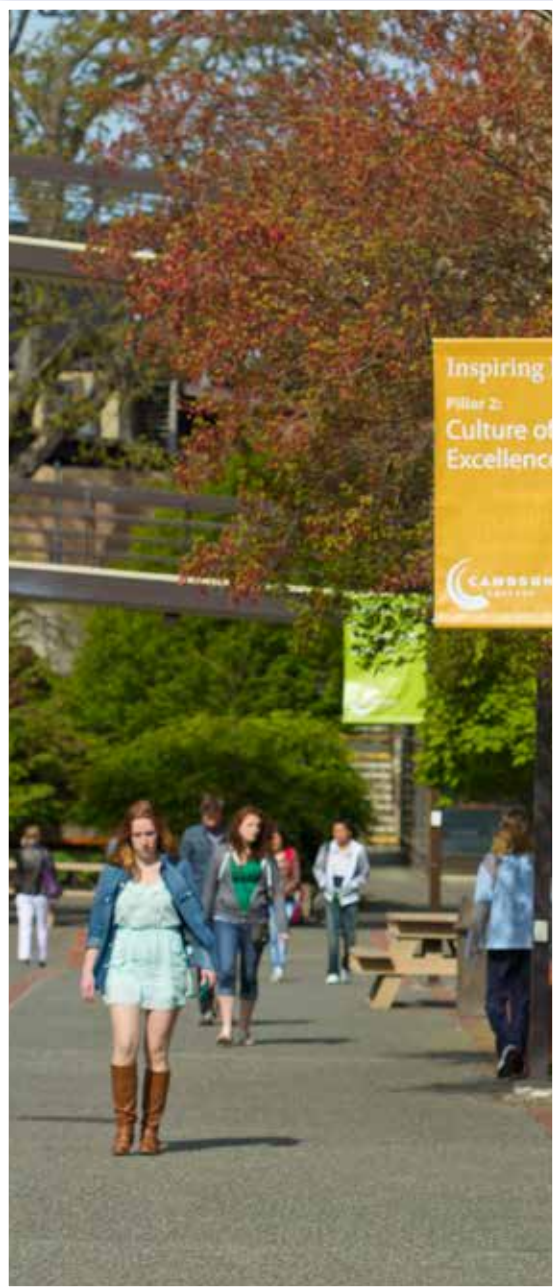
For the purposes of this Strategy, we have identified the following five strategic categories, through which to address and promote student mental health and well-being on campus: Policies, procedures and practice; Supportive campus environment and student connections; Mental health literacy, engagement and support; Campus mental health services; and Supporting students-at-risk and responding to crises.

For each category, the following goals have been established:

1.   Policies, Procedures and Practice

Goal: Apply a "mental health lens" in the creation of new, and the review and revision of existing, College policies, practices and procedures to ensure the development and maintenance of optimal student mental well-being at Camosun College.

2.   Supportive Campus Environment and Student Connections

Goal: Create an inclusive campus environment which is conducive to student engagement and connections within the campus community that will positively influence student mental health and well-being.

3.   Mental Health Literacy, Engagement and Support

Goal: Engage the Camosun community in a process of valuing and initiating the recommended actions that promote student mental health and well-being, support students who are experiencing psychological distress, and connect them to campus services.

4.   Campus Mental Health Services

Goal: Ensure the provision of adequate, accessible, effective, and interconnected campus mental health services, which employ "best practice" knowledge and strategies in the support of students who are experiencing psychological distress.

5.   Supporting Students-at-risk and Responding to Crises

Goal: Develop and maintain effective and responsive processes and action-based supports for individual college "students-at-risk" and in the response to campus-based critical incidents, crises and threats, maintaining the safety of the campus community.

Guiding Principles

1. Optimal mental health and the maintenance of well-being are key predictors of student success and prime determinants of healthy student development for post-secondary students. Camosun recognizes this interrelationship and is committed to exploring ways to maximize its benefits.

2. Student mental health and well-being is influenced by many socio-cultural factors in the College learning environment and community. The maintenance of optimal well-being depends upon our collective awareness, commitment and action in pursuing opportunities to achieve these potential benefits.

3. A comprehensive, broad-in-scope approach to student mental health and well-being requires commitment and investment by all College community members. Everyone has a role to play. This collective effort involves everyone realizing they can have supportive, compassionate conversations with students and connect them to services in a timely fashion.

4. To feel respected, valued and involved, all Camosun students should have opportunities to learn and share their knowledge, engaging in educational experiences that enrich their learning and enhance their personal development as contributing members of the Camosun community.

