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Students Who Thrive

Well-being of University Students in Ontario

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Submitted to OCAD University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Design in Strategic Foresight and Innovation

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Author's Declaration

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Abstract

This research project explores the current state of student well-being in Ontario universities and highlights some of the key challenges and opportunities for change within the system. The paper provides a glimpse into the current state of university life in Ontario and provides concrete design proposals to improve and transform the higher education system in Ontario to make it a model of student well-being and academic excellence around the world.

University Students, Well-Being,
Student Services, Faith, Purpose,
Ontario Higher Education.

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Dedication

To my mom, the bravest person I know.

And to all the courageous people that inspire
me every day to live a life of purpose.

To the generations of now and of tomorrow:
May we change the world together
and never lose hope.

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Definitions

1. Health

Health comes from the word “haelb” which means “wholeness” (Harper, 2016) and as described by The World Health Organization (2003) is not only the absence of illness but a “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being” (WHO, 2003)

2. Well-being/ Wellness

Wellness is a “conscious, self-directed and evolving process of achieving full potential” (National Wellness Institute, 2016) that leads to a state of well-being, which is “to be well” (Harper, 2016).

*Even though there is a scholarly debate on the difference between wellness and well-being, for the purposes of this paper, these two words will be used interchangeably.

3. Purpose

Purpose: “intention, aim, goal”, “to design”; (Harper, 2016) refers to why a mission or a task is undertaken, why something exists. It is visualizing a plan and carrying it out. (Webster, 2016; Dictionary.com, 2016)

4. Faith

Faith: “root of fidere,” “to trust,” (Harper, 2016).

- “strong belief or trust in someone or something
- belief in the existence of God: strong religious feelings or beliefs
- a system of religious beliefs” (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2016)

5. Religion

Religion: from Latin “religionem,” “respect for what is sacred” (Harper, 2016):

- the belief in a god or in a group of gods
- an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god or a group of gods
- an interest, a belief, or an activity that is very important to a person or group. (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2016)

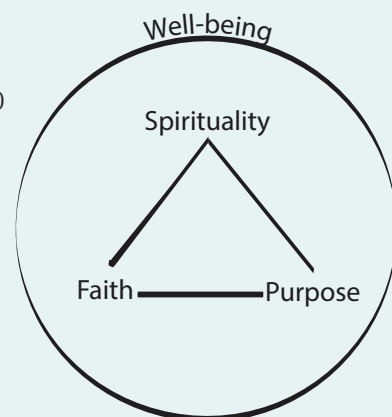
6. Spirituality

Spirituality: from Latin “spiritualis,” “quality of being spiritual” (Harper, 2016).

- “of or relating to a person’s spirit
- having similar values and ideas: related or joined in spirit” (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2016).

“Some may find that their spiritual life is intricately linked to their association with a church, temple, mosque, or synagogue. Others may pray or find comfort in a personal relationship with God or a higher power. Still others seek meaning through their connections to nature or art... your personal definition of spirituality may change throughout your life, adapting to your own experiences and relationships” (UMCSH, 2015).

Figure 1.
(Quiros-
Marten, 2016)



Synopsis

Well-being is instrumental in the optimal performance and proper development of university students. University students are under a great deal of stress which impacts their well-being and their ability to perform well in studies and in life (CACUSS, 2013; Wong, 2014; CFS, 2016).

The author of this study encountered this phenomenon through first hand observation which led to the examination of statistics to get a clearer indication of just how widespread the issue is for university students in Canada, and more specifically in Ontario. It was found that the majority of Canadian students, over 80%, reported feeling overwhelmed: many suffer from loneliness and depression (ACHA, 2013). These statistics are not only relevant to illustrate students' physical and mental lack of well-being, but also they indicate a direct impact on their academic performance (OUSA, 2010). As the ACHA 2013 report shows, the main factors identified by Canadian students as affecting their academic performance,

include stress (38.6%) and anxiety (28.4%), among others (CACUSS, 2013).

It is important to mention that there are several dimensions that contribute to an individual's well-being. According to Dr. Bill Hettler, the co-founder of the National Wellness Institute in the United States, there are six areas that should be optimized to achieve a state of well-being. These six dimensions are: "occupational, physical, social, intellectual, spiritual and emotional" (Hettler, 1976). Universities place greater emphasis on occupational and intellectual well-being, followed by some attention to physical and emotional aspects supported by dedicated student services. Social, spiritual, and emotional aspects may not be as comprehensively addressed. This has the potential to cause an imbalance between the internal and external development of the students (Heri, 2013). It is vital that university services become able to respond to all students' wellness needs in addition to the two dominant dimensions of intellectual

and occupational wellness. Spirituality is one such area that must be addressed, especially as statistics indicate that approximately 85% of the world's population adheres to some type of spiritual or religious practice (Harper, 2012).

This study sought to discover how to best support students' well-being through the very complex transition from youth to adulthood which takes place often during university years. An exploration of the relationship between physical and mental health and the connection to concepts of purpose, meaning and faith was undertaken. A qualitative design research approach was utilized to explore the topic of wellbeing (to include concepts beyond physical wellbeing) through qualitative methods that included: literature review (Creswell, 2009), semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2009), persona development (Blomkvist, 2002), systems mapping (Gharajedaghi, 2011), journey mapping (Bodine 2015) and thematic analysis: (Boyatzis 1998; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006).

Research on the beginnings of higher education revealed that early sites of learning were faith based, such as the University of Al-Karaouine in Egypt (Grigg, 2010). Then with the settling of America, institutions in the manner of Harvard (est. 1636) were established to educate the clergy (The New Encyclopedia, 2016). While faith-based universities still exist, the 300+ years since Harvard's inception have seen a plethora of secular post-secondary institutions which have mandates aligned with the American value of separating church and state. Similar developments took place in Canada, with College des Jesuits being established in 1635 as one of the earliest forms of higher education aimed at educating men who were looking to become priests (Hardy Cox & Carney Strange, 2010).

The university department tasked with helping students to overcome these emotional difficulties (in addition to physical ailments) is usually the health and wellness centre. At religious universities,

there may also be the addition of dedicated chaplaincy offices for spiritual counselling. Spiritual counselling is also provided in most secular universities, usually through faith groups which are approved groups in campus, but are not officially part of the university's student services.

