

Western's Student Mental Health and Wellness Strategic Plan



March 8, 2018

Land Acknowledgement

Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples, who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of Southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region, there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).



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Letter from The Student Mental Health and Wellness Advisory Committee

Western's Student Mental Health and Wellness Strategic Plan reflects the hopes and stories of personal and professional experience, and the collective thinking of hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, senior administration, and staff from the Western community. We are grateful for the leadership of Angie Mandich and Jana Luker, former Associate Vice-Presidents of Student Experience in overseeing the earlier vision and development of this Plan. We acknowledge the significant contribution of current and past members of the Student Mental Health and Wellness Advisory Committee¹ and Western's Student Experience portfolio towards making this Strategy a reality.

The development of this Strategy could not have been possible without the hundreds of individuals who came forward to provide input into creating a mentally well campus. When it was decided to develop a Student Mental Health and Wellness Strategy, we were pleasantly surprised at how many individuals wanted to be consulted on this topic and to provide direction to the Plan. And after 20 months and countless consultations locally and provincially, document revisions, brainstorming sessions, and in-person meetings, we are delighted to share this document with the Western community.

Western's Student Mental Health and Wellness Strategic Plan is an ambitious, multi-year undertaking. The strategic directions, goals, and recommendations of this Strategy were drawn from the extensive consultation data, as well as several national frameworks and best practice recommendations that have been developed to guide supporting post-secondary student mental health. Many of the recommendations emphasize ongoing health promotion and prevention efforts as a priority. To create a healthier campus, a better balance between prevention and treatment must be recognized and achieved.

In writing this Plan, we have aimed to honour the community of diverse voices and minds, all working towards a positive, healthy change for our students and community campus.

Sincerely,

John Doerksen

Vice-Provost (Academic Programs) and Acting Associate Vice-President, Student Experience

Rick Ezekiel

Interim Senior Director, Student Experience

Debbie Chiodo

Mental Health Strategist

Student Mental Health and Wellness Advisory Committee

¹ See Appendix A for list of committee member names

Executive Summary

Providing effective support for students experiencing mental health challenges is a pressing challenge facing post-secondary institutions. The promotion of student mental health and wellness² is a priority to Western University. This strategic plan puts forth a multi-level institutional commitment and framework to promote wellness among our campus community and support individuals who are struggling with mental illness.

Through extensive community consultation¹ and the work of the members of the Student Mental Health and Advisory Committee³, we have created a vision and framework to enhance mental health at Western:

Our vision is to create a university campus that is resilient and cares about mental health and wellness, where students receive support as needed, where talking and learning about mental health reduces and eliminates the stigma surrounding mental health issues, and where we build a more supportive and inclusive campus environment to enhance all students' potential for success. This vision will make mental health an institutional priority and will support a culture and climate on our campus that promotes student wellness.

To help achieve this vision, this plan focuses on four primary strategic objectives and goals specifically related to optimizing student mental health:

- 1** Promote and support a resilient campus community;
- 2** Develop and deliver effective health and wellness education;
- 3** Support inclusive curriculum and pedagogical approaches that promote student mental health;
- 4** Provide accessible and effective mental health and wellness services.

² Unless otherwise specified, the term students is used within this Strategy to include undergraduate, professional and graduate students, as well as postdoctoral fellows at Western University and the affiliated university colleges of Brescia, Huron, and King's.

³ See Appendix B for stakeholder groups who participated in in-person consultations

2018–2023 Goal Summary & Highlighted Priorities

While this document contains a wide range of recommendations to holistically support student wellness, this executive summary outlines broad goals and highlighted priorities that exemplify some tangible initiatives that will stem from this plan.

1 To cultivate institutional commitment for student mental health at all levels of the university;

HIGHLIGHTED PRIORITIES:

- Ensure that mental health is identified as a priority through the University's strategic goals, mission, financial commitments, value statements, policies, and protocols.

2 To sustain and strengthen student resiliency;

HIGHLIGHTED PRIORITIES:

- Ensure that every student receives mental health and wellness education through course curricula and/or co-curricular content during their studies at Western.
- Increase and enhance training and supports for student helpers, student leaders, and student mentors across campus.

3 To increase knowledge and awareness of mental health prevention;

HIGHLIGHTED PRIORITIES:

- Provide tools and resources to support administrative leaders, faculty, staff, teaching assistants, and students in identifying signs and symptoms of student distress

4 To advance practice and policy that promote resiliency and wellness;

HIGHLIGHTED PRIORITIES:

- Explore opportunities across campus for students to learn and practice stress reduction strategies such as mindfulness meditation as a method of stress management and building resiliency.

5 To increase capacity and accessibility to support and provide service to students with mental health conditions;

HIGHLIGHTED PRIORITIES:

- Reduce the fragmentation and 'siloing' of student mental health services through the integration of student mental health and wellness services into a Health and Wellness Centre.
- Support campus capacity for 24/7 mental health crisis response.

6 To improve and increase access to mental health and wellness prevention and intervention data;

HIGHLIGHTED PRIORITIES:

- Increase data collection and assessment of key indicators of student mental health and wellness – Electronic Health Record.

Guiding Principles

Our guiding principles help shape and reinforce our commitment to student mental health and wellness at Western:

