

July 22, 2021

Launch of Canada's first national post-secondary mental health conference

Conference inspires an integrated approach to post-secondary mental health practices, including new findings and experiences during the pandemic

Calgary, Alberta – How does research result in best practices? Too often, there's a gap between the two, which the upcoming [Collaborations for Change](#) conference will help close in mental health practice in post-secondary education. This first-ever, national event will run August 12-13, co-hosted by University of Calgary alongside partners from across the country.

“Conversations around mental health have become increasingly diverse and open within the public discourse, especially highlighted during COVID-19. As academics and practitioners, we must bring experiences of mental health on and off campus into our research and best practices, while also bringing the research full circle to benefit people the community. Research must inform best-practices, and in turn, lived experiences must inform research initiatives.”

Dr. Andrew Szeto, Director of the Campus Mental Health Strategy at University of Calgary

Collaborations for Change aims to address this need by convening post-secondary students, service professionals, mental health professionals and researchers in meaningful conversations about post-secondary mental health. Reflective of this collaborative spirit, the event itself is co-hosted by The University of Calgary, [Campus Mental Health Strategy](#) and the [Best Practices in Canadian Higher Ed Network](#), with support from the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS).

External supporters committed to post-secondary mental health are helping to fuel these conversations intended to spark change and collaboration. “In order to effectively support the evolving mental health care needs of post-secondary students, we must bridge the gap between research and practice. To innovate and to adapt mental health services, we must leverage key learnings from the pandemic and emerging best practices,” says Stephanie Rossy, of The Rossy Foundation, the lead funder. “This inaugural conference will help bring us closer to our shared goal of improving the well-being of post-secondary students across the country.”

Mary Deacon Chair of Bell Let's Talk, lead sponsor for Collaborations for Change agrees and adds, “By putting research into action on campuses across the country, we can help ensure no one is left behind and that help is available to all. On our way forward, we all have a role to play. Together we can come out of the pandemic stronger and healthier.”

Speakers include award-winning Harvard-trained physician Dr. Shimi Kang, who will speak on the topic “Understanding mental health in times of stress”. Other key sessions highlight timely discussions and resources like the new National Standard for Mental Health and Well-Being for Post-Secondary Students, released less than a year ago. The [Mental Health Commission of Canada](#) will host a panel about this Standard, which offers an evidence-

based set of voluntary guidelines that post-secondary institutions can confidently rely on. A diverse student panel to elevate student voices vital to the conversation will close the conference.

“The goal is integrating research and practice through partnerships among and service providers, and students themselves. We want to engage all campus stakeholders to come together to advance campus mental health. We really want to listen to the individuals we want to help and support, before determining a way forward.”

Dr. Lina Di Genova, Dr. Rina Gupta, and Dr. Sandra Yuen, Best Practice Network leads

Register to attend: www.collaborationsforchange.ca/. This conference is made possible through lead funding from the Rossy Foundation, lead sponsorship from Bell Let’s Talk and is supported in part by the Mental Health Commission of Canada and Health Canada.

Media inquiries

Karen Keller

Media Relations Advisor

University of Calgary

Karen.keller@ucalgary.ca

403-614-0982 (mobile)

Interview opportunities are available:

1. [Dr. Andrew Szeto](#), Director, Mental Health Strategy, University of Calgary
2. [Dr. Lina Di Genova](#), Best Practices Network Site Lead; Director of Strategy, Assessment and Evaluation in Student Services at McGill University
3. [Sandra Yuen, Ph.D., C. Psych](#), Best Practices Network Site Lead; Director, Professional Practice & Quality Assurance, Health & Wellness, University of Toronto
4. [Mary Deacon](#), Chair of Board, Bell Let’s Talk

A limited number of media passes are available for the event upon request.

About the University of Calgary

The University of Calgary is a global intellectual hub located in Canada’s most enterprising city. In our spirited, high-quality learning environment, students thrive in programs made rich by research, hands-on experiences and entrepreneurial thinking. Our strategy drives us to be recognized as one of Canada’s top five research universities, engaging the communities we both serve and lead. This strategy is called Eyes High, inspired by the university’s Gaelic motto, which translates as ‘I will lift up my eyes.’ For more information, visit ucalgary.ca/eyeshigh.

For more information, visit ucalgary.ca. Stay up to date with University of Calgary news headlines on Twitter [@UCalgary](https://twitter.com/UCalgary). For details on faculties and how to reach experts go to our newsroom at ucalgary.ca/newsroom.

About the Best Practices Network

The Best Practices Network in Canadian Higher Education is a partnership between University of Toronto, McGill University and Queen’s University and our goal is to disseminate emerging, promising and best practices in student mental health initiatives across Canadian campuses. The network focuses on strengthening the assessment and evaluation capacity of mental health and wellness centres in Canadian post-secondary institutions. We are working

on supporting institutions in sharing and developing practical program and evaluation toolkits in the areas of health promotion, program and service delivery, and policy. For more information, visit www.bp-net.ca or reach us at info@bp-net.ca.