Goals	Key Objectives
1. Policies, Procedures and Practice Apply a "mental health lens" in the creation of new, and the review and revision of existing, College policies, practices and procedures, to ensure the promotion and maintenance of optimal student mental well-being at Camosun College. 	• **College communication and information** Ensure that appropriate messaging exists with respect to the value of student mental well-being in College communications and in information provided to our students, employees and the public. • **Policy review and development** i. Review and update current policies related to: student mental health; diverse ability access and support; student conduct; involuntary health and safety withdrawal and critical incident response, in order to ensure inclusiveness, support and optimal student well-being. ii. Determine where gaps or needs exist in policy areas with respect to student mental health, substance use, personal safety. Proceed with policy development in these areas as needed. • **Curriculum, instruction and evaluation** i. Explore means of embedding language that emphasizes the importance of student mental well-being in the design, writing and delivery of educational curriculum. ii. Review academic and skill-practice evaluation procedures to ensure they reflect fair process with respect to students with mental health challenges, diverse abilities and need for support and accommodation. • **Program entry, exit and re-entry** Review program entry, exit and re-entry criteria to ensure consideration and inclusion of appropriate accommodation for students with mental health challenges and diverse abilities.

Goals	Key Objectives

2. Supportive Campus Environment and Student Connections

Create an inclusive campus environment which is conducive to student engagement and connections within the campus community, that will positively influence student mental health and well-being.

- **Space design and a climate of well-being**

  Ensure that design and renovation of college spaces incorporates universal design principles in creating inclusive, activity-flexible spaces that are conducive to both successful learning and optimal student well-being.

- **Student connections and engagement**

  i.   Encourage formal and informal student connections through clubs, groups and sponsored activities.

  ii. Increase the involvement of students during multiple levels of college space, program, curriculum and service planning processes, to ensure relevance and effectiveness of planning outcomes.

- **Peer support**

  Encourage the development of student initiatives and peer – based support programs that promote mental health awareness, resiliency and student well-being.

- **Access to learning and community activities**

  Ensure full access to all learning and community activities for students with mental health challenges and diverse abilities.

3. Mental Health Literacy, Engagement and Support

Engage the Camosun community in a process of valuing and initiating the recommended actions that promote student mental health and well-being, support students who are experiencing psychological distress, and connect them to campus services.

- **Mental health literacy and a culture of compassion**

  Provide opportunities for employees and students to acquire information and strategies related to mental health and well-being, and responsible substance use, and to engage in mental health promotion activities that foster student well-being and a culture of compassion on campus.

- **Learning and well-being**

  Enhance opportunities for students to learn and develop mental health resiliency strategies, both within their various learning environments, and throughout their Camosun College experience.

- **Community Supports for distressed students**

  Provide mental health and service information, "helpful conversation" practice and referral procedures in training opportunities for employees and students in order to help community members identify and support distressed students and connect them with college services.

- **Collaboration with employee-designated/targeted mental health initiatives**

  Continue to collaborate, co-plan and share information with those developing policy, planning and initiatives related to promoting employee mental health and well-being in the Camosun community.

Goals	Key Objectives

4. Campus Mental Health Services

Ensure the provision of adequate, accessible, effective, and interconnected campus mental health-related services, which employ "best practice" knowledge and strategies in the support of students who are experiencing psychological distress.

- **Service information and promotion**

  Expand the distribution and posting of information for students that describes College mental health-related services.

- **Capacity, effectiveness and responsiveness of services**

  i. Provide adequate service capacity and mental health-related training opportunities for employees working in direct services such as Counselling and Disability Resources, to assure currency of knowledge, skill and best practices.

  ii. Provide a variety of flexible means for students to access mental health services to ensure optimal service responsiveness.

- **Consultation with employees**

  Maintain communication between mental health service units within the College. Promote and provide effective consultation and support between College mental health-related services to College employees who encounter students in psychological distress.

- **Connections with professional, Provincial and community resources**

  Ensure the maintenance of productive connections between College mental health-related services and their professional associations, Provincial resource networks and also active liaison with regional community mental health resources.

Goals	Key Objectives

5. Supporting Students-at-risk and Responding to Crises

Develop and maintain effective and responsive processes and action-based supports for individual college "students-at-risk" and in the response to campus-based critical incidents, crises and threats, maintaining the safety of the campus community.

- **College Safety Net and supports for "students-at-risk"**
  - i. Continue to develop effective processes within the College Safety Net and continue to expand the distribution of relevant information with the College community.
  - ii. Explore the feasibility of a computer system-supported "early alert system" to identify students-at-risk that will interface with the Colleague system.

- **Communication and roles within the college community**

  Expand communication related to the function of the College Safety Net and ensure that employees and deans are both familiar with its processes, and comfortable with their role in managing student behaviour and mental health risk on campus.

- **Responding to campus- based crises and critical incidents**
  - i. Establish the systems, roles, procedures, and practice required to effectively respond to campus-based crises, in order to ensure the support and safety of the College community.
  - ii. Communicate to the College community the expectations, roles and procedures related to critical incident response plan. Provide training and practice opportunities.

- **Responding to threats of a broader, more complex nature**

  Develop the capacity to respond to potential threats of a complex nature and broad impact. Create alliances with external responders and develop protocols and practice orientations that ensure the support of our campus community.

"Mental and behavioral health is a critical component of well-being for all students and having a campus culture and learning environment that supports healthy minds is a core need deeply centered in the mission of every institution of higher education. The best way for colleges and universities to nurture resilience among students is to promote health and well-being, especially mental and behavioral health, at both the individual and community levels."