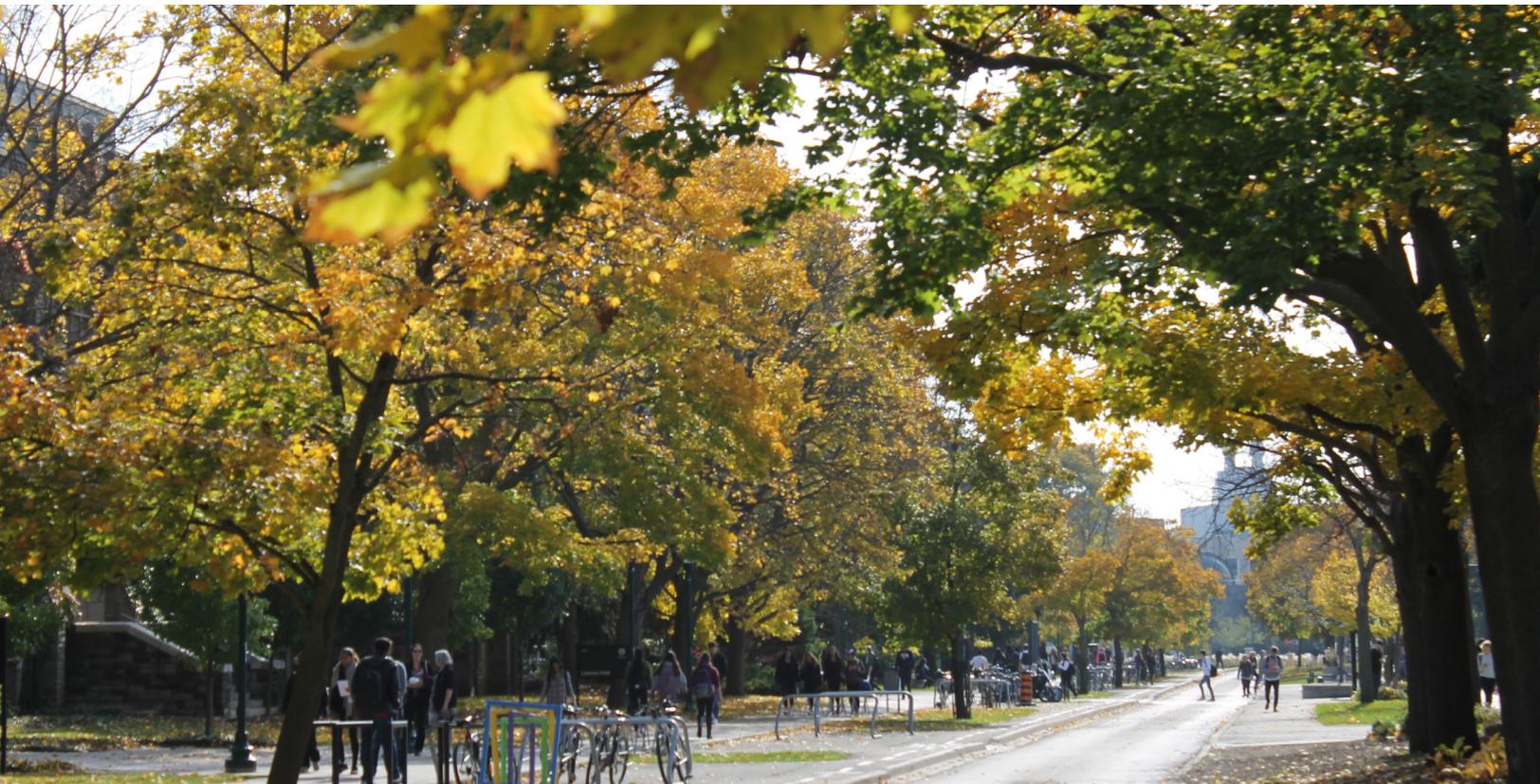
- 1** Student health exists on a continuum and is affected by the physical, emotional, mental, social, environmental, and spiritual dimensions of health.
- 2** Mental health and wellness is critical to all students':
 - academic and personal success
 - learning and productivity
 - ability to reach their full potential
 - ability to participate and engage meaningfully in school and life activities
- 3** Everyone on campus has a role to play in supporting students, including students assisting and supporting each other.
- 4** Students must be involved in the consultation, design, and ongoing support of the services, programs, and policies that will ultimately affect them.
- 5** Through targeted, effective, and accessible programs, services, and supports students can better achieve their academic and personal goals and maintain their wellness throughout their university experience.



Mental Health in Post-Secondary Institutions

Approximately one in five people experience a mental illness in any given year and almost everyone is affected by mental illness in a family member, friend, co-worker, or neighbour. Every third year, Western University participates in the National College Health Assessment (NCHA), a benchmarking climate survey conducted at postsecondary institutions across North America, administered by the American College Health Association. Data from this survey shows that the proportion of Western students reporting having a psychiatric condition was 9.2% in 2016 (3% higher than it was for Western students in 2013), and higher than the national Canadian average of 7.4% in 2016. Since 2013, the number of students reporting that stress was having a negative impact on academic performance increased from 33.0% in 2013 to 48.5% in 2016, also higher than the national average of 42.2%. Western students reporting anxiety having a negative impact on academic performance has increased from 27.4% in 2013 to 39.4% in 2016, a 10% increase. When considering the impact of stress, it is the negative effects that stressful events can have on longer-term mental health that are often significant.

By providing Canada's best education for tomorrow's global leaders, Western's priority and commitment to 'leadership in learning' strives to provide students with the knowledge and skills required to lead and succeed in a rapidly evolving world. The relationship between academic performance and health is well understood. In recent consultations with the Western community, all individuals acknowledged that student health, including mental health, is central to educational success. Moreover, while stress and adversity can have negative effects on longer-term mental health and functioning, many also recognized that certain types of stressors have the potential to enhance the capacity for resilience, with downstream benefits to student mental health and wellness.



Opportunities within the environment can shape an individual's capacity to build resilience and universities are recognized as places to promote the health and wellness of those who learn and work within them. By promoting mental health and wellness,] we can increase the number of students who experience good mental health. This plan has a strong focus on health promotion and prevention because this a primary strategy for universities to reduce the number of students who may develop a mental health disorder. It is our collective and shared responsibility to ensure a healthy learning and working environment for all. This means that all of us –administration, faculty, staff, and students- must play key roles in supporting the mental health and wellness of our University community. This plan would be remiss if it did not recognize and acknowledge the tremendous work that has gone on for decades to compassionately and ethically serve Western students' mental health and wellbeing. Services, programs, groups, drop-ins, modules, and many other innovative practices and programs have been developed to equitably meet the needs of our student body with respect to mental health and wellbeing. This plan is intended to build on a strong foundation of practice, policy, service, and most importantly, caring and compassionate members of our campus community, to better meet the increasing mental health needs of our student body.

Our Student Mental Health and Wellness Strategy aligns with the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS) Campus Mental Health guide to supporting post-secondary student mental health. According to the CACUSS guide, a systemic approach to creating a campus environment that is conducive to mental health and learning should be comprehensive, create environmental conditions for the flourishing of all students, is student-directed, extends beyond the individual to include the campus environment, organizational structure, policies, and practices, and involves all campus members in a collective, shared responsibility for creating the conditions to support learning and mental health. This document is informed by an extensive campus-wide consultation and review process, evidence based practices in supporting post-secondary student mental health, and the leadership and experience of the Student Mental Health and Wellness Advisory Committeeⁱⁱ. Key termsⁱⁱⁱ used throughout this document can be found in Appendix C.