Bill Hettler's six dimensions of health diagram introduces spirituality as a key component of well-being. Attention to one's spirituality becomes necessary to achieve optimal health. In Hettler's diagram, the spiritual dimension is described as the area of wellness that deals with an individual's search for meaning and purpose in life, the aspect of the person that has questions about the universe and how it works, and that seeks to understand their unique value system and how these values influence their 'world view' and their interactions with the world around them (Hettler, 1976 in the National Wellness Institute, 2016). The spiritual dimension is non-religious although it can include the

religious beliefs and interests of an individual.

Faith, a concept that is also not purely religious by definition (although just like spirituality can encompass religious systems), is explored in the research as an aspect of the spiritual dimension of wellness in a person. Faith is the belief in someone or something greater than yourself (Harper, 2016; Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2016) and although different in definition to spirituality, for the purposes of this paper, is explored as an aspect of the spiritual dimension of health of a person.

Research revealed that faith can act as a buffer to alleviate the many stressors endemic to university life (Frankel & Hewitt, 1994; Byron & Miller-Perrin, 2009; Mishra, 2009). The decision was made to explore the impact of faith and faith groups on students' well-being and the extent to which health/wellness centres, chaplaincy centres and faith groups enhanced this well-being. Research was conducted using a qualitative

approach of semi-structured interviews with staff of health and wellness centres as well as chaplaincy centres and faith groups. Research confirmed that faith does indeed have a positive impact on student well-being, but a much greater issue was uncovered. Faith, although by definition not strictly a religious concept is often perceived as such. Faith is often confused with religion and spirituality, and spirituality is often seen as religious (Frankel & Hewitt, 1994; Lyon, Beaty, Parker, Mencken, 2005), leading to resistance by many students to any service students perceive to be religious or evangelizing (Bryant, 2008).

The negative response in some quarters to the use of the word faith led to the realization that what was necessary was a proposal that would enhance the well-being of the entirety of the student body. It has been proposed that directing attention towards spiritual and emotional well-being might also include attention to purpose and meaning for students (Heri, 2013). Further studies confirm that

purpose and meaning play a key role in enhancing well-being (Van Dyke & Elias, 2007; Hill & Turiano, 2014). Purpose is an aspect of faith but can be used separately from it. A study on the value of life-purpose claims that 'purpose' can act a mediator between faith and well-being (Byron & Miller-Perrin, 2009). Further studies confirm that purpose and meaning play a key role in enhancing well-being (Van Dyke & Elias, 2007; Hill & Turiano, 2014). This realization prompted an exploration of how purpose can be used as a way to enhance well-being of all university students, regardless of their beliefs and background. It also led to the proposal of design interventions that seek to align and enhance the internal and external aspects of a student's life, academically and individually.



*“Education is the most powerful weapon
which you can use to change the world.”*

– NELSON MANDELA



1 METHOD

Method

- a. Research Approach
- b. Scope and Limitations

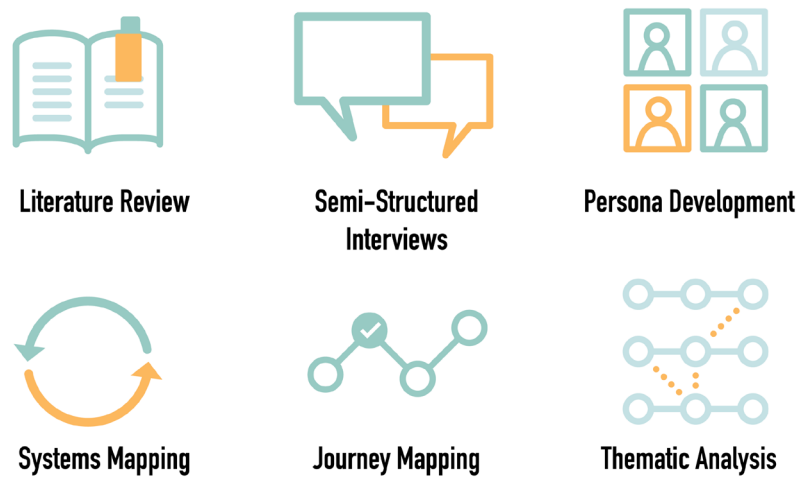


Figure 2.
(Kornet, 2016)

This MRP research project had as a primary focus the investigation of the current state of student well-being in Ontario; with the aim of using traditional and alternative approaches to support student health, prioritizing both the inner and outer development of the individual, as well as his/her preparation for work and for life.

Specific techniques used were:

- Literature Review (Creswell, 2009)
- Semi-structured Interviews (Creswell, 2009)
- Persona Development (Blomkvist, 2002)
- Systems Mapping (Gharajedaghi, 2011)
- Journey Mapping (Bodine, 2015)
- Thematic Analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006)

a. Research Approach

This research focused on an exploration of student services (especially health centres and faith groups) within Ontario universities. It studied the weight of the spiritual dimension of wellness as a contributor to overall well-being, specifically in the area of faith.

Summary of Project Direction

With the current landscape of student services, the increasing need for student support and recognition of increasing mental health challenges among students, this paper focuses on health centres and faith groups as two campus stakeholders that could play a substantial role to support students' well-being.

Considering the literature on university student well-being, indications from scientific studies and research papers on the role of faith in student health (in its broad definition), and considerations of purpose/meaning, the author studied the different dimensions of wellness – specifically the spiritual dimension of faith

within universities, and explored what possible role faith played or could play in student well-being as a complement to other student services. The study of faith, led to the study of meaning and purpose, and how it could be used as a catalyst for well-being for university students in Ontario, regardless of beliefs and background.

Research

Findings revealed the health challenges faced by university students in Ontario, and uncovered the student services ecosystem and highlighted the role faith can play in enhancing student well-being. The exploration focused primarily on understanding the university student experience, the current state of affairs of student services and the possible advantages and challenges of incorporating faith-related student services as part of university life.

Main Research Question:

In what ways can student well-being be enhanced at university?

Secondary Research Questions:

- What role does faith play in promoting wellness within university health centers?
- Is there a place or need for a greater role for faith within university health centers?

The initial focus was primarily on:

- I. Understanding the current state of student well-being in university students in Ontario
- II. Studying health centres and faith groups within universities in Ontario and the impact - if any - the aforementioned student services have in enhancing student well-being, as well as identifying any opportunities for improvement.

The methods used for this section were: literature review (Creswell, 2009), semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2009), thematic analysis (Boyatzis 1998; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), persona development (Blomkvist 2002) and systems mapping (Gharajedaghi, 2011).