(Douce & Keeling, 2014. A Strategic Primer on College Student Mental Health, p.3)

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING STRATEGY

Preface

Why consider student mental health and well-being?

College students' post-secondary experience is normally a period of change and discovery. Students discover courses of interest that often lead to program and career choices. They often move away from home and learn the responsibilities and challenges of living independently. They meet new friends of similar and varied interests and explore expanded social activities. They are exposed to experiences which influence the development of their values and their identity.

It goes without saying that students experience the challenges and stresses of these transitional experiences differently. Depending upon each student's capacity to adjust and cope with these challenges, some manage fairly well, some struggle and require supports, and some are, at times, overwhelmed. In addition, the literature reminds us that it is during the 18 to 25 age range, typical of our Camosun student population, in which individuals often first experience many of the signs and symptoms of mental illness.

For students who are struggling, who have not developed effective coping strategies or supports and who also have unrecognized or undiagnosed emerging mental health issues, the typical challenges of being a student can feel insurmountable.

"Students have to be ready to learn – in a state of physical, psychological, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual well-being"

(Douce & Keeling, 2014. A Strategic Primer on College Student Mental Health, p.1.)

Camosun historical context

In 2005, Camosun College's Director of Student Services convened a college-wide forum on student mental health. Observations and concerns were shared and it became clear that we were seeing many more students experiencing mental health challenges on campus, and that the impact was challenging employees and services.

A paper entitled: "Components of a Comprehensive Response Plan Supporting Students with Mental Health Concerns" was produced. Research was undertaken into the current literature on mental health promotion frameworks, strategies and programs, in particular the Suicide Prevention Resource Center's [SPRC] document: "Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Suicide in College and Community Settings" [2004], and the JED foundations: "Framework for Developing Institutional Protocols for the Acutely Distressed or Suicidal College Student" [2005].

In 2009, these frameworks were adapted in order to produce "A Campus Mental Health Framework for Camosun College." An issue paper was produced in 2011: "Toward a Camosun College Mental Health Group and Campus Mental Health Framework", along with terms of reference which were subsequently approved by the College leadership team.

The first meeting of the multi-representative Camosun College Mental Health Group was held in July 2011. This group has been actively developing and facilitating campus-based initiatives since that time, under the framework. In January, 2015 funds were released for work to begin on development of The Camosun College Student Mental Health and Well-being Strategy.

Current National Trends

University and college counselling centres across Canada have been reporting increases in the frequency, complexity and severity of students experiencing psychological distress [Canadian Counselling Centre Survey, 2004-2005].

The National College Health Assessment (NCHA 2013) data, drawn from students' self-reporting, indicates that stress, anxiety, depression and harmful substance use are very prevalent in post-secondary students' lifestyles and that many students report that these symptoms and behaviours affect both their physical and mental health, as well as their learning and personal success. Counsellors and other mental health professionals agree that when students' mental health is compromised, they are unlikely to apply their true academic capacity or achieve their optimum success. Conversely, when students develop effective coping strategies, have a support network and can engage in their studies, their chances of academic success are far greater.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada report Changing Directions/Changing Lives presented a national framework and strategy for addressing mental health concerns. Noting the interrelationship between mental health and academic success, they remind us that, "Good mental health is associated with better physical health outcomes, improved educational attainment, increased economic participation, and rich social relationships" [MHCC, 2012, p.10].

The collaborative, Canadian post-secondary mental health strategy document, "Post-secondary Student Mental Health: Guide to a Systemic Approach" (2013), responds to the current realities and challenges faced by today's post-secondary students by laying out a broad, inclusive framework for developing a comprehensive post-secondary student mental health strategy and plan.

Camosun's comprehensive strategy will galvanize our commitment as a community, guided by specific, intentional actions, to develop conditions that foster optimal mental health and well-being for Camosun College students.

National College Health Assessment [NCHA] Statistics Related to Student Mental Health

The National College Health Assessment [2013] provides us with a vivid snapshot of how students experience mental health challenges within the context of their post-secondary enrollment. Although we do not have a comparative set of data for Camosun College, there is reason to believe that our students' experiences would resemble these findings.

Students reported experiencing the following any time within the last 12 months:	National student population response [NCHA spring 2013][1]
Felt overwhelmed by all they had to do	89.3%
Felt exhausted (not from physical activity)	86.9%
Felt very lonely	63.9%
Felt very sad	68.5%
Felt things were hopeless	53.8%
Felt overwhelming anxiety	56.5%
Felt overwhelming anger	42.2%
Felt so depressed it was difficult to function	37.5%
Seriously considered suicide	9.5%

1. Based on results of the ACHA-NCHA II Spring 2013 survey for the Canadian Consortium Reference Group, consisting of 34,039 respondents. American College Health Association - National College Health Assessment II: Canadian Consortium Reference Group Executive Summary Spring 2013. Hanover, MD: American College Health Association; 2013.