Broad Strategic Directions, Goals, & Strategies

Broad Strategic Direction 1: Promote and support a resilient campus community	
GOALS	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
<p>1a. Cultivate Institutional Commitment Cultivate institutional commitment for student mental health at all levels of the university.</p>	<p>Ensure that mental health is identified as a priority through the University’s strategic goals, mission, financial commitments, value statements, policies, and protocols.</p> <p>Encourage Western University to be a signatory to the Okanagan Charter^{iv} articulating our commitment to implement the calls to action of the Charter^v.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Okanagan Charter calls to action as important considerations for the Student Mental Health and Wellness Advisory Committee to integrate into policy, practice, and physical space at Western. <p>Increase data collection and assessment of key indicators of student mental health and wellness. Leverage large benchmarking datasets such as National College Health Assessment, internal data from Western’s Shared Electronic Health Record, which is under development, and the Smart, Healthy Campus IDI.</p> <p>Through Western’s annual budget and planning process, request updates from all faculties and units on initiatives within their purview that promote student mental health and wellness, and student resilience.</p> <p>Celebrate innovative and effective practices that promote wellness across our campus community within and outside of Western (e.g., Western News stories, conference presentations, social media and internal communications, etc.).</p>

GOALS	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
	<p>Partner with faculty members who are research experts in student mental health and wellness, health promotion and prevention, and program evaluation, to inform the development, delivery, and evaluation of programs and services on campus related to mental health and wellness.</p> <p>Review policies and procedures with regard to their impacts on mental health, inclusion, and diversity; ensure policies are up to date and provide appropriate supports for students.</p> <p>Raise institutional awareness related to the impact of educational practices and policies on the mental health and wellness of marginalized sociodemographic groups (e.g., barriers and stressors faced by students with disabilities, Indigenous students, etc.^{vi}).</p> <p>Develop a mental health and wellness strategic plan for faculty and staff.</p>
<p>Ensure the goals and strategies of the Mental Health and Wellness Strategic Plan are met.</p>	<p>Ensure that the strategic plan is reviewed annually.</p> <p>Launch a Mental Health Summit one year after the strategic plan is in place to review and evaluate the progress of the plan against the recommendations.</p> <p>Ensure that the outcomes of the mental health and wellness strategic plan are reported at least annually by the Student Experience portfolio.</p>
<p>In the context of the Affiliation Agreement, enhance and support partnerships between Affiliated University Colleges (Brescia, Huron, and King's) and Western in promoting and supporting student mental health and wellness.</p>	<p>Support recommendations identified in Affiliated University Colleges' mental health strategic plans with Western's Mental Health and Wellness Strategic Plan.</p> <p>Engage in ongoing opportunities for staff and faculty across campus and Affiliated University Colleges to collaborate on initiatives supporting student mental health and wellness.</p> <p>Recognize the leadership the Affiliated University Colleges have taken to support student mental health and wellness and continue to promote student access to services at affiliated university colleges and complementary services at Western.</p>

GOALS	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
<p>1b. Strengthen student resiliency through leadership, mentorship, and help-seeking</p> <p>Sustain and strengthen student resiliency.</p>	<p>Ensure that every student receives mental health and wellness education through course curricula and/or co-curricular content during their studies at Western, intentionally designed and delivered in a developmentally appropriate manner. Link content delivery and design to Western’s Degree Level Outcome on ‘Resilience and Life-Long Learning.’^{vii}</p> <p>Academic Programs and Student Experience portfolios collaborate to consider how mental health and wellness learning modules could be made accessible to all students online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing online learning platforms such as Western 1010, Online Academic Orientation, Mental Health First Aid, and external resources to streamline and enhance online learning tools related to mental health and wellness. • Consider the addition of financial literacy to the content of the modules. • Consider developing similar mental health educational modules for graduate students. • Provide facilitator resources to support use of online materials in a manner that is complimentary with face-to-face learning tools; increase effectiveness of online learning through blended learning designs.
<p>Promote structured supports that foster peer mentorship, leadership and community connection.</p>	<p>Expand mental health and wellness-focused mentorship programs to all students, with supports from existing mentorship programs and services offered through Student Experience, Residence Life, SOGS and the USC (e.g., Leadership and Academic Mentorship Program, Learning Skills Services, Sports and Recreation Services, Peer Support Centre, Orientation Program, Residence Staff).</p> <p>Continue to support students who have innovative ideas to promote health and wellness on campus. Establish a Wellness Innovation Fund to support innovative programs and services that promote wellness on our campus.</p> <p>Increase and enhance training and supports for student helpers, leaders, and mentors across campus.</p> <p>Continue to support the Peer Support Centre and ensure that ongoing expert input, advice, and regular evaluation for effectiveness and safety occurs.</p>

GOALS	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
<p>Promote stress-reduction strategies as effective methods for stress management for students.</p>	<p>Explore opportunities across campus for students to learn and practice stress reduction strategies such as mindfulness meditation as a method of stress management and building resiliency. Several faculties (e.g., Law, Medicine & Dentistry, Science, and King's) have programs and drop-in sessions that can serve as models. Psychological Services and the Wellness Education Centre also offer a mindfulness lecture series that could be expanded across campus. Consider coordinating with individual faculties on a need basis to ensure that students have access to opportunities during the day.</p> <p>Increase the awareness of the connection between physical health and mental health, sleep, learning, and quality of life.</p> <p>Continue to find creative ways to promote opportunities provided to students by Campus Recreation to incorporate physical activity as a method of stress-reduction and resiliency.</p> <p>Encourage students to build self-awareness on, seek out, and engage in activities that are individually meaningful, rewarding and wellness promoting. Some examples could include: reading fiction, exercise, social activities, cooking, etc.</p> <p>Provide resources to faculty who wish to offer or promote stress-reduction resources, information, and skill-based activities for students.</p>
<p>Normalize failure and setbacks as standard parts of a rigorous education.</p>	<p>Introduce campus-wide initiatives, programs, or projects that normalize setbacks, promote an optimistic outlook, and help students reflect on and learn from their failures.^{vii}</p>
<p>Encourage help-seeking among students.</p>	<p>Promote early access to preventative mental health and wellness initiatives that address all dimensions of wellness (academic, career, financial, mental, physical, and spiritual) through enhanced communications of existing campus resources.</p> <p>Promote help-seeking as an effective strategy for academic success, career success, and positive mental health and wellness.</p> <p>Explore creative ways to encourage help-seeking of students who are less likely to request support.</p>