Through a qualitative approach, the intent was to answer the following sub-questions:

1) Do university health centers use faith as a way to promote well-being?

University health centres have limited resources and demand for their services is growing more and more every year (OUSA, 2012; Wong, 2014) thus the need to explore alternative and complimentary ways to enhance student well-being became necessary (Stoddart 1990, p. 55 In Poland, Coburn, Robertson & Eakin, 1998).

2) If university health centres do use faith as a way to promote well-being, what tools and

avenues do they use? how do they measure impact and how can faith offerings be improved?

Measuring impact is necessary to be able to accurately assess whether a program is beneficial and cost-effective. If a program proves to be an effective way to promote well-being, it is necessary to explore concrete ways in which its use can be maximized by universities to enhance the student experience.

- 3) **If university health centres do not currently use faith as a way to promote well-being, is faith something that should be included? If it is, how can it be incorporated in the university wellness centers and what are the opportunities and challenges of including faith in health services?** Faith, although by definition not exclusively being a religious or spiritual word, is often seen as such. Religion and spirituality are two words that are loaded with heavy connotations

and because of this, students and administration tend to be very cautious, and even reactive to any offering, service and discussion that contains these words. This does not mean that faith-based, religious and spiritual services should not be offered; they should, but that it is necessary to understand the conditioning around them, so that they can be delivered in the most effective way possible.

- 4) **How do university health centers interact with university faith groups?**

An examination of how different university groups and services interact and collaborate with one another (especially faith groups and health centres) will reveal both challenges and opportunities on how, from a systems point of view, university services can best work together.

The project involved an examination process of interviews and system mapping (Creswell, 2009; Gharajedaghi, 2011) of: (a) university health centers and (b) faith-based university groups. The examination identified and mapped students' interactions with the centers, measurements of well-being used, demographics of Canadian university students, and in what ways Canadian universities have been addressing the issue of health and faith.

The research consisted of questionnaires and expert interviews with administrative staff and experts in university health centers and university faith groups. Participants were recruited using the following three methods:

- 1) professional networks
- 2) email or phone conversations
- 3) referrals by university health centers and faith groups

The most successful recruitment method was through referrals. Four out of the five individuals that were contacted through a referral gave an affirmative response. The remaining five participants were recruited through more than forty email exchanges and phone conversations with ten plus institutions. Recruitment of student-run faith groups was especially challenging. It was only possible to recruit one student representative of a faith group by making an initial contact through Facebook.

A total of nine representatives of health centres and faith groups were interviewed, coming from seven different Ontario universities. There were five representatives from university faith groups (including chaplain centres, student run faith-groups and multi-faith groups) and four representatives from university health centres, from both secular and faith-based institutions.

Initial Findings

The findings of the research and interview sessions revealed that although faith does have a positive impact on student well-being, the word faith is often confused with religion (spirituality is also used interchangeably with religion), leading to resistance by many students to any service students perceive might be religious or evangelizing.

Faith-services, religious-services and spiritual-services are seen as beneficial for student life, but an examination on how the well-being of all students, regardless of personal beliefs and background, could be enhanced, led to an exploration of purpose and the potential it may have to positively impact student life.

Qualitative and design research approaches were used to investigate the research topic, they were followed by the implementation of design research tools and techniques used to translate research findings into design guidelines and to formulate proposals with the goal of:

- Enhancing student well-being through the optimization of student services with a primary focus on the study of health centres and faith groups.
- Incorporating purpose as a key component of student life; as a stress coping mechanism and value-development tool in order to:

- 1) enhance student well-being and as a result,
- 2) to support student success.

b. Scope and Limitations

It is important to mention that the current study is based on academic research and semi-structured interviews, of a small sample of the Ontario Higher Education system - nine representatives from seven different universities. More specifically, the research was limited to the study of health centres and faith groups but did not encompass all other student services and student offerings, such as financial services and career services, among others. To deepen the understanding of the topic, a more extensive research study would be necessary, especially delving further into the topic of purpose. The study revealed the limitations around the use of the word faith, since faith is often confused with religion. In a secondary phase of research, not only would student health centres and faith groups be included as the target of the study, but the student population as a whole as well as teachers and administration who, according to the research, are highly influential in student well-being.

2 BACK- GROUND

Background

- a. The Purpose of Education
- b. Demographics - Ontario University Students
- c. The Dual Development Process of the Academic
- d. Student Services
- e. The Role of Faith in Well-being

“The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason, but with no morals.”

– (KING, 1974)

a. The Purpose of Education

If education is a weapon, we must learn to use it properly. A weapon must be used with clarity and care. In Dr. Martin Luther King’s words:

The function of education... is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason, but with no morals.

We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education. The complete education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate (King, 1947).

The authors of the article titled ‘Ontario and its Universities’ define the goals of the university to be:

- 1) The promotion of technological and scientific progress through the sharing of basic knowledge and,
- 2) The “awareness of the traditional values which humanize our society” (MacDonald & Ross, 1974, p. 515).

It is not possible to isolate academic performance as the sole measure of success for a university; it is also necessary to look at the holistic development of the individual - the student as a human being searching for knowledge, as well as a person looking to “enrich and improve” the standard of living for himself and others (MacDonald & Ross, 1974, p. 515).

Student health has a direct impact on academic performance (OUSA, 2010). Because of this, well-being becomes a determining factor in the successful attainment of the goals of the university.

b. Demographics: Ontario University Students

An overview of demographics of higher education and student well-being in Ontario provide context on:

- 1) How universities are a key contributor to the development of the province and,
- 2) The urgent need to find solutions that will enhance student well-being (to achieve both academic excellence and quality of life for its students).

Studying is a privilege. Just under 7% of the world population has a college degree. Ontario Universities “educate 43% of Canada’s University population” (Council of Ontario Universities (COU), 2016). In Ontario, there are 20 publicly funded universities and one associate member, the Royal Military College.

University enrolment has experienced a 69% growth since 2000 with approximately 433,700 undergraduate and graduate students attending Ontario Universities in 2014-15 (COU, 2016).

Universities are the key driver in the province’s economy, educating the leaders of tomorrow, creating jobs and building up communities. The country’s top researchers are making discoveries that improve the ways people live, work and play. Internationally, universities are forging partnerships that make Ontario globally competitive (COU, 2016).