Guiding Principles

The following principles are representative of the literature, research and recommendations highlighted within *Post-Secondary Student Mental Health: Guide to a Systemic Approach* (2013). These will inform our commitment, approach and direction as we move forward to apply the objectives and recommendations of this Student Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy:

1. Optimal mental health and the maintenance of personal well-being are key predictors of student success and prime determinants of healthy student development for post-secondary students. Camosun recognizes this interrelationship and is committed to exploring ways to create foster results.

2. Student mental health and well-being is influenced by many socio-cultural factors in the College learning environment and community. The maintenance of optimal well-being depends upon our collective awareness, commitment, and vigilance in pursuing opportunities to achieve these potential benefits.

3. A broad-scope, comprehensive approach to student mental health and well-being requires commitment and investment by all College community members. Everyone has a role to play. A unified effort involves everyone realizing they can have compassionate, supportive conversations with students and connect them with helpful services in a timely fashion.

4. To feel respected, valued, and involved, all Camosun students should have opportunities to learn, share their knowledge, and engage in educational experiences that enrich their knowledge and enhance their personal development as contributing members of our community.
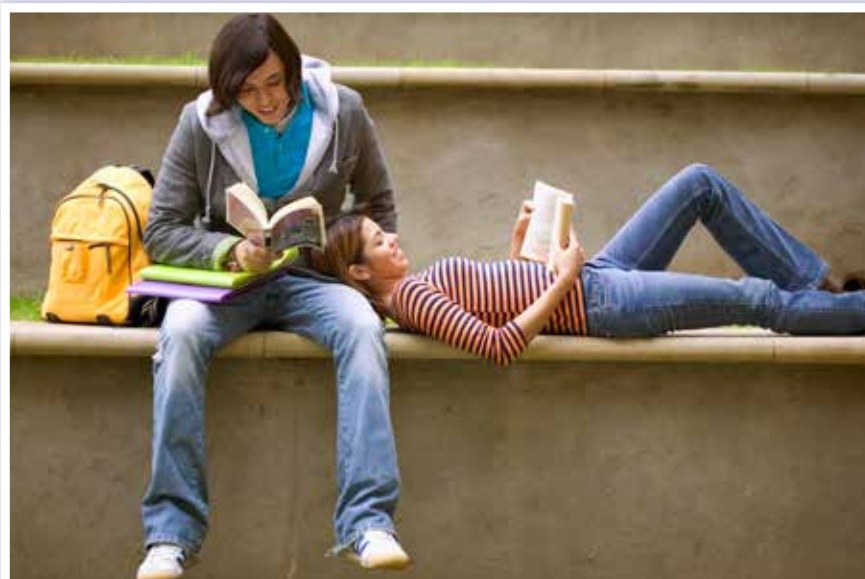
Strategy Development Process

In January 2015, the Student Services Department assigned Chris Balmer, counsellor and chair of Camosun's Healthy Minds Group, the task of facilitating the development of this strategy. Receiving the support of the Senior Leadership Counsel, he created a category structure based upon *Post-secondary Student Mental Health: Guide to a Systemic Approach* (CACUSS/CMHA 2013). He then planned and hosted seven in-person community discussion forums, to gather recommended actions from the College community, related to each of five strategic categories. The collection of recommendations informed the creation of objectives in each category. These recommended actions were then distributed in a college-wide survey to validate their importance and relative priority in the minds of Camosun employees, students and administration. These prioritized recommendations then formed the set of actions laid out in each of the mental health strategy categories.

CATEGORIES, GOALS, SUPPORTING INITIATIVES, KEY OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Following are the categories, goals, supporting initiatives, objectives and recommended actions that will create the conditions required to support the development of student mental health and well-being at Camosun College.

1. Policies, Procedures and Practices

Goal: Apply a "mental health lens" in the creation of new, and the review of existing, Colleges policies, practices and procedures to ensure the development and maintenance of optimal student mental well-being at Camosun College.

Examples of Current Supporting Initiatives

✓ Development of the Involuntary Health and Safety Withdrawal Policy. (Camosun Healthy Minds Group 2013).

✓ The College Safety Net Group receives concerns about students at risk and develops intervention and support plans to ensure student support and community safety.

✓ Creation of registration information and questions that assist in identifying students with diverse ability support needs.

✓ Discussion of universal design philosophy in the planning of spaces, programs and services.

✓ The development of Promoting College Safety: a Resource Guide for Employees.

✓ Counselling Services and the Disability Resource Centre provide consultation, education, and problem solving for faculty related to individual student needs and accommodations for students with mental health challenges and diverse abilities.

✓ Review of existing Provincial post-secondary policies related to diverse ability access, support, and accommodation – in order to inform the future development of a Camosun policy.

✓ Establishment and ongoing work of the campus-wide Diversity Committee.

✓ Development of program intake procedures that take into account a student's academic and personal readiness to enter and progress successfully in an academic program.

Key Objectives and Recommended Actions:

Note: College survey respondents' level of agreement with recommended actions is indicated [in brackets]

1.1 College communication and information

Ensure that appropriate messaging exists with respect to the value of student mental well-being in College communications and information provided to the public.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Provide employees with orientation and coaching on how to support the "whole student," with examples of mental health support and accommodation strategies for students experiencing mental health challenges and diverse abilities.