GOALS	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
<p>Explore ways to help students manage expectations about university life, academics, finances, and access to mental health services.</p>	<p>Celebrate the strength of on-campus services, while increasing awareness about needs to link and refer to community resources to effectively support students with mental health challenges. Provide ongoing information about services available on campus in addition to community supports through the broader mental health services ecosystem.</p>
<p>Promote mental health literacy and sustain and broaden mental health education.</p>	<p>Provide tools and resources to support administrative leaders, faculty, staff, and students in identifying signs and symptoms of distress.</p> <p>Enhance and regularly redistribute tools and resources to faculty and staff to identify students in distress and support them in accessing appropriate resources (e.g., Student in Difficulty resource). This resource should include clear communication of 24/7 crisis contacts locally, in addition to local, provincial, and national phone numbers, addresses, and websites for mental health and/or other crisis services and centres.</p> <p>Build literacy on the continuum of mental health. Support enhanced distress tolerance among campus community members through normalization of experiences of acute stress and negative emotionality that are healthy responses to navigation of day to day life experiences. Provide tools to assist students and community members with identification of toxic stress in themselves and others, which may require intervention or supports to promote wellness.</p> <p>Increase opportunities for staff, faculty, student leaders, teaching assistants, and leaders at Western to receive mental health and suicide prevention training that will help to effectively identify and respond to a student with mental health concerns (e.g., ASIST, Mental Health First Aid for Adults who Interact with Youth, Mental Health First Aid for First Nations, safeTALK).</p> <p>Ensure that all units on campus have at least one staff member trained on Mental Health First Aid and that units consider booster or re-training staff every two years.</p> <p>Increase awareness of mental health through anti-stigma campaigns and other awareness building initiatives.</p> <p>Increase 'lived experience'^{ix} and storytelling initiatives on campus in the area of mental health (e.g., guest speakers who share stories of their experiences, peer-to-peer conversations about experiences of mental health challenges, etc.).</p>

GOALS	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
<p>1c. Enhance transitional supports for all students</p> <p>Enhance transitional supports for students arriving at Western in their first year.</p>	<p>Promote connection within Western’s social and academic communities through programs and services that foster peer-to-peer, peer-to-staff, and peer-to-faculty connections.</p> <p>Emphasize health promotion, prevention, and wellness education through transitional programming with all students (e.g., Summer Academic Orientation, Orientation Program, Graduate Student Orientation Programming).</p> <p>Provide ongoing learning and professional development opportunities in the area of mental health and wellness to orientation leaders.</p> <p>Ensure that orientation information to students includes resources related to online spaces, social media, and digital literacy.</p> <p>Review and improve the mechanisms of disclosure and support for students who identify a pre-existing mental health challenge as they transition into Western. Provide mechanisms for students to disclose mental health challenges and begin accessing supports early, through or soon after the admissions process. Provide streamlined connections to health and wellness services and accommodation services to meet their needs as they begin undergraduate or graduate training at Western.</p> <p>Establish mechanisms to encourage students who have been receiving academic support for a mental health, learning or physical disability to identify their needs to the university in advance, to facilitate early access to service and effectively support their transition to Western.</p> <p>Enhance inclusivity of programming to reflect the needs of our diverse campus community; increase representation of marginalized sociodemographic groups in transitional programming to foster increased sense of connection to our campus community within the full diversity of its membership.</p>
<p>Review and enhance transitional supports for distance and part-time students.</p>	<p>Review and increase services and supports for distance learners, including students who may only be on campus on a part-time basis. Ensure that online student services are highly visible through online presence, and provide opportunities for connection with personal supports from a distance where necessary.</p>

GOALS	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
<p>Enhance transitional supports for students as they move into second and upper years.</p>	<p>Review transitional supports as students move from residence into off-campus housing.</p> <p>Develop a comprehensive mental health communication plan that will reach all students on and off-campus to enhance consistency and clarity of mental health communications for off-campus students.</p> <p>Explore effective ways to identify and support students who are high-risk for mental health challenges as they transition from first year to community residence in second and upper years.</p>
<p>Enhance transitional supports for students as they move into graduate school, professional school, postdoctoral fellowships and/or the workforce.</p>	<p>Encourage Faculties and Affiliated University Colleges to have in-class discussions regarding career expectations, the use of career services in The Student Success Centre, and job market availability.</p> <p>Explore creative ways to expand the use and promotion of career services offered at The Student Success Centre, Faculties, Departments, and Affiliated University Colleges.</p> <p>Develop a sub-committee of the Student Mental Health and Wellness Advisory Committee to address the issues raised during consultation pertaining to graduate students and post-doctoral fellows at Western.* This subcommittee should include representation from SGPS.</p> <p>Increase campus mental health promotion and awareness initiatives designed for students in professional programs and graduate studies.</p> <p>Encourage professional faculties and graduate programs to address challenges with isolation and unique stressors experienced in graduate and professional training programs.</p>
<p>1d. Recognize and support our diverse campus community</p> <p>Recognize the unique strengths and needs of students who identify with marginalized sociodemographic groups (e.g., students who identify with sexual and gender minorities, racialized students, Indigenous students, international students, etc.).</p>	<p>Support programs designed to meet the unique needs of, and build a sense of, community among students who may not identify with dominant norms of the institution.</p> <p>Recognize the value of peer-to-peer connections within marginalized communities, and promote the visibility of faculty / staff role models who share identities with marginalized students.</p> <p>Promote visibility and education regarding individual experiences related to mental health, wellness, and navigating challenges among our diverse campus community.</p>

GOALS	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
	<p>Reduce barriers often faced by marginalized sociodemographic groups on campus, which can lead to frequent and deleterious stress (e.g., physically accessible buildings, gender neutral washrooms, etc.).</p>
<p>Enhance anti-oppressive and inclusive practices across the university to more effectively support our diverse student body.</p>	<p>Identify social norms and systemic barriers that are threats to gender equality, respect, and safety for all students.</p> <p>Increase training opportunities for staff and faculty for anti-oppressive practice training.</p> <p>Allocate sustainable institutional resources to provide confidential supports for survivors of sexual violence, and engage in active sexual violence prevention and education efforts.</p>
<p>Recognize the unique strengths and needs of Indigenous students</p>	<p>Support and implement the recommendations of the Indigenous Strategic Plan.</p> <p>Provide faculty and staff on campus with the opportunity to receive Mental Health First Aid First Nations training to increase their skills, confidence, and cultural competency in supporting mental health and wellness of Indigenous students; prioritize offering this training to counsellors who support student mental health, and front line student supports.</p> <p>Raise awareness of the significant impact of past and historical trauma on the mental health and academic performance of Indigenous students, and promote the use of trauma-informed approaches when working with Indigenous students.</p> <p>Expand holistic and culturally-relevant counselling, student supports, and space available through Indigenous Services.</p>
<p>Recognize the unique strengths and needs of international students.</p>	<p>Explore ways to offer the Summer Academic Orientation to international students in their first language.</p> <p>Increase the awareness among faculty and staff of the unique considerations of supporting international students who have mental health concerns; recognize the unique stressors associated with acculturation faced by international students entering Western. Support the goals and strategies of Western International's strategic plan.</p>

