



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

Mental Health Framework

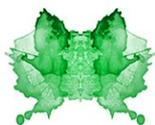
Update 2016



Mental Health Framework Update

Since its launch in November 2014, staff, faculty and students have been working collaboratively toward implementing the recommendations outlined in the Student Mental Health Framework.

The following update provides [highlights](#) of the work undertaken thus far, grouped by strategic priority, with the goal of developing a systems approach to student mental wellness.



Priority 1

Develop a communication strategy that ensures students are informed of all programs and services available, and how and when to access them.

Digital

- A web based platform called More Feet on the Ground was launched in partnership with the Council of Ontario Universities to address student mental health education, awareness and stigma.
- The launch of the new healthyuoft.ca website provides links to campus programs, resources and events in support of student mental health. The HealthyUofT site is supported via Twitter (53,000 students reached) and Facebook (130,000 views).
- The Flourish program at UTSC has been expanded.
 - Developed a new website utsc.utoronto.ca/flourish
 - Students can take a comprehensive assessment of their mental health that identifies signs and symptoms of mental health, character strengths, academic engagement and well-being. They are provided with customized feedback and resources concerning their mental health.

More than 2,000 UTSC students have completed the online Flourish assessment.

- Mental health messaging has been promoted weekly to students at the St. George campus via inclusion in the campus-wide just-in-time slide program and the 9 New Things e-newsletter.

Messaging about mental health supports and services reached approximately 60,000 students per week.

Print

- Print-based navigation pieces have been developed to demonstrate the mental health continuum with a range of appropriate resources based on student needs.
 - Developed a new website utsc.utoronto.ca/flourish
 - Students can take a comprehensive assessment of their mental health that identifies signs and symptoms of mental health, character strengths, academic engagement and well-being. They are provided with customized feedback and resources concerning their mental health.
- New student-centred wayfinding signage has been installed in the Koffler Centre to direct students to the new Health & Wellness Centre location on the second floor.

Face-to-face

- HealthyUofT campaign was launched on the St. George campus
 - Four pillars of health and wellness were identified: Mental health, safety, physical activity and nutrition. The pillars are marketed as HappyU, SafeU, MoveU and FuelU.
 - Promotional materials included postcards, condoms, cutlery sets and stress balls to reflect the four pillars and were distributed to more than 10,000 students on the St. George campus.
- New tri-campus consent campaign was launched in September. More than 30,000 bracelets, postcards and buttons were distributed across the three campuses during orientation activities.
- Communications materials were designed to reflect the “recognize, respond and refer” approach to assisting and referring students in distress and distributed to staff and faculty.
- More than 6,800 students were reached through Health Promotion staff/volunteers at events and workshops across the three campuses during the 2015/16 academic year.
- [The change room project](#) is a direct, activist and educational project that investigates locker room experiences to build awareness, compassion and conversation around equity and inclusion for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and queer students in sport and recreation. The goal of the project is to shift change room culture to be more inclusive, accepting and reflective.



Priority 2

Expand strength-based programming to develop positive mental health and resilience that engages students early in order to prevent exacerbation of the problem.

Working groups

- The Resilience Committee (chaired by the Executive Director of Health and Wellness) has begun to address campus-wide student resiliency programming based on best available evidence. The committee has undertaken an environmental scan and literature search, culminating in a proposal for the development of a comprehensive, student-centred tool to enhance individual psychological resilience.
- A psycho-educational group for students living with ADHD was piloted by Accessibility Services staff in the spring of 2015. Given the positive feedback from students about the value of the group and the consistent attendance of 10-12 students, ADHD groups are being offered on a permanent basis moving forward.
- Peers Are Here is peer support initiative of Health & Wellness and has been redesigned to align with student feedback asking for peer support that is more localized. In 2015, peer support groups were established within the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering and the department of Life Sciences in the Faculty of Arts and Science.
- Psycho-educational groups and workshops on coping, behavioural change, balanced thinking, emotional regulation and balanced living were offered.

Participation in the workshops rose by 26 percent and in the groups by 45 percent.

- Strength-Based Resilience and Habits of Happiness groups at UTSC focused on building resilience and tapping in to the strengths of students.
- The Health & Wellness Centre has created inter-disciplinary teams for trans health, trauma, ADHD and eating disorders.