University students are fortunate, but they are struggling. A Canadian campus survey conducted by the COU reported that “students are more likely to suffer from psychological distress than the general population, or the general youth demographic” (COU, 2010). Toronto Star reporter Patty Winsa (2013) referenced a report by the AHCA (2013) in noting that “more than 86% of students in Canada reported feeling exhausted and overwhelmed as a result of their responsibilities with 64% experiencing loneliness sometime in the past 12 months. In addition, “nearly 54 per cent reported being hopeless...and nearly 10 percent had seriously considered suicide.”

Statistical Landscape of Students in Ontario

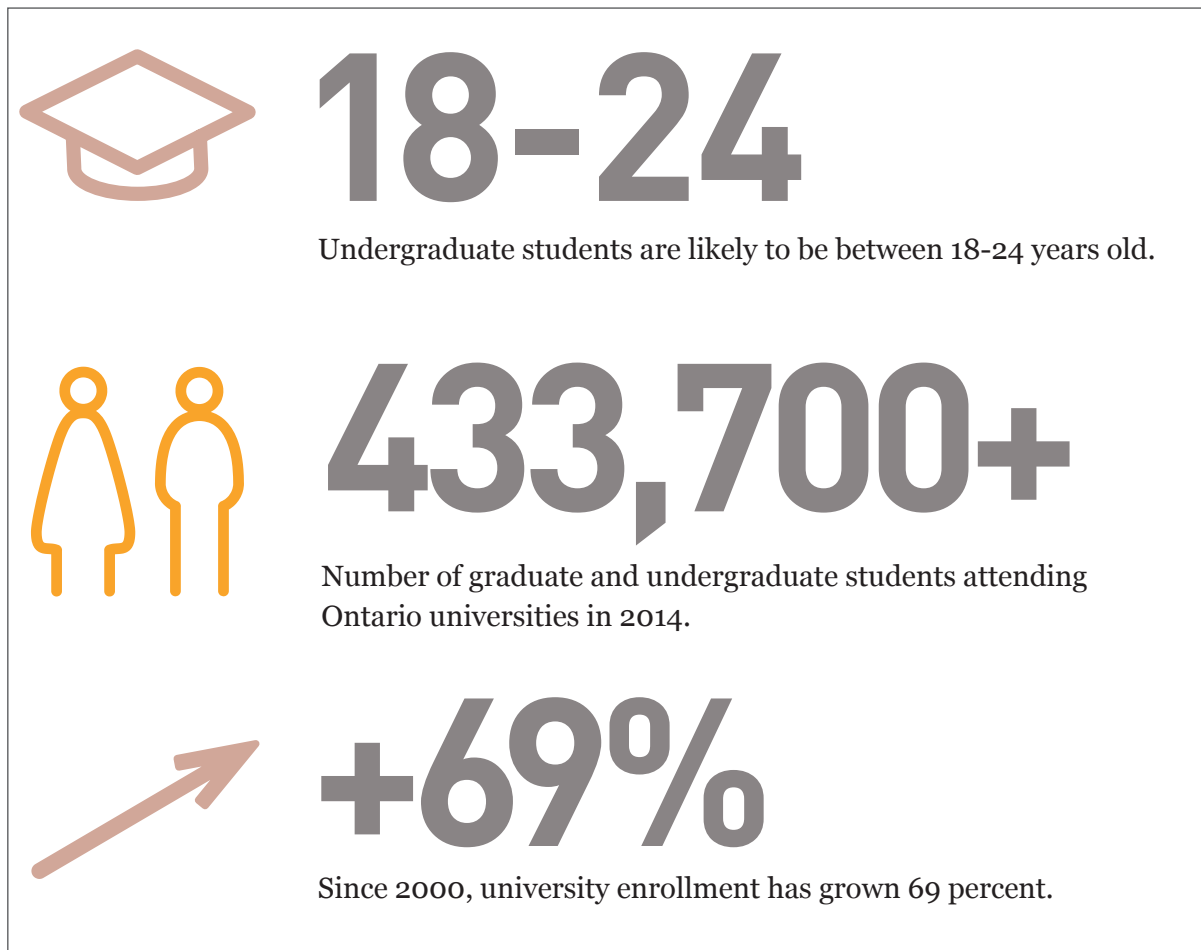


Figure 3. Diagram based on Data from COU, 2013 (Kornet, 2016)



86%

Over 86% of students said they were exhausted or overwhelmed by all they had to do.

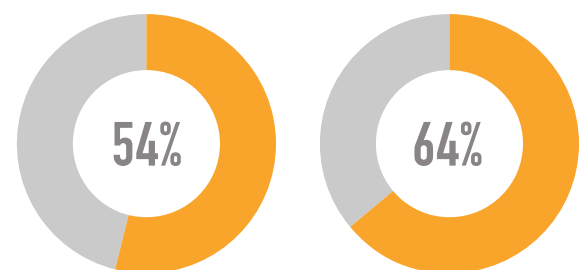
Figure 4. Diagram based on Data from COU, 2013 (Kornet, 2016)

Student mental health has been a growing concern for years and years and years. Students have become very concerned with, often, the lack of services of campus,” said Anna Dubinski, the chairperson for CFSNS (Wong, 2014).

Healthy individuals are necessary for healthy societies. Health is defined by the World Health Organization as a “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being” (WHO, 1948). One student considering suicide or losing hope is one too many. Universities are taking steps to support their students due to a growing awareness of mental health challenges among their population. Health centres, despite their growth in recent years, cannot keep up with the demand for their services, especially with the increased need for counselling (Dubinski in Wong, 2014). With the high demand for their services and insufficient resources to respond, health centres are generally only available for consults, prescribing medications, and diagnoses (COU, 2010). It is imperative to mention that university health centres are

necessary in Ontario, because the province’s medical system cannot provide care for the thousands of students living in the area. Many are coming from different provinces or out of country and the province is not yet prepared to properly service such a demand for their health services (OUSA, 2012).

In short, students are overwhelmed; student services cannot keep up and everyone needs more time, direction and resources (OUSA, 2012; Wong 2014; CFS, 2016). To understand how to better care for students one must look beyond traditional models of support.



Nearly 54 percent of students reported feeling hopeless.

64 percent felt lonely in the past 12 months.