▶ Provide mental health information and messaging for faculty related to mental health challenges, student well-being and referring students to services, emphasizing that mental health challenges are supportable and treatable – along a mental health continuum.

▶ Provide mental health information and messaging for students and our public emphasizing support for students, strategies and resources – utilizing bookmarks, electronic advertising, wall advertisements, classroom bulletin boards and bulletins placed in washrooms.

1.2 Policy review and development

i. Review and update current policies related to student mental health, access and support for students with diverse abilities, student conduct, involuntary withdrawal, and public safety in order to ensure inclusiveness, support and opportunities for optimal student well-being.

ii. Determine where gaps exist in policy areas with respect to student mental health, substance use, and diverse ability access, support, and accommodation, and proceed with policy development in these areas as needed.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Applying a "mental health lens," review and finalize policies related to, student conduct, involuntary health and safety withdrawal, and critical incident response. Create policies on: Access and accommodation for students with diverse abilities, substance use and date rape.

▶ Allocate financial resources to support the development and implementation of the recommended actions contained in Camosun College's Student Mental Health and Well-being Strategy.

1.3 Curriculum, instruction and evaluation

i. Explore means of embedding language that emphasizes the importance of student mental well-being in the design, writing and delivery of educational curriculum.

ii. Review academic and skill-practice evaluation procedures to ensure they reflect fair process with respect to students with mental health challenges, diverse abilities and need for support and accommodation.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Provide flexible scheduling for class times and flexible deadlines for course assignments; plan the scheduling of quizzes and exams using a "student mental health lens"– ensuring recharge breaks for students, and reducing "stress overload" for students.

▶ Provide clear, transparent information, procedures and education that assist employees in the integration and application of mental health-related policy recommendations into their work with students.

▶ Applying a "mental health lens," review processes and practices used in programs and services – including clinical practice evaluation processes – to ensure they are responsive to students' experiencing mental health challenges and that they support student well-being.

1.4 Program readiness, entry, exit and re-entry practices

Review program readiness, entry, exit and re-entry criteria to ensure inclusion and consideration of reasonable, appropriate criteria and accommodation for mental health challenges and diverse abilities.

Recommended Actions:

▶ During college recruitment/information sessions and program orientations, cover the topics of mental health stressors, strategies and supports, and personal readiness, and reflect the realistic workload expectations of our college programs.

▶ Applying a "mental health lens," review and clarify expectations, criteria, processes, and communication regarding student readiness, program entry, exit and re-entry. Include questions that invite self-identification of mental health challenges and resiliency strengths.

2. Supportive Campus Environment and Student Connections

> **Goal:** **Create an inclusive campus environment which is conducive to student engagement and connections within the campus community that will positively influence student mental health and well-being.**

Examples of Current Supporting Initiatives

- ✓ The award-winning design and construction of the Lansdowne Campus Library and Learning Commons which invites student participation and connection in an informal and welcoming atmosphere.

- ✓ The invitation for and involvement of students in the development of the Camosun student mental health strategy.

- ✓ The creation and promotion of a "safe spaces to discuss mental health issues" logo campaign (Healthy Minds Ambassadors, 2015)

- ✓ The Camosun International Peer Connections Program, which facilitates connection, support and transitional adjustment for international students.

- ✓ Student-facilitated activities, clubs and groups that encourage connection and support between students, including student orientation week. E.g. CCSS constituencies: Pride; Students with (dis) Abilities; and First Nations. Also: Camosun 4 Social Justice Club.

- ✓ Psycho-educational groups and workshops facilitated by Counselling Services related to student development topics: e.g. Relationships; Bounce Back Yoga; Surviving Exam Week; and Living Well.

- ✓ The creation and use of the Na'tsa'maht Gathering Place by the Eyē Sq 'lewen Centre for Indigenous Education & Community Connections.

- ✓ The proposed renovation of the Interurban Campus Centre Student Services area to facilitate better access and support for students.

- ✓ The configuration of Camosun International's Lansdowne Campus multipurpose gathering area which promotes access to services and student connections.

- ✓ The Eyē Sq 'lewen office at the Lansdowne campus – which offers a communal space for Indigenous students to gather.

Key Objectives and Recommended Actions:

Note: College survey respondents' level of agreement with recommended actions is indicated [in brackets]

2.1 Space design and a climate of well-being

Ensure that design and renovation of college spaces incorporates universal design principles in creating inclusive, activity-flexible spaces that are conducive to both successful learning and optimal student well-being.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Apply a "mental health lens" and universal design principles to plan and construct spaces that ensure maximum access for students with diverse abilities and produce an inviting and friendly atmosphere, conducive to relaxation, reflection, and social connection for students.

▶ Provide flexible, multiuse classroom spaces that foster collaborative group work. Have private, relaxing service waiting areas for Counselling and DRC to ensure confidentiality. Explore opportunities to provide learning experiences in the "open air."

▶ Have spaces to accommodate students with differing religious practices, for prayer/meditation, and create gender-neutral washrooms to accommodate and reduce confusion for students identifying as gender-diverse.