GOALS	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
	<p>Identify and provide supplemental mental health initiatives that are specific to the needs of international students.</p> <p>Develop a sub-committee from the Student Mental Health and Wellness Advisory Committee to address the issues raised during consultation about the unique stressors and supports required for international students. This subcommittee should include representation from Western International.</p>
<p>1e. Assess the Campus Environment</p> <p>Identify and address gaps in our current physical spaces, safety plans, and infrastructure.</p>	<p>Work with Facilities Management and Institutional Planning and Budgeting to identify wellness as a key consideration in new building and renovation projects. This includes creating indoor spaces that encourage community building; study spaces; spaces to support commuting students; spaces for spiritual activities, meditation, and ceremonies; and incorporation of design elements that optimize learning and wellness with color and natural light.</p> <p>Incorporate wellness as a key consideration in Western’s Open Space Strategy, identifying the role that the campus environment, green spaces, and outdoor spaces play in promoting wellness and physical activity.</p> <p>Review green and the natural spaces that exist around campus that can promote and contribute to better mental health and wellness, and increase promotion and awareness of outdoor space usage opportunities among the campus community.</p> <p>Create a resource for faculty and staff that provides evidence-based information about designing physical learning spaces and environments that support optimal learning experiences, mental health and wellness.</p>

GOALS	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
<p>1f. Policies and Procedures</p> <p>Work to streamline the medical accommodation process for short-term illness.</p>	<p>Collaborate with the working group of Associate Deans responsible for the review of the medical accommodation policy for short-term illnesses to explore alternative models that may be effective when addressing short-term medical accommodation.</p> <p>Conduct a review of other provincial and national models that post-secondary institutions are using for medical accommodation for short-term illnesses to ensure that Western’s policy is up-to date, and meeting the needs of students, faculty and the university.^{xi}</p> <p>Develop a communications strategy regarding regarding academic accommodation and relief policies and practices to foster greater understanding among students, faculty, and staff, and increased consistency of application.</p>
<p>Evaluate the pilot fall reading week for alleviating stress and promoting mental health and wellness among students.</p>	<p>Conduct an assessment of the fall reading week pilot with regard to its effectiveness in alleviating stress and promoting wellness for students.</p>
<p>Reduce stress associated with academic degree planning, course scheduling, and degree completion.</p>	<p>Identify and explore ways to address unnecessary stress associated with navigating the academic calendar, and course and exam scheduling (e.g., improved online academic calendar that highlights degree and career pathways; appointments with academic counsellor).</p> <p>Explore strategies to expand the number of spring and summer courses offered across faculties to allow for greater flexibility of course selection and degree completion.</p> <p>Recognize the academic pressures and stress associated with the Intent to Register process, specifically related to securing places in limited enrolment programs on an annual basis.</p> <p>Enhance Intent to Register communications and supports for students to alleviate perceived stress associated with the process.</p> <p>Promote the benefits associated with degree and modular flexibility supported by Intent to Register and other similar processes.</p>

GOALS	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
	<p>Explore creative ways to promote student attendance at information sessions regarding the Intent to Register process and degree planning.</p> <p>Engage peer supports and student leaders in supporting conversations about Intent to Register (e.g., Leadership and Academic Mentorship Program, Residence Staff, Orientation Leaders, etc.).</p>
<p>Explore best practices for academic student advising.</p>	<p>Strike an Academic Advising Review Committee^{xiii} to explore best practices as they relate to student advising strategies that promote student wellness.</p>



Broad Strategic Direction 2: Develop and Deliver Effective Mental Health and Wellness Education

GOALS	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
<p>Assign a unit and leader responsible to oversee mental health communication.</p>	<p>Senior leadership to assign a unit and leader tasked with forming a Student Mental Health and Wellness Promotion and Communication team. This team would collaborate with campus and community resources and services to deliver mental health and wellness education, health promotion and prevention initiatives in a unified manner. This working group should include representation from Faculties. The group would report regularly to the AVP of Student Experience.</p> <p>Strategize ways to sustain and support Mental Health and Wellness Education.</p> <p>Allocate dedicated communication and staffing resources for mental health and wellness and digital expertise to support this work.</p>
<p>Increase student awareness and knowledge of mental health resources and services, including why and how to access services.</p>	<p>The Student Mental Health and Wellness Promotion and Communication team develop a comprehensive, annual communications plan that promotes a culture of positive mental health, resilience and wellness all-year round, including information, resources, and supports available to students.</p> <p>The communications plan should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify timelines for content delivery and accountability. • Include specific strategies and approaches to target messaging to more isolated student groups. • Provide resources intentionally designed to help students in crisis identify appropriate resources and supports.

GOALS	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
	<p>The Student Health and Wellness Promotion and Communication team should also review the best practices for communicating wholistic information regarding all dimensions of wellness to students (e.g., academic, financial, social, etc).</p>
<p>Enhance ongoing engagement and communication with parents related to policies, programs, and services that can support student mental health and wellness.</p>	<p>Annually review and enhance the Summer Academic Orientation parent session materials to ensure it is up-to-date and includes effective mental health and wellness information for parents.</p> <p>Include mental health and wellness content in parent newsletters for parents of first year students coordinated by Housing and The Student Success Centre.</p> <p>Create web resources for parents wishing to support a student struggling with mental health challenges on Western’s Health and Wellness website.</p> <p>Consider enhancing mobile-friendly online versions of mental health and wellness resources for parents and students.</p>
<p>Enhance and streamline the presence and accessibility of online information and resources regarding mental health.</p>	<p>Conduct a review of mental health and wellness websites and apps at Western to identify current strengths and areas for improvement.</p> <p>Develop a centralized website to provide efficient and effective access to mental health and wellness information to the Western community. This would enable the websites of faculties, units, and student governments to link and provide consistent information.</p> <p>Ensure that the Student Mental Health and Wellness Promotion and Communication team collaborates with students in developing a website to ensure the communication content, channels, navigation and interactive elements are appropriate for each target audience. The website should be accessible, updated frequently, mobile-friendly, and easy to navigate online for resources and information.</p>

Broad Strategic Direction 3: Inclusive Curriculum and Pedagogy to Support Student Mental Health

GOALS	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
<p>Apply a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach to programs, services, and curriculum.</p>	<p>Establish a UDL committee to review best practices in UDL for universities and how UDL can be implemented in teaching pedagogy and training for new faculty at Western.</p> <p>Invite UDL experts to provide training to key staff and stakeholders, including faculty who express an interest in learning more about UDL.</p> <p>Provide ongoing learning and professional development for faculty to make use of a broad range of assessment methods to further enhance and support student learning.</p> <p>Raise awareness among students of their rights and responsibilities related to learning barriers and accommodation.</p>
<p>Create learning environments that promote mental health and wellness.</p>	<p>Explore relevant conditions for mental health and wellness in learning environments at Western. This could include ideas around positive classroom culture, real life learning, opportunities for personal and professional growth of students' skills and preparedness for the future, and providing students with some flexibility and control over their learning experiences.</p>
<p>Develop early identification and intervention programs for academic issues.</p>	<p>Explore ways to implement and evaluate an early alert program to identify early signs of students who are struggling academically and facilitate access to supports, contributing to reduced stress, enhanced academic success and retention.</p>
<p>Provide mental health and student accommodation information consistently on course syllabi across the institution.</p>	<p>Regularly review standard course syllabus content to ensure that information is up to date and relevant regarding mental health services on campus and in the community, and accommodation processes in relation to mental health challenges. Consider linking to an online information portal where the most up to date information about mental health and wellness can be made consistently available.</p> <p>Ensure that the online repository of past course syllabi is up-to-date and easily accessible by students (e.g., launch a central website that links to departmental course syllabi websites, and/or include links in a new online academic calendar).</p>