Figure 5. Diagram based on Data from COU, 2013 (Kornet, 2016)

c. The Dual Developmental Process of the Academic

The relative amount of attention that colleges and universities devote to the ‘exterior’ and ‘interior’ aspects of students’ development has gotten out of balance... we have increasingly come to neglect the student’s inner development—the sphere of values and beliefs, emotional maturity, spirituality, and self-understanding. (Heri, 2013)

Currently, there is an imbalance between the focus given to the internal and external development of students. Even though studies such as a report by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) reveals that “three of every four college students are searching for meaning/purpose in life” (Heri, 2013), the emphasis moves more and more towards the development of the individual’s credentials and possibly intellect and less to the development of character, values, spirituality and a sense of meaning for the person.

If universities also consider their remit

to include the students’ development of meaning/purpose, the question then becomes how might universities support the internal and external development of the academic so that universities graduate not only bright people, but also healthy, ethical, productive individuals? Wellness models that include concepts of meaning/purpose generally indicate a holistic approach.

William Hettler’s Six Dimensions of Wellness



Figure 6. (Hettler, 1976)

Models of health that discuss the importance of taking an all-inclusive approach to well-being include William Hettler's: Six Dimensions of Wellness, a multidimensional hexagonal model of health and wellness that accounts for physical, mental, social, occupational, intellectual and spiritual dimensions (Hettler, 2004). These dimensions need to be considered and addressed in order for an individual to be fully supported and as a result be able to be healthy and thrive.

Evans and Stoddart (1990, p. 55) argue that "A society that spends so much on health care that it cannot or will not spend adequately on other health-enhancing activities may actually be reducing the health of its population" (In Poland, Coburn, Robertson & Eakin, 1998). This suggests that university wellness services need to expand beyond the traditional scope of physical and mental health and consider other aspects such as instilling purpose/meaning, supporting individuals search for meaning in life and exploring value systems and how they influence student well-being.

As Bill Hettler illustrates - there are several dimensions that contribute to well-being that are interconnected and influence each other. Models such as the biophysical model by Engel (1977) explore how different models of health interact with each other (Engel, 1977 in Lindau, Laumann, Levinson, & Waite, 2003).



Figure 7. Based on Hettler, 1976 (Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016)

d. Student Services

University wellness centres are the main source of support for students' physical, mental and emotional health during their degree-seeking years. As the statistics above demonstrate, mental health is a recurring and growing issue in the student population and one that must be prioritized by student services (Cockburn, Madden & Pin, 2012). Mental issues often manifest as physical ailments as well, and both have a direct impact on student's academic performance (CFS, 2016). One of the main contributors to the growing mental health challenge is lack of funds; it impacts mental health in two main ways:

- 1) Stress caused by financial burdens due to high tuition rates for students (not enough financial support).
- 2) Limited funds (not enough public funds results in budget cuts in student services. Without enough funds, student services cannot keep up with student's demand for their services (CFS, 2016).

Universities have tried to expand their offerings

beyond physical and mental health, to also encompass spiritual, social and financial well-being, as well as career and academic development and support. Examples of such services are: financial aid, academic advising, academic success, international student services, career services, environmental health and safety, among others (University of Toronto Student Services, 2016).

On the other hand, spiritual health (that would include having a strong sense of purpose/meaning) is often addressed in chaplain centres or student run faith-groups through spiritual and pastoral care. There are significant differences in the programs available by student services from secular and faith-based universities. Secular universities focus mainly on academic excellence whereas faith-based universities place greater emphasis in the development of the whole person and try to promote the values that are part of their belief system (Lyon, Beaty, Parker & Mencken, 2005; University of Toronto Mission, 2016; Conrad Grebel University College, 2016).

e. The Role of Faith in Wellbeing

Faith is explored as an aspect of the spiritual dimension of an individual. Research demonstrates a positive link between individuals who have faith (including sense of purpose and meaning) and their physical and emotional well-being (Van Dyke & Elias, 2007). Greater life expectancy, quality of life and resilience are a few of the many benefits that individuals that have faith and participate in faith and/or religious activities enjoy. Further, when a person attends faith based services at least four times per month, this adds 4 to 14 years of life expectancy (Young & Hobson, 2015).

In some studies, researchers have attempted to map life-expectancy to reveal factors supportive of longevity. Studying areas of the world with higher than average longevity has revealed the main contributors to the longevity of its inhabitants, two of the main ones being having faith and a sense of purpose. Others include having a vegetarian diet, exercising regularly (low-intensity) and valuing and spending

quality time with family (Mishra, 2009).

Studies have also revealed that university students who belong to faith or religious groups are better able to cope with stress and challenges and overall possess greater well-being. A study of Canadian university students revealed that students affiliated with a faith group on campus are “significantly healthier and make less visits to health care services.” They also report “fewer visits to hospital emergency rooms” and “seem to be more satisfied with their lives and to express more positive psychological states than their non-affiliated counterparts” (Frankel & Hewitt 1994).

3 FINDINGS

Findings

- a. Worldview and Students' University Experiences
- b. Overview of Students' University Experiences
- c. Stimuli (stressors) and Resilience
- d. Snapshots of Students

a. Worldview and Students' University Experiences

Weltanschauung means 'world view', it combines the German word for world "Welt" (world) with view "Anschauung" (Merrriam-Webster.com, 2016). Worldview is a particular individual's perception of the the world. Each person has a set of filters based on their beliefs, upbringing, background, personal experiences, education and other factors, that colors their perspective and contributes to the unique view they have of the world around them.

These factors define how each student experiences, perceives and interprets daily life. This in turn gives them a framework to use as reference points for their choices and interactions. In short, worldviews influence individual values and codes of conduct.

Having a worldview gives individuals a set of parameters that gives them stability and direction; is used as a measuring stick for what an individual feels safe with or unsafe with, comfortable doing or not doing and what helps define morality for each person.

During university years, students' worldviews are often challenged by the environment

around them. Away from home and from their families for the first time, they suddenly have the freedom to question and explore, and to try and put together their own worldview – one that is influenced by their past but not dictated fully by it. The process of challenging one's own worldview, or having it challenged by others can be very threatening and disconcerting.

To be able to assertively support students during their university years, it is imperative for universities to understand the internal process that most students are going through. Student services will then be able to properly nurture the journey of the student as an academic and as an individual.

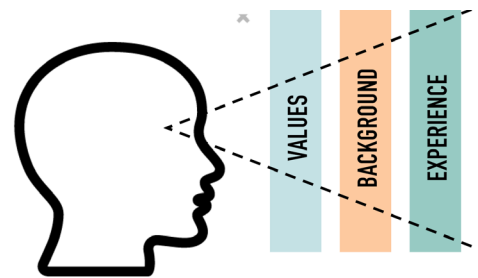


Figure 8. Diagram Illustrating Worldview and Filters that Influence Perception of Students (Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016)

“There is a commonality in this age group that is about searching.”

- UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN

b. Overview of Students' University Experiences

University is often the first time students live by themselves, away from home and the social and religious structures that they were brought up in. University is a time of change and transition that for many individuals is a period of a newfound freedom, that they are often not properly equipped to deal with and manage.

“Some students are struggling.” They feel: “wow, I have so much freedom now, I can do anything that I want, and then how to deal with that freedom.”

- UNIVERSITY STUDENT

This is a very vulnerable stage in a person's life. Students suddenly find themselves not only looking for ways to cope with a new environment, but also, often with stressors that they did not have to deal with before such as financial burdens, housing issues, new academic pressures and responsibilities, (OUSA, 2012; Wong, 2014) and with question on what type of person they want to be and

what do they want to do after university and for the rest of their lives (HERI, 2003; Bryant, 2008). This newfound freedom, as a result of the distance from their known social and family structures, is an opportunity for students to look at and question rituals and behaviours that were imposed on them during their upbringing. Students, often for the first time, are able to question whether they are doing things because they want to do them or because that is what they were told to do growing up. Suddenly participating or not in cultural and religious rituals is a choice and not an obligation (Regnerus & Uecker, 2007). Away from their communities they are able to ask questions about their belief systems that they were often not able to ask before due to fear of rejection by their peers. In many cases students had such difficult experiences with dogmatic practices growing up, that all they want to do is stay away from anything that seems similar during university, but at the same time they often lose their sense of purpose and direction (OUSA, 2012; Regnerus & Uecker, 2007).

“School is hard. In school you have less support than in a job, less financial stability and harder things to learn.”

– UNIVERSITY SOCIAL WORKER

Away from their parents and their communities students have to find ways to make new relationships and to set up their new community life. Students often struggle with loneliness and depression, especially during the first year of University.

Universities have recognized the need to foster student well-being. University is a time of change, and change with not enough coping skills can quickly turn into stress that can lead to health issues. One of the ways in which universities attempt to provide a wholesome approach to well-being is through a variety of student services. These should aim to address the six dimensions of wellness: “occupational, physical, social, intellectual, spiritual emotional” (Hettler 1976). These dimensions are in turn influenced by each individual’s worldview. Health services and financial services are two of the most common student services offered by universities that address occupational, physical, emotional and intellectual needs.

The inclusion of services such as faith groups on campus seek to address the spiritual needs of the student body. Spirituality does not necessarily have to be religious, it is the way in which individuals make sense of and, find meaning in the world around them. The Center for Spirituality and Healing at the University of Minnesota (UMCSH, 2015) is a strong advocate of integrative therapies describes the complexities of spirituality in the following way:

“Some may find that their spiritual life is intricately linked to their association with a church, temple, mosque, or synagogue. Others may pray or find comfort in a personal relationship with God or a higher power. Still others seek meaning through their connections to nature or art... your personal definition of spirituality may vary. Some may find Like your sense of purpose, your personal definition of spirituality may change throughout your life, adapting to your own experiences and relationships.”

Research shows that strong faith and spiritual beliefs correlate strongly with good health. These aspects of human life should continue to be addressed within the university setting while recognizing that services on the topics of faith, spirituality and religion, although successful do not reach the totality of the student population. The reason being that there are many students who based on their worldview, are apprehensive towards anything that feels remotely religious or that they feel will force them to comply with a pre-existing structure (legal or social).

Further studies reveal that one of the significant contributors to well-being (that is found in faith) is giving students a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

With this in mind, one can consider:

- 1) How can universities address students' need for purpose and meaning?
- 2) How can universities give students direction and structure without compromising their process of exploration and new-found freedom?

c. Stimuli (stressors) and Resilience

As discussed above, university life is a time of change and transition. Students are vulnerable to stimuli (stressors) that have a direct impact on their health and well-being. In the Transactional Model of Stress, Lazarus (1976) defines stressors as ‘demands made by the internal or external environment that upset balance, thus influencing physical and psychological well-being and requiring actions to restore balance’ (p. 19). Stress refers to ‘any event in which environmental demands, internal demands, or both, exceed the adaptive resources of an individual or social system (Lazarus & Cohen, 1977 in University of Twente, 2016).

Human beings are susceptible to the stimuli (stressors) in the environment around them (Lazarus, 1977). How stimuli affect a particular individual and to what degree it does, is dependant on the perception filter of each person. When an individual comes in contact with a particular stressor, the first thing that the individual does is analyze whether they perceive this particular stressor as a threat or

not. This is called primary appraisal, where the individual, based on its perception filter, will decide if a particular stressor is either positive, dangerous or irrelevant. (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). If the individual’s perception filter registers this particular stressor as a threat - “dangerous”, then the individual will evaluate what available resources it has to properly deal with this threat. This is called secondary appraisal, which is the “Evaluation of the controllability of the stressor and a person’s coping resources.” (Table from Glanz et al, 2002, p. 214. In University of Twente, 2016).

If the person has sufficient resources to deal with the stressor, he/she will move to a stage of coping. The individual will deal with the stressor through either a ‘problem focused’ or ‘emotion-focused’ approach. The problem focused approach is when an individual feels they have control over the situation, and with their available resources are able to solve it. If a person does not have control over a particular situation or cannot perceive the root of the issue and thus is unable

to change it then the person will take an emotion-focused approach that may lead to actions such as distancing him/herself from certain situations, groups or environments. (Transactional model of stress and coping, 1976 In Flow Psychology, 2015). If the person does not have sufficient resources to deal with the “dangerous stimuli”, then this stimuli (stressor) will transform into a source of stress for the individual, which will have a negative impact on the person’s health. susceptible

Some of the main stressors during university years are: “academic demands; being away from home; transition to a new developmental stage; pressure from peers; conflict with peers and with their expectations about university life; frustrations with achievements; difficulty coping in a new social environment; and financial difficulties” (Towbes & Cohen, 1996; Misra et al, 2000). As mentioned above, stressors by themselves are not the source of stress, but when a student’s worldview