▶ Explore the "de-siloization" of the current Student Services model and feasibility of co-locating some student services with other learning supports in a Learning Commons configuration.

2.2 Student connections and engagement

i. Encourage formal and informal student connections through clubs, groups and sponsored activities.

ii. Increase the involvement of students during multiple levels of college space, curriculum, program, and service development processes to ensure relevance and effectiveness of planning outcomes.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Create holistic, informal supports for students where they feel connected, welcomed and involved. Promote peer-to-peer learning and support like a "learning buddy" concept and have a Conversations Day for students to validate student ideas and community values.

▶ Have greater student involvement in various levels/stages of space and program planning.

▶ Host gatherings where instructors and students can share information and food and where instructors can monitor and support students.

2.3 Peer supports

Encourage the development of student initiatives and peer-based support programs that promote mental health awareness and resiliency and student well-being.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Work with the Student Society to create peer-based student support groups (e.g. for depression), sponsored/supported by Counselling Services. Encourage, sponsor and promote student mental health and responsible substance use activities/events on campus.

2.4 Access to learning and community activities

Ensure full access to all learning and community activities for students with mental health challenges and diverse abilities.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Have accessible spaces/stations available in each classroom for students who may have a diverse ability, as a normal expectation in classroom design.

▶ Review the quality of the learning / living environment in the "huts" assigned for special education program students on the Interurban Campus.

3. Mental Health Literacy, Engagement and Support

Goal: **Engage the Camosun community in a process of valuing and initiating the recommended actions that promote student mental health and well-being, support students who are experiencing psychological distress, and connect them to campus services.**

Examples of Current Supporting Initiatives

✓ The collaboration, co-planning, and facilitation between Human Resources and Counselling Services, and Island Community Mental Health, in the co-planning and facilitation of the Healthy Minds Ambassadors training program, – which provides in-person training to employees and students simultaneously.

✓ The Camosun Community of Practice [CoP]: Well-Being in the Learning Environment, which explores ways that faculty can embed activities in their curriculum and teaching that promote student well-being.

✓ Provision of planned mental health promotion fairs, e.g. Healthy Minds – De-Stress Fest 2015, which was collaboratively planned between the Camosun College Student Society, the "Healthy Together" Employee Wellness program, and the Healthy Minds Ambassador Program.

✓ The facilitation of community engagement forums and validation survey, related to the Student Mental Health Strategy project.

✓ Provision of educational sessions for employees related to the guide – Promoting College Safety: a Resource Guide for Employees."

✓ Consultation and support provided by service units such as Counselling Services, Disability Resource Center, Campus Security, and the Ombudsman with program chairs, instructors, and deans in support of "at-risk" students experiencing mental health challenges and concerning behaviors.

✓ Information and training sessions provided by the Ombudsman and Campus Security representatives to staff groups related to ensuring personal safety and the management of challenging situations.

✓ Direction, support and resources provided to the Camosun Healthy Minds Group by the provincial level CMHA Healthy Campuses Project, which provides guidance, resources, mental health conferences, and networking on multiple aspects of mental health promotion and responsible substance use.

✓ Liaison with the University of Victoria in the development of mental health literacy training options for Camosun students and employees.

✓ Co-development, by representatives from Human Resources and the Camosun Healthy Minds Group of the Workplace Solutions for Mental Health training seminar for employees (2015).

Note: College survey respondents' level of agreement with recommended actions is indicated [in brackets]

3.1 Mental health literacy and a culture of compassion

Provide opportunities for employees and students to acquire information and strategies related to mental health and well-being, and responsible substance use and to engage in mental health promotion activities that foster student well-being and a culture of compassion on campus.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Have regular awareness campaigns and activities that promote positive student well-being, healthy substance use, and campus support.

▶ Have more widespread and multi-means of advertising for Counselling Services and the Disability Resource Centre, and provide better information and distinctions regarding these services.

▶ Continue with training opportunities like Healthy Minds Ambassadors and explore different levels and models of mental health-related training, providing flexible ways for employees and students to access and participate in this training, including in-person and online.

3.2 Learning and well-being

Enhance opportunities for students to learn and develop mental health resiliency strategies, while in their various learning environments, during their Camosun College educational experience.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Provide leadership to encourage a "culture shift," where mental well-being is seen as integral to academic success. Provide strategies/activities on how faculty can promote student well-being and mental health resiliency. Integrate mental health awareness and support activities into classroom learning.

▶ Include mental health-related information and support services in student program orientations.

3.3 Community supports for distressed students

Provide mental health information, "helpful conversation" practice and referral procedures in training opportunities for employees and students to in order to help community members identify and support distressed student and connect them with college services.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Provide basic training for more employees on how to recognize mental health signs & symptoms and provide support and referral to college services for students experiencing psychological distress. Include assessment questions to help employees determine appropriate service.

▶ Develop and offer faculty workshops on how to provide mental health support and accommodation to students in distress and on how to provide students with constructive feedback in respectful ways, so as not to erode their self-esteem and confidence.

▶ Demonstrate how to 'operationalize' the philosophy of "a culture of support and compassion;" provide information and resources to build employee knowledge and confidence in supporting students in distress.