GOALS	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
	<p>Provide faculties with a PowerPoint slide complementing syllabi information as it relates to mental health and wellness. Encourage faculty to embed the slide into course overview.</p> <p>Determine the feasibility of Faculties providing current course syllabi for classes in advance of course registration.</p> <p>Conduct a review of the best practices around alleviating the stress associated with course registration.</p>
<p>Increase knowledge and understanding across the institution of the effectiveness and intended objectives of the new policy of students receiving 15% course grade prior to the course drop date.</p>	<p>Conduct a review of the policy related to the 15% course assessment to students before the drop date to ensure that the policy is being implemented in the spirit of increasing assessment diversity, mitigating students' stress, and ensuring students have information regarding their performance to inform course add/drop decisions.</p>



Broad Strategic Direction 4: Provide Accessible and Effective Mental Health and Wellness Services

GOALS	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
<p>Enhance access, responsiveness, and effectiveness of student mental health services; increase knowledge among the campus community (faculty, staff, & students) of mental health and wellness services, including why and how to access them.</p>	<p>Reduce the fragmentation and 'siloing' of student mental health services through the integration of student mental health and wellness services into a Health and Wellness Centre.</p> <p>Explore strategies to increase access to evidence-based treatments for students with existing mental health disorders, in part by leveraging existing campus resources including the extensive clinical expertise of faculty and staff on campus. Strike a community liaison committee with external agencies to cultivate and build community relationships and to explore ways to extend services and support for students off-campus.</p> <p>Enhance and sustain collaborations with the Canadian Mental Health Association, the University Students Council, and Society of Graduate Students to offer after-hours crisis counselling at times of peak demand.</p> <p>Continue efforts to dynamically adjust service availability and service model to meet fluctuating needs of mental health services over the academic year.</p> <p>Advocate for increased resources from government and donor sources to support mental health and wellness service capacity, including increased funding for students to access effective psychological services.</p>
<p>Enhance data tracking, collaborative care, early identification and triaging to community mental health facilities, hospitals, and community agencies.</p>	<p>Implement a shared Electronic Health Record among health and wellness service providers on campus.</p> <p>Consider using standardized screening instruments that are used within local community agencies to support students with significant issues who require further assessment and intervention off campus.</p>

GOALS	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
<p>Increase the awareness among campus community (faculty, staff, & students) of the Wellness Education Centre (WEC).</p>	<p>Explore creative ways to promote WEC as a safe, comfortable environment where students can get connected with the mental health and wellness resources available at Western and in the London community.</p> <p>Expand the education and outreach role of the WEC as a communications arm of the new integrated Health and Wellness Centre.</p> <p>Secure financial resources for the sustainability of wellness education initiatives.</p>
<p>Support enhanced crisis intervention and response capacity on campus.</p>	<p>Engage in continuous review of student death and critical incident policies to ensure Western is in alignment with established best practices in the post-secondary and mental health sectors.</p> <p>Ensure timely and effective community supports for members of the Western community who are impacted by a mental health crisis or suicide.</p> <p>Engage in annual review of communications strategy following mental health crises or a student death by suicide to ensure alignment with established best practices in community care and suicide postvention.</p> <p>Collaborate with peer institutions and the Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health to maximize the effectiveness of crisis intervention and response strategies.</p> <p>Establish an institutional mechanism to identify, communicate, support and respond to students who may be experiencing mental health challenges; establish clear mechanisms for members of the Western community to communicate potential challenges through this mechanism.</p> <p>Support campus capacity for 24/7 mental health emergency first response available through Campus Community Police Services. Engage in ongoing review of professional development needs for campus police who act as active campus first responders in mental health crisis situations. In expanding capacity to support mental health first response, consider strategies to engage non-uniformed officers and mental health professionals as active collaborators with police in providing campus first response.</p>

Appendix A:

Student Mental Health and Wellness Advisory Committee Member List 2017-18

Name

Title

Current Co-Chairs

John Doerksen	Vice-Provost (Academic Programs)
Rick Ezekiel	Interim Senior Director Student Experience

Committee Members

Melanie-Anne Atkins	Wellness Coordinator, Student Experience
JC Aubin	Operational Leader, Campus Community Police Services
Joanna Bedggood	Manager, Student Wellness, King's University College
Madison Bettle	Vice-President Student Services, Society of Graduate Students (SOGS)
Leanne Bonnelo	Student Wellness Educator, Student Life Centre, Brescia University College
Anh Brown	Campus Student Case Manager, Housing & Ancillary Services
Debbie Chiodo	Mental Health Strategist, Student Experience
Jana Cernavskis	Communications Officer, University Students' Council (USC)
Kathryn Dance	Acting Director, Student Development Centre, Student Experience
Rav Datta	Western Vice-Chair, Student Senators, University Senate
Lorraine Davies	Associate Vice-Provost, School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
Perri Deacon	Student Emergency Response Team (SERT)
Sarah Dolphin	Sexual Violence Prevention Education Coordinator, Student Experience
Joan Finegan	Associate Dean, Faculty of Social Science
Martha Fuller	Academic Manager, Undergraduate Student Services, Faculty of Science
Cynthia Gibney	Director, Health Services, Student Health Services
Michelle Harvey	Coordinator Fitness & Wellness, Sports and Recreation Services
Joe Henry	Dean of Students, King's University College
Tom Lee	President, Active Minds Western
Scott May	Campus Communications Consultant, Communications and Public Affairs
Courtney McDonald	Manager, Student Life, Brescia University College
Chris Mellon	Associate Director, Residence Counselling & Senior HR Consultant, Housing & Ancillary Services
Kim Miller	Acting Director, Student Success Centre, Student Experience
Emma Newman	Student Emergency Response Team (SERT)
Dan Redmond	Director, Campus Community Police Service
Alan Salmoni	Professor, School of Kinesiology
Kevin Shoemaker	Professor, School of Kinesiology
Catherine Steeves	Vice-Provost & Chief Librarian
Thomas Telfer	Professor, Faculty of Law
Landon Tulk	Vice-President, University Students' Council (USC)