Programs and events

- **Our Lives at U of T** (facebook.com/ourlivesatuoft) was integrated into the resiliency framework. This initiative collates student stories of challenge, resiliency, persistence and “falling forward” while finding success at the university.
- The Academic Success Centre piloted the From Intention to Action (FITA) program, beginning fall 2015, for university students who want to take a proactive approach to fostering their resilience, well-being, learning and life skills. FITA trains practicum students from social work and counselling to work over a 12-week period on developing effective academic and life management skills with students who feel overwhelmed or who may be at academic or psychological risk. The FITA program currently has 48 registered students and 278 appointments have been conducted.
- In February 2016, 189 students registered for the Fresh Start Conference for students wanting to bounce back from difficult academic circumstances.. Sessions included fostering resilience; self care and developing effective academic skills. The conference was hosted collaboratively by the Faculty of Arts and Science, the Career Centre and the Academic Success Centre.
- The Flourish project at UTSC has engaged students through resilience-building and strength-based programming.

493 students at UTSC have participated in Flourish events from September 2014 – August 2015.

- UTSC Health and Wellness centre offered Strength-based Resilience (SBR), an eight-week group for students facing mental health challenges. The group focused on building resilience by tapping on to the strengths of students.
- UTSC Health and Wellness Centre and Athletics and Recreation offered Habits of Happiness, a weekly group focused on building resilience.
- A Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT)-based online workshop is being piloted at UTSC, based on a first-line, evidence-based treatment approach for anxiety and depression. Students can access the online platform 24/7, increasing access to students who may not be able to attend the in-person program (e.g., commuter students).

- Supported by the Health Promotions group, The Healthy Grad team offers programming on positive mental health and resilience for grad students.
- More than 6,800 students were reached at Health Promotions events. Events focused on the development of healthy habits for students in support of ongoing mental health.
- The School of Graduate Studies conducted panels on mental health issues that included discussion from different perspectives, mental health issues, academic issues, conflict resolution and resources/supports.
- Expansion of Mindfulness programming, where students learn to slow down and appreciate the present, learn to pay attention to thoughts and feelings without judging them. Participating in a mindfulness meditation, yoga or Tai Chi provides an opportunity to learn and practice techniques that will increase relaxation, resiliency and focus.

During the 2015-16 academic year, more than 180 students attended mindfulness programming each week at the 15 weekly sessions held across campus.

Programs and events (continued)

- Parent Power, a program developed by MoveU and the Family Care Office, provides student parents the opportunity to participate in drop-in physical activity programs by providing free childcare for children ages four through 12.
- The Family Care Office offered workshops to address caregiver burnout and study/life balance issues:
 - Stuck in the Middle - Juggling School and Family Life (requested by the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering, Institute for Leadership Education in Engineering)
 - Avoiding Parental Caregiver Burnout
- The Student Voice Project, offered by New College, provides a safe space for mental health awareness and discussion. This program was offered over three days during reading week and asked participants to consider two critical questions: “What is my story?” and “What am I here for?” Answers arose from group discussions, among other ways. Some students created zines - self-published folios brimming with words, pictures and creative montages. Others voiced their thoughts and feelings through spontaneous spoken poetry.

Services

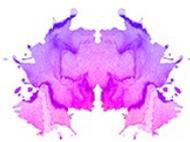
- The Welltrack program’s computerized CBT support for UTSC students offers students the ability to educate themselves and work through online modules about anxiety, depression and phobias. It also offers an app for students to check in with their moods twice a day. With appropriate safeguards in place, students can use this application alone or in conjunction with their counsellor or group at Health and Wellness. To date, more than 200 students have used Welltrack.
- Health & Wellness Centre expanded embedded services to 17 sites across the St. George campus including: School of Graduate Studies, John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture and Design, Faculties of Applied Science and Engineering, Dentistry, Law, Music, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Rotman Commerce, Rotman, MBA, Speech Language Pathology, Varsity Athletics, St. Michael’s College, Trinity College and Victoria College.

Wellness counsellors and coordinators now provide 160 hours of embedded counselling per week across the St. George campus.