Transactional Model of Stress and Coping of Richard Lazarus

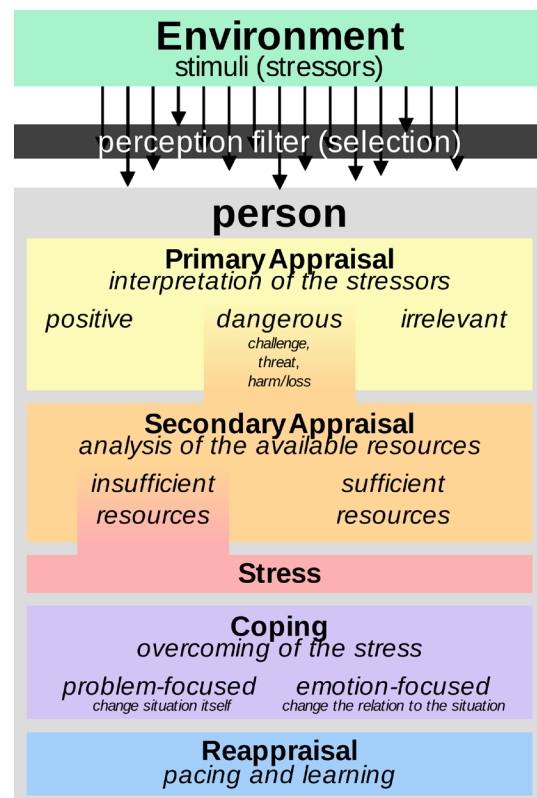


Figure 9. Transactional Model of Stress and Coping of Richard Lazarus (Guttman, 2015)

*“Resilient people are like bamboo in a hurricane
—they bend rather than break.”*

– ANONYMOUS

perceives them as a threat, and the student does not have the necessary tools to deal with the stressor, then it transforms into stress and often into some sort of mental and physical ailment as well. The goal is not to eliminate the stressors endemic of university life, but to give students the right tools and skills so that they can properly assess and deal with stressors before they turn into sources of stress.

One of the ways in which this can be achieved is by teaching students to have direction in life through clarity of purpose. This equips them to better deal with the stressors of life. Clarity of purpose leads to resilience in the individual. In describing ten traits of emotionally resilient people, author Brad Waters (2013) revived the old metaphor:

“Resilient people are like bamboo in a hurricane — they bend rather than break.” (Anonymous)

Universities should aim to help student become more resilient - it is not about avoiding the hurricane but about being able to bend, adapt and flow, when it has arrived.

Students that have a clear purpose and meaning in life will be less affected by the environment around them. Purpose acts as a cushion that protects students from being shaken by the internal and external stressors linked to university life. It better prepares them to deal not only with their academic life, but with life after university: work, family and, the world.

The following diagram describes the interplay between the person, their environment and occupation (Chrstiansen et al., 2005).

Person-Environment-Occupation Performance Model



Figure 10. (Christiansen, C., et al., 2005)

d. Snapshots of Students

Four personas were created to illustrate some of the experiences students have during their university years and in order to be able to better understand what it means to be a student. These personas helped guide the design interventions. The personas were based on information gathered from the 9 in-person interviews and from academic articles, blogs and websites. The in-person interviews were particularly helpful as the stories, characteristics and challenges of many students were shared through the experiences of counsellors, chaplains, social workers, etc. *It is important to mention that these personas do not intent to represent the complete breadth of the student body, but to provide a glimpse into some of the key transitions and challenges (related to purpose, faith and well-being) that students face in university.

- › The Newcomer
- › The Rebel
- › The Struggler
- › The Naturalist

The Newcomer

Ana is a second year undergraduate student who moved to Ontario, Canada from Latin America to pursue a degree in biology. She grew up in a big family where religious beliefs were a key component of family and social life. Ana attended religious services with her family weekly and as a teenager joined her denomination's youth group to deepen her understanding of her beliefs and also participate in community outreach and volunteer work. Ana has always felt at home with her religion; it helps give her direction and peace of mind, and has also given her many good friends over the years.

Moving to a new country was challenging for Ana, especially being away from home and her friends. When Ana first moved to the city, she had to stay at her aunt's friend's house because her university did not offer housing. She had to juggle between studies and finding a place to live. For the first three months, while trying to adjust to life in a new city: new people, new language,

new norms, Ana started to get dizzy spells that meant it was hard to study and her grades dropped. She got a few invitations for activities and orientation from the international student services department when she arrived, but she just did not have the time to go. Ana often felt lonely, so she tried calling home frequently but she did not even have much time for this. As time went on, she was able to find another place to live in. It is an hour commute to university, but at least it is her own place.

The dizzy spells weren't stopping. She kept wondering why she was there, away from her family. Looking through the student groups in the university webpage, she found a faith group of her denomination. Ana wrote to them right away and two weeks later went to the first meeting where she felt at home for the first time in months. She now has many friends outside of her faith group as well, but this group is her family here, since she is able to confide in them and feel safe because they

share similar values and beliefs so despite differences in language and culture she finds it is easy to understand and support each other. Most of them are far from family but have faith that it will be worth it in the end to get their degrees and learn from the new experience of living independently. Some of them had also been very stressed and when Ana told them about her dizziness, they helped her get an appointment with the university health centre. Ana is a sleep deprived because of her school work and a part-time job on the weekends, Ana is getting used to university life and her community and she is feeling like her studies will pay off.

The Rebel

John, moved to Ontario from Vancouver. His parents wanted him to stay in Vancouver to study, but he managed to convince them that Ontario had the best university for his degree. A friend of his, had moved a few years ago to Ontario with his family, so he called him as soon as he arrived into the city. His friend was very busy with his studies and new friends too, but they saw each other every week or so to play some basketball or go to the movies. John was happy with all the extra free time that he had. He decided he no longer wanted to study medicine – the subject his parents had instructed him he should study. For the first time in years, he felt he had some time to think about choices. He realized he had been upset for many years at his parents' emphasis on money because he felt constrained by the decisions his parents had made for him. John also had more free time than his fellow students because his parents had paid in full for his education (although he often wondered with concern whether payments would stop if they realized he

no longer wanted to practice medicine).

John, at the beginning liked his classes, he found them quite easy in general but soon started to find them boring. By his second year in university, he had already made a few new friends, he went out to parties, found a new girlfriend and he thought his life was quite ok, but he had annoying questions that kept coming back about his upbringing, the need for a “money orientated career” and the rest of his life. He kept avoiding certain subjects with his parents and overall not talking to them too much. He really loved them, but he just didn't know what to tell them anymore.