3.4 Collaboration with employee-designated/targeted mental health initiatives

Continue to collaborate, co-plan and share information with those developing policy planning and initiatives related to promoting employee well-being in the Camosun community.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Include mental health-related information and support services in new employee orientations.

▶ Ensure ongoing communication, collaboration, co-planning, and sharing of information and resources between student mental health promotion initiatives and those developed and provided for employees.

▶ Identify and connect with campus employees having "mental health expertise" and increase collaboration, discussion, and planning of campus mental health promotion initiatives.

4. Campus Mental Health Services

Goal: Ensure the provision of accessible, effective, interconnected campus mental health services, which employ "best practice" knowledge and strategies in the support of students who are experiencing psychological distress.

Examples of Current Supporting Initiatives

✓ Counselling psycho-educational groups and workshop offerings are posted on the Counselling Services website, distributed in information bulletins, and featured on computer monitors on campus; the Disability Resource Centres services are described on the college website and in brochures from their office.

✓ The Disability Resource Centre advertises, and provides regular information sessions to describe their services, eligibility criteria, and supports available to students.

✓ Counselling Services and the Disability Resource Centre review, update, and improve their websites to ensure they contain the most current, useful information, resources, and links to self-help strategies.

✓ Faculty in Counselling Services and the Disability Resource Centre attend professional development activities, online seminars, and conferences to maintain the currency and effectiveness of their knowledge and skills in their specialty area. They attended a suicide education prevention training (ASIST), and also threat assessment training at Vancouver Island University in 2013.

✓ Counsellors and faculty in the Disability Resource Centre routinely provide consultation and problem-solving to individual faculty, program leaders, and department chairs on strategies to provide support and accommodation for students experiencing psychological distress and diverse abilities.

✓ The College Ombudsman provides information, guidance, and support for students experiencing mental health challenges and/or difficulties dealing with college processes, and connects students with services best suited to their needs.

✓ Counselling Services maintains liaison, consultation, and referral relationships with mental health resources in the community, who are invited to provide professional development updates at staff meetings.

✓ The Eyē Sq 'lewen Centre for Indigenous Education & Community Connections involve community elders and engage culturally sensitive activities in the support of students, including those challenged by psycho-emotional distress.

✓ Counselling Services provides a variety of student counselling appointments including: regular counselling session bookings, same-day half-hour appointments and times reserved for urgent counselling issues. In addition, employees are made aware that students in crisis can and will be accommodated as a priority on an immediate basis.

✓ Participation by counsellors in the Provincial CMHA [BC] Healthy Campuses Community of Practice and liaison with community mental health resources such as Island Community Mental Health (formerly Capital Mental Health).

Key objectives and Recommended Actions:

Note: College survey respondents' level of agreement with recommended actions is indicated [in brackets]

4.1 Service information and promotion

Expand the description, distribution, and posting of information for students on College mental health-related services.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Provide and advertise visible, concise information about college mental health services, and referral protocols, including a variety of appointments types, and post these on multiple information sites – electronic and posters.

4.2 Capacity, effectiveness and responsiveness of services

i. Provide adequate service capacity and mental health-related training opportunities for service employees working in direct services such as Counselling and Disability Resources, to assure currency of knowledge and skill.

ii. Provide a variety of means for students to access mental health services to ensure optimal service responsiveness.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Provide adequate funding to ensure mental health staffing profiles in Counselling Services and the Disability Resource Centre meet the increasing demand created by students who experience psychological distress and require urgent and on-going therapeutic support.

▶ Ensure campus mental health service providers maintain their currency of knowledge, skills and practice through on-going professional development and in-service training opportunities.

▶ Explore the feasibility of having a wellness centre on campus.

▶ Have contiguous counselling staffing over the spring and summer periods to avoid students having to change counsellors, which currently interrupts the flow and progress of counselling process.

▶ Explore the potential benefits of having a "live chat" feature on the Counselling Services website. Have Counselling Services sponsor support groups for distressed students.

▶ Ensure the provision of effective counselling service to support the special and unique needs of international students experiencing mental health issues and adjustment complications of language, culture and customs.

4.3 Consultation with employees

Promote effective consultation and support between College mental health-related services and College employees who encounter students in distress.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Have counsellors engage in outreach to College programs, including regular visits to provide service information, mental health orientations to address student stress levels, and provide stress management/study skill tips at opportune times, so as not to overwhelm students.

▶ Explore the benefits of more frequent information sharing and collaboration between the offices of the Disability Resource Centre and Counselling Services.

4.4 Connections with Provincial and community resources

Ensure the development of effective partnering relationships between College mental health-related services and Provincial resource networks and maintain effective liaison and referral protocols with community mental health resources.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Ensure mental health service providers maintain links and active involvement with their professional associations, Provincial reference groups, colleagues in post-secondary institutions and community resource partners.

5. Supporting Students-at-risk and Responding to Crises

> **Goal:** Develop and maintain effective and responsive processes and action-based supports for individual college "students-at-risk" and in response to campus-based critical incidents, crises and threats, maintaining the safety of the campus community.