Peggy Wakabayashi Acting Associate Vice-President, Housing & Ancillary Services
Rob Walsh Athletic Therapist, Sports and Recreation, Student Experience
Naomi Wiesenthal Psychologist, Student Development Centre, Student Experience

Past Chair

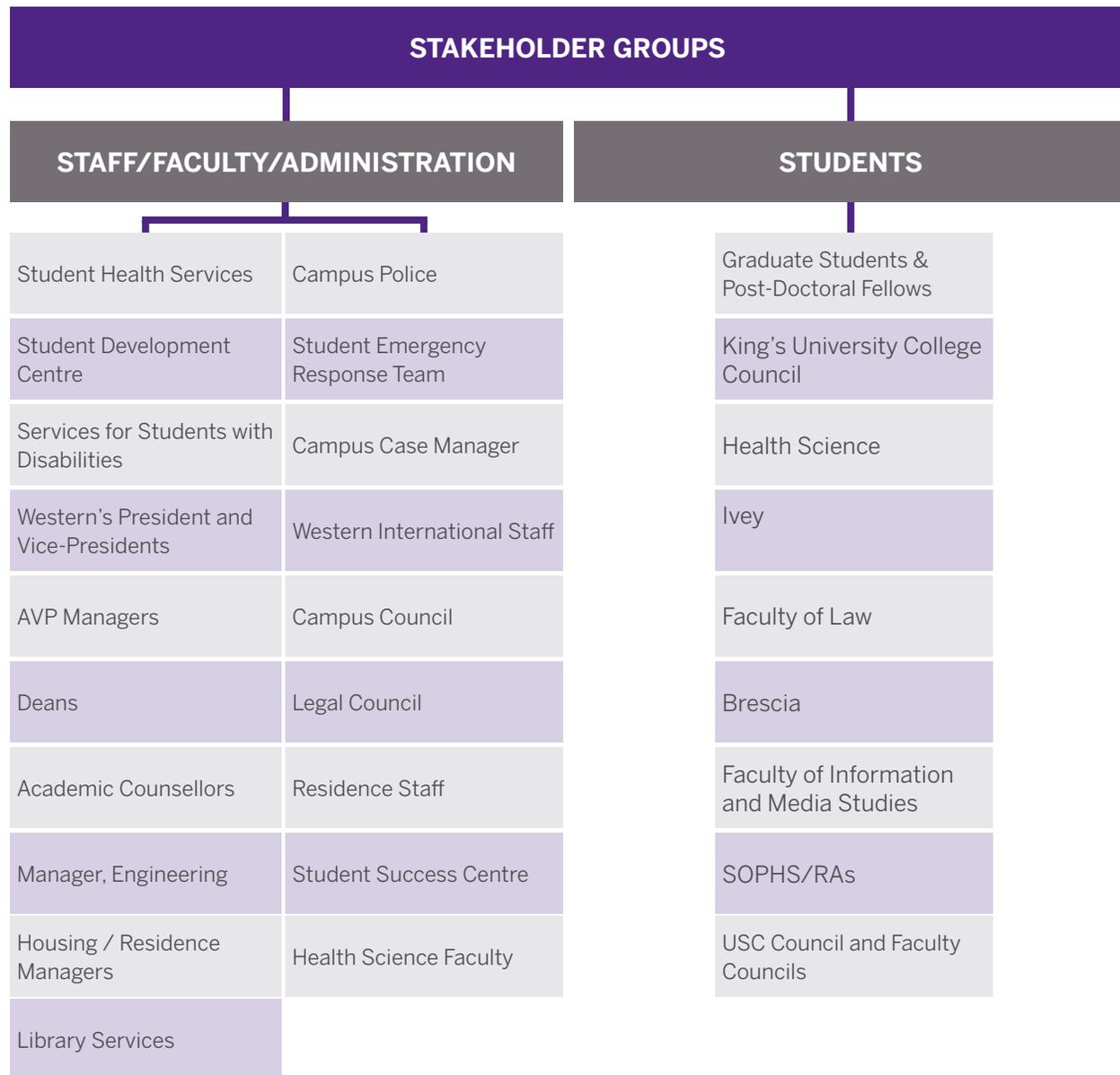
Jana Luker Past Associate Vice-President, Student Experience
Angie Mandich Past Associate Vice-President, Student Experience

Past Committee Members

Chris Alleyne Past Acting Executive Director of Residences, Housing & Ancillary Services
Alex Benac Past Vice-President (Internal), University Students' Council (USC)
Danielle Carr Past Sexual Violence Prevention Education Coordinator, Student Experience
John Carson Past Director, Campus Community Police Services
Jamie Cleary Past Vice President, University Students' Council (USC)
Helen Connell Associate Vice-President, Communications and Public Affairs
Deb Coward Past Director of Administration, Student Experience
Susan Grindrod Past Associate Vice-President, Housing & Ancillary Services
Courtney Hardy Western Student Senator, University Senate
Sophie Helpard Past President, University Students' Council (USC)
Ryan Henderson Past President, Active Minds Western
Gail Hutchinson Past Director, Student Development Centre, Student Experience
Harry Orbach-Miller Past Chair of the Western Student Senators, University Senate
Candy Parker Counselling Intake and Crisis Nurse, Student Health Services
Therese Quigley Past Director, Sports and Recreation Services, Student Experience
Emily Ross Past Communications Officer, University Students' Council (USC)
Margaret Steele Past Vice Dean, Hospital and Interfaculty Relations, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry
Angela Treglia Past Sexual Violence Prevention Education Coordinator, Student Experience
Krista Vogt Past Assistant Dean, Student Services, Huron University College
Tamara Will Campus Student Case Manager, Housing & Ancillary Services

Appendix B:

Stakeholder Groups that Participated in Mental Health and Wellness Consultations to Inform Plan Development



Appendix C:

Notes

ⁱStudent Mental Health and Wellness Advisory Committee and Consultation Process

Western University struck a Student Mental Health and Wellness Advisory Committee in 2015 to begin to develop a comprehensive strategy on mental health. In the spring of 2016, a mental health strategist was hired by the University to conduct a literature review and environmental scan of provincial, national, and international policies, services, and processes related to promoting mental health and wellness on university campuses. The mental health strategist was responsible for developing and carrying-out a consultation plan that would capture the experiences, thoughts, and ideas of the University's faculty, staff, and students as it related to mental health and wellness. From August 2016 until February 2017, the strategist conducted in-person consultations with over 500 University faculty, staff, senior leaders, and students. Moreover, more than 1500 individuals responded to consultation questions electronically via a campus-wide email survey. Our campus mental health strategy builds on existing policies and programs, but also unifies these efforts to ensure that Western University is a leader in promoting mental health in our community.