- Drop-in advising was offered by the following partners at UTSC: International Student Centre, Multi-Faith Chaplains; Athletics; Academic Advising and Career Centre (Career and Academic Counsellors); Health & Wellness (Nurse and Personal Counsellor). A counsellor is also situated within the Residence Life team to provide on-site counselling and consultation
- Counselling, a partnership with the Faculty of Arts & Science and the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, continues to provide embedded counselling services for undergraduate students by Masters of Social Work interns. The program continues to focus on diversity issues by providing LGBTQ+ sensitive counselling, cross-cultural counselling and service to bridging and transitional year students.

A total of 897 visits were made to Counselling Services by 166 students.

- The new Grad Conflict Resolution Centre opened in January 2016 providing resources and peer-level support.
- The Health & Wellness Centre's mental health programs and services have been re-envisioned as a stepped-care model whereby student needs are best matched with the least intensive, most autonomous and most accessible program, ranging from health promotion and educational services to skills-building workshops and intensive group programs, to counselling and psychiatric care. Mental health is presented on a continuum with a range of appropriate resources based on student needs.



Priority 3

Develop mental health literacy of students, staff and faculty to create supportive and inclusive conditions for students to flourish and to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues.

Staff and faculty training

- New workshops were offered in collaboration with Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, Centre for Teaching and Learning, Teaching Assistants' Training Program and Organizational Development and Learning Centre to educate staff, faculty and TAs with an emphasis on understanding mental illness, recognizing and referring students in distress, and having difficult conversations with students. Topics include instructional design, setting expectations, effective feedback and referrals and boundaries.
- A guide was developed by the Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation for the Teaching Assistant Training Program, *Supporting Students in Distress: Guidelines for Teaching Assistants at the University of Toronto*.
- Training and professional development for Health & Wellness staff to delve deeper into trauma-informed counselling, and education with Rainbow Health to assist health care and comprehensive services for trans students.
- Programming, in partnership with Ryerson and OCAD U, has been developed to support international student mental well-being. The Speaking Your Language project increased awareness of mental health challenges among the international student populations at Ryerson University, OCAD University and the University of Toronto. Speaking Your Language hosted a full-day symposium on supporting international student mental health that was attended by professionals across 30 post-secondary institutions.
- Massey College developed a peer team model to better support their junior fellows (U of T students) who might be experiencing challenges. Student Life delivered training focused on mental health and well-being for the peer team and supporting staff members. The training was followed by a panel discussion with senior fellows and staff from the Health and Wellness Centre.
- Full-day training for invigilators working at the Test and Exam Centre, focused on topics such as communication and conflict and de-escalation, and identifying and referring students in difficulty.

- Crisis and Academic Progress teams provide four core presentations:

- 1.) Engaging with Difficult Student Behavior
- 2.) Breaking Bad News to Students
- 3.) Personal and Professional Boundaries
- 4.) Identifying and Referring Students in Difficulty

Over the past year, training has been provided to various faculties, departments and services across all three campuses:

- Faculty of Arts and Science Registrar's and staff
- Faculty of Architecture
- Enrollment Services
- Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, Geography, Speech Language Pathology, and Pharmacology and Toxicology departments
- Invigilators with Test and Exam Services
- Front line staff at Health and Wellness
- Training provided to staff from multiple faculties and divisions through the Organizational Development and Learning Centre (ODLC).
- Student Housing Professionals conference

Student training

- A healthy campus training day (peer health educators) provided skills and strategies that enabled the formation of healthy habits in support of academic and personal goals, provided awareness and education around health and well-being, and referred students to wellness resources and services on campus and in the community.
- A standardized mental health education program for all student leaders has been developed. In 2015, mental health training was delivered to mentors, club and organization leaders, orientation leaders and residence life staff.

Mental health training was provided to 1,500 student leaders in fall 2015.

- Residence Life staff connected with students prior to arrival on campus through the residence early intervention program to discuss medical and accessibility needs (UTSC).

Events

- Mental Wellness Month was hosted in October 2015 on all three campuses. The focus was on resilience and coping strategies.

More than 100 events were offered on all campuses during Mental Wellness Month.