Examples of Current Supporting Initiatives

✓ The College has a long-standing College Safety Net Group, represented by key responders who receive concerns/complaints about disruptive or unsafe behaviour. This group assesses need, determines appropriate interventions and supports, communicates and responds with those involved on an individual case-by-case basis. Camosun's Promoting College Safety Guide was produced by this group.

✓ The Camosun Healthy Minds Group created a draft policy and procedures related to critical incident response. This could form the basis of a managed and coordinated response in the provision of support for community members in the event of a containable campus crisis or critical incident.

✓ The College has an Emergency Management Protocol that would be engaged in the event of a physical crisis such as an earthquake. Regular earthquake drills are practiced.

✓ Members of the College Safety Net Group have attended a day-long training on threat assessment and response provided by Kevin Cameron, a recognized Canadian expert in the field of post-secondary threat intervention.

✓ Counsellors are frequently asked to present/meet with department groups to discuss ways of supporting "at-risk" students, including assessment, support, and referral to counselling.

✓ Members of the College Safety Net Group are frequently invited to meet with department groups to provide safety orientations that include how to support and refer students to services, and provide them with suggestions for ongoing personal support and safety.

✓ Counsellors have attended presentations describing the function of Early Alert system used at UBC for early observation and reporting of students in distress.

✓ Members of Camosun's Healthy Minds Group have met with representatives from the University of Victoria to begin discussions on providing psychosocial support for members of their post-secondary communities in the event of a wide or complex crisis or threat.

✓ The Post-Secondary Counsellors Association of BC have convened a workshop to begin to identify the components that need to be explored and articulated in the creation of a standard protocol, involving counselling services personnel, in the event of crises or threats occurring on post-secondary campuses in the Province.

Key Objectives and Recommended Actions:

Note: College survey respondents' level of agreement with recommended actions is indicated [in brackets]

5.1 College Safety Net and supports for "at-risk" students

i.   Continue to develop effective processes within the College Safety Net group – the campus team which receives concerns about students at risk and collaboratively plans for their support and the safety of others involved.

ii. Explore the feasibility of a computer system-supported "early alert system" to identify students- at- risk.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Continue to highlight a positive focus on education, prevention, and pro-activity in terms of supporting students and employees, to balance our current emphasis on crisis response and management.

▶ Explore the feasibility of a Colleague-supported Early Alert Program to identify and provide timely support for students experiencing psychological distress.

▶ Provide examples and coaching for faculty and chairs on the use of learning and behavioural contracts as a method of measuring and monitoring student progress and behaviour.

5.2 Communication, training and roles within the college community

Expand communication related to the function of the College Safety Net and ensure that employees are both familiar with its processes, and comfortable with their role in managing student behaviour and mental health risk on campus.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Have more information and training on how to recognize early signs of "at-risk" student behaviour and how to balance the need for student support and behavioural accountability.

▶ Differentiating between Counselling Services and Campus Security, clarify and distinguish roles, expectations, consultation process and referral protocols for employees, when referring "at-risk" students with mental health issues and behavioural challenges.

▶ Provide broader information distribution on the functions and procedures of the College Safety Net, particularly consultation, documentation and referral, and how employees should refer behaviourally/psychologically "at-risk students" for assessment and support.

▶ Provide debriefing for employees impacted by challenging student interactions and ongoing support for those who are exposed to continuing volatile behaviour.

5.3 Responding to campus-based crises and critical incidents

i. Establish the systems, roles, procedures, and practice required to effectively respond to campus-based crises in order to ensure the support and safety of the College community.

ii. Communicate to the College community the expectations, roles, and procedures related to a critical incident response plan. Provide training and practice opportunities for the campus community.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Construct a College critical incident response team and protocol for responding to College - specific crises, which includes awareness training, response protocol, communication plan, and practice drills that are in sync with the Provincial Emergency Program.

5.4 Responding to threats of a broader more complex nature

Develop the capacity to respond to threats of a broad and complex nature and impact. Create alliances with external responders and protocols that guide the support of our campus community. Develop practice orientations.

Recommended Actions:

▶ Consider partnering with the University of Victoria and Royal Roads University in psycho-social support training opportunities, and developing a plan for mutual personnel support in the event of a broad-impact crisis event.

▶ Identify and coordinate with trained external-to-the-college threat response professionals and the community support network, who can be engaged in the event of a broader-impact crisis or major threat, to support the students and employees of the College.

CONCLUSION

Within the BC post-secondary sector, Camosun College has established an admirable reputation for proactively identifying and responding to the challenges and needs of students who grapple with mental health, behavioural, and other adjustment challenges. This strategy provides us with a shared and unified vision, clear objectives, and concrete recommendations to broaden and deepen the positive influence we can have on student well-being within our college community. Many of the recommendations will continue mental health initiatives already underway. The array of strategy objectives reflects a broad-scope, comprehensive approach to student well-being that will require commitment and action by all members of the Camosun community. As future needs emerge, this strategy will also provide sufficient scaffolding to support the development of new initiatives. We believe that this wise investment in human potential will reap many benefits in the years to come.

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