ⁱⁱStudent Mental Health and Wellness Strategic Plan Review Process

The Student Mental Health and Wellness Strategic Plan underwent an extensive review process. The draft plan was circulated to the internal university groups listed below and feedback and input to the plan was requested. The Mental Health Strategist (Debbie Chiodo) and the Interim Senior Director of Student Experience (Rick Ezekiel) attended meetings of these groups to gather feedback and input in person, and to make any changes as necessary:

- Student Mental Health and Wellness Advisory Committee
- President's and Vice-President (PVP) members
- Deans and Associate Deans (Graduate and Undergraduate)
- Library Services
- Student Senators

Feedback and comments were also requested via a campus-wide email that was distributed to all students, faculty, and staff. The campus community could either provide feedback via an anonymous survey or by email. Feedback and comments were reviewed and incorporated when the feedback strengthened and enhanced the goals and strategic directions of the plan. More than 150 individuals have provided feedback to the plan via these methods.

ⁱⁱⁱDefinition of Key Terms

- **Flourishing** is characterized by positive emotions and relationships, as well as by a sense of connection, purpose, and accomplishment (Seligman, M. E. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. New York, NY: Free Press.)
- **Positive mental health** is “the capacity 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.” It is characterized by resilience, commitment to an active lifestyle, and the experience of flourishing.
(Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). (2006). *The human face of mental health and mental illness in Canada*. Ottawa, ON.)
- **Resilience** allows us to cope with life’s disappointments, challenges, and pain. To be resilient, we need to believe in our own strengths, abilities, and worth. Resilient traits include flexibility, empathy, realistic action planning, listening and problem-solving skills, self-confidence, optimism, a sense of humour, and an ability to develop effective relationships, manage emotions, and make social contributions.
- **Marginalized sociodemographic groups** are a particular group or groups of people who may be systematically excluded from meaningful participation in economic, social, political, cultural and other forms of human activity in their communities and thus are denied the opportunity to fulfil themselves as human beings because of a sociodemographic characteristic or other aspects of their identity (e.g., race, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, age, religion, etc.)
(UNESCO, 2000.)
- **Stress** is a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances. There is some evidence that life stressors may be an important opportunity for building the capacity for resilience, with benefits to mental health and well-being.
(Crane, F., Searle, B.J. (2016). Building resilience through exposure to stressors: The effects of challenges versus hindrances. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 21 (4), 468-479.)

^{iv} The Okanagan Charter is an international charter for health promoting universities and colleges that has two Calls to Actions for higher education institutions: Embed health into all aspects of campus culture, across the administration, operations and academic mandates and 2) Lead health promotion action and collaboration locally and globally. See <http://internationalhealthycampuses2015.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2016/01/Okanagan-Charter-January13v2.pdf> for more information.

^v Kings University College in the spring of 2017 adopted the Charter and has accepted the institutional commitment to integrate the Charter into all aspects of its policies, practices, and actions.

^{vi} For further reading on minority stress theory in university environments, please see an example: Hayes, Chun-Kennedy, Edens, & Locke (2011). Do double minority students face double jeopardy? Testing minority stress theory. *Journal of College Counseling*, 14, 117-126

^{vii} <http://www.uwo.ca/pvp/vpacademic/iqap/doc/WDOs.pdf>

^{viii} Stanford University has established The Resilience Project <https://vptl.stanford.edu/resilience-project>, under the leadership of the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning in 2010. *Stanford, I Screwed Up! A Celebration of Failure and Resilience* is an initiative on campus that combines personal storytelling, events, programs, and academic skills coaching to motivate and support students as they experience the setbacks that are a normal part of a rigorous education. Students are taught how to learn from failure with the hope that this will instill a sense of belonging and bravery among its student population. The overarching goal of the initiative is to help change the perception of failure from something to be avoided at all costs, to something that has meaning, purpose, and value. The Project has many elements that can be adopted on other university campuses and can spark conversation, collaboration, and new ideas for promoting resilience at Western.

^{ix} Lived experience refers to the meaningful engagement of people with lived experience of mental health conditions.

^x During consultations, a range of graduate-student specific challenges and stressors were raised that prevent them from thriving. Graduate-student specific issues included:

- **Supervisory relationship**, which included pressures from supervisors to devote all their time to their studies, conflict with supervisors, fear of disclosing mental health problems to supervisors because of concern regarding potential differential treatment, supervisors not understanding mental health issues or disabilities, and supervisors not recognizing the tremendous stressors students face.
- **Isolation**, which included working independently on thesis work, less check-in points with students after course work is completed, having a single supervisor to work with, and communication challenges for post-doctoral fellows who feel far removed from the university campus.
- **Financial and career anxiety**, which included living in poverty, especially for students who have to support families either locally or within their home country, and the stress of finding an academic position (or any other job) upon graduation.
- **University services designed for undergraduate students** which included little or no well-being groups offered during the summer months when graduate students are still on campus, the need for graduate student-specific counseling, the confidentiality concerns of attending health and mental health services in the same places as their own students.
- **Requirement of full-time academic status** which included the requirement to be a full-time student or take an official leave of absence from your studies, with no option to be considered for part-time status.
- **Imposter syndrome** which included trying to obtain an unattainable ideal of what constitutes academic success, with no real understanding of what success means or how to achieve it, where the criteria of what it means to be successful is constantly changing, and where mistakes and failures are not acceptable
- **International graduate students** which included many of the same concerns as non-international graduate students albeit exacerbated by heightened pressure to succeed from families who send their children abroad to graduate school, integrating and fitting into a new culture and community, the lack of family and social networks upon first arrival and ongoing in many cases, the additional financial stress of not completing a degree in the anticipated time period and asking family for additional support to complete the degree, and the cultural and ethnic stigmas surrounding mental health.

- **Culture of graduate education**, which included the belief that life outside graduate school does not matter, that students must devote 100% of their time to their studies, that students feel discouraged at disclosing mental health issues with their supervisors, and the power imbalance that exists between student and supervisor that at times may result in appropriate treatment of graduate students.

^{xi} Many American universities, as well as some Canadian universities, have removed the medical accommodation by physician notes for short-term illness. Memorial University, for example, removed the requirement for supporting medical documentation for short-term illnesses that are less than five days in duration that may affect a students' participation in classes, labs, and/or evaluations related to their courses or programs. At Memorial, students can self-declare to professors their illness or medical conditions and sometimes this may be put in writing by a student and their professor.

^{xiii} The University of Guelph has also developed an Academic Advising Review Committee to enhance the quality and consistency of academic student advising.