- The Department of Psychiatry held Mindfest, a mental wellness fair with speakers, interactive workshops and a mindfulness walk.
- Health promotion and community events were held on all three campuses to educate students, staff and faculty on supports and services.



Priority 4

Coordinate, benchmark and assess the effectiveness of programs and initiatives to ensure they are accessible, sustainable and cohesive.

Committees

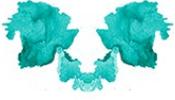
- Assessment and benchmark committees have been formed to track and measure initiatives and service delivery.

Surveys

- We are leveraging current and upcoming assessment projects both institutionally and locally through the National College Health Assessment (NCHA), the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey (CGPSS), as well as through focus groups and orientation surveys.

Metrics

- Metrics to track volumes and usage have been developed within the health services area, along with targets for service delivery. Results will allow for the informed development of new programming and operational plans.
- An assessment framework for annual reporting is being finalized by the advisory committee.



Priority 5

Further leverage external community resources to help meet the full spectrum of health needs of our students and enhance coordination, collaboration and communication across services and systems within and beyond the University.

Programs and events

- In collaboration with the Canadian Association of Mental Health (CAMH), the Department of Psychiatry, Good2Talk, multiple U of T student groups, Ryerson, OCAD U and a number of other community organizations, U of T hosted Mindfest 2015. The full-day mental health conference was held at Hart House with a focus on enhancing mental health awareness and literacy while reducing stigma.
- U of T partnered with Healthy Minds Canada to offer a full-day, on-campus conference in June 2015 focused on schizophrenia identification, symptom management and lived experience.
- A high school transitional group for students was created. Wellness Promotion Programs (UTSC) provided workshops on mental health, peer pressure, drug and alcohol awareness with 10-12 students in each group.
- Rainbow Health provided training on meeting the needs of trans students.

Information exchange

- Student Life professionals came together for an information exchange to share programming on student resiliency. Several universities have come together to draft a donor proposal focused on student resiliency programming.
- U of T partnered with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and Rouge Valley Health System to train 46 educators and mental health professional from the Shoniker Clinic and the Toronto District School Board on the Strength-based-Resilience (SBR) program. These professionals will disseminate these programs at their respective sites. The Shoniker Clinic will provide strength-based programming to transitional aged students and clients who have or may be at risk of mental illness.

- UTSC hosted an educational opportunity: Practical Strategies for Supporting University Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder delivered by the Geneva Research, Education and Training Institute. The training was facilitated by AccessAbility Services and attended by staff (for a fee, to share costs), within AccessAbility, Health & Wellness, AA&CC, Student Life, Athletics & Recreation, Housing, Campus Police, Financial Aid, Registrar's Office, Equity & Diversity and Program Advisors.

Research

- The Health & Wellness Centre, in collaboration with the psychology department, completed a randomized group therapy study that compared a strength-based treatment (positive psychotherapy; PPT) with an established treatment (Dialectical Behaviour Therapy; DBT) for students experiencing symptoms of severe emotional dysregulation, anxiety and depression. The study assessed 97 students. Of these, 54 (27 each) were randomized to each group. Results of rigorous pre, post and follow-up assessment showed that both treatments were effective in reducing emotional dysfunction, suicidal ideation, symptoms of depression and anxiety. We found that the established treatment (DBT) showed higher compliance rate by clients.
- The University of Toronto's Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education has launched the Mental Health and Physical Activity Research Centre (MPARC), one of the first research facilities in Canada to integrate the study of physical activity and mental health. This multidisciplinary centre is committed to reducing mental health challenges by promoting physical activity and reducing sedentary behaviour, and providing long-term solutions. MPARC will partner with U of T's Health & Wellness Centre to help students exercise, set goals, self-monitor and manage stress. The centre contains seven suites where professors will study how exercise can improve quality of life. It features accessible cardiovascular and strength training, psychological assessment, and data collection and analysis.
- HWC partnered with the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario to offer Strengthening Families Together, a four-session education program for family members and friends of individuals living with mental illness. The program is designed to give families and caregivers the tools they need to address issues that arise while supporting relatives with schizophrenia or related illness and topics include coping skills, effective communication, self-care and the criminal justice system.