Some days he was very happy and others he did not see the point of it all. John did not understand the purpose of all of his classes and all the effort that he had to make. He tried to go back to some of his parents talks about the cost of things and the value of a good job but they seemed to no longer fit. He was not sure what to believe in anymore. He

liked his girlfriend but some days felt like he did not want to do anything and he did not

want her to see him like this so he started moving away, spending more time alone. He was having lunch alone one day, when one of the university chaplains approached him. She was a nice lady and did not seem to want to convince him of anything. He finally was able to share some of his concerns and for the first time in years felt heard. She recommended a weekly group that met to discuss questions and choices in life that were not religious based. He thought it was interesting, but was very sceptical, he wondered whether he would go to a few times and then they would turn all religious on him. He thought about going to the counselling services but it looked like only people with real problems went there. Again, he was not sure what to do. At this point he no longer talked to his parents during the week and was dreading the holidays. He got a warning letter from his program, his grades were too low.

The Struggler

Veer moved to Ontario from Delhi on a scholarship. He had always found school easy and his parents often bragged about his good grades. Veer's parents were raised in a strict religious system but they had been very flexible with him. They believed that there was a Divine being/power and that we had to be good with others. They taught Veer some of the doctrines of their religion but not much. Veer arrived to Toronto and moved in with some distant family members. His commute to school was two hours but at least it was cheaper than in the city, and he got to eat home cooked meals. His scholarship covered some of his academic expenses but life in Canada was much more expensive than he had thought. He soon found a part time job to help support his studies. Even though the academic part of school was easy for him, he was not used to so much group work and he soon discovered that finding the right time to meet was always very stressful, especially because of his part time job.

He also found it hard that some of the students seemed to not care and would play games trying to claim grades for group work they hadn't helped with. He found them telling stories about each other –how was this good? He began to feel very isolated and alone. Was he the only person who had been brought up to behave well to others? He started to feel a shred of resentment towards his parents – how did they not teach him about this? Suddenly, he started having migraines and feeling overwhelmed with everything that was going on. He went to the University Health Centre and the doctor sent him some pills that seemed to help but he suggested he see a counsellor, as it seemed the source of his migraines was stress.

Veer wants to talk about all these issues and questions to someone but he just doesn't have the time. He tried making an appointment with the university counselling service once. He went to a walk-in and his counsellor was very nice. He was able to at least get some things off his chest. The

counsellor suggested that he should come for weekly appointments for a few months to get the necessary support and tools to be able to manage his stress and anxiety and especially his new life here in Canada. Veer asked for an appointment and was told that the next available one was in three months. He took it. By the time it arrived, he had forgotten about it. When he received the reminder email from the university it was too late, he already had a group meeting scheduled at the same time and moving it would have been just too stressful. Veer meant to call to cancel but he had so many things that he forgot.

The Naturalist

Adrienne was born and raised in Canada. She lived in Ottawa most of her life and moved three years ago to Toronto, as her father was transferred here for work. Her mother is French and her father is from South Africa (they both moved to Canada with their families, when they were still quite young; they met, fell in love and married in university). Adrienne is currently pursuing a graduate degree in International Relations. She has an undergraduate degree in business management. Adrienne studied business to appease her father, who was horrified every time she brought up her real passion: ‘environmental conservation.’ “There is no money in that”, he kept saying. “You must be practical about your education - saving plants won’t bring food to the table.” She eventually gave in, but managed to take some very interesting electives on environmental policy, and forest conservation.

Her parents were good people. Since Adrienne was very young, she remembers them telling her of the importance of caring

for others: “We must love and respect all people” they would say, “regardless of how we look, what we believe or where we come from, we are all special.” Adrienne herself, did not feel that special, she was often bullied at school for her mixed race but her parents never seemed to notice. She always felt most at peace and happy when she went camping with her parents on the weekends as she loved running around in the forest and rolling down the hills. She doesn’t remember her parents ever talking about religion. She remembers once seeing her grandmother pray during one of her visits to France as a child, but that’s it. There was never talk of God or religion at home. She didn’t feel it was necessary either. She had nature, what else could she need.

During her undergraduate years, she remembers once joining a group on open-faith out of curiosity, but she felt uncomfortable as soon as she was asked what she believed in, it felt weird, why would she want to share this with other people.

Now, mid-way through her master's degree, she has started to have trouble sleeping at night. Adrienne feels anxious and thoughts keep going round and round her mind... She keeps having the same dream over and over again: "In the dream she finds herself working in a square, grey office, in a grey building and living in a square, grey home... everything is grey, everything is made of concrete." She tries and tries to find a tree but no matter where she goes, she just finds more grey and more concrete. She feels she cannot breathe" and then finally wakes up in a sweat... she looks out of her dorm window and it is dark outside... it is mainly concrete outside too (in her real life) but in the distance, she can spot a patch of green... she breaths with deep relief and then tries to go back to sleep.

The more she thinks about graduating, the more stressed she gets. She feels like she has lost all purpose. What's the point? All these years of studying for what? She starts visiting her parents less and less, she just

can't bear to look at them... all she wants to do is scream. One day, she sees a poster of a meditation class. Out of desperation Adrienne goes, but just as the class is about to begin, she runs out. She is not sure where she fits. Finally, one of her teacher calls her aside one day - it's Helen, her favourite teacher. Helen tells her that she has noticed a change in her work, specially a change in her behaviour in class, "you seem quiet and aloof" - she says gently. Helen asks her if she is ok... and that's it. Adrienne can't take it anymore, she doesn't know why but she starts crying, and it feels the tears will never stop coming. Helen recommends that she go to counselling. She walks her to the counselling centre and stays with her as she waits for a walk-in appointment. Adrienne thinks this is a waste of time, but she does not want to be rude to Helen who seems to be trying so hard to help her. She decides that she will give it a try, just for Helen.

4 THEMES

Themes

- a. Seeking Inclusion
- b. Faith-Services in Ontario Universities
- c. The Challenge with Definitions and the Need for “Safe Words”
- d. Bringing Back Purpose
- e. Beyond the Band-Aid Method
- f. The Need for Service-Integration

The analysis of a) 140 articles, b) 9 in-person and over the phone semi-structured interviews and, c) the development of four student personas, revealed valuable findings on:

- 1) University life and student well-being
- 2) The role, benefits and challenges of student services
- 3) The influence of purpose and faith on students' health and students' lives

Through thematic analysis (Boyatzis 1998; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) findings were grouped into 6 main themes.

The themes provide a doorway into university life, that results in concrete proposals for design interventions and system innovation that seek to enhance

the well-being of university students in Ontario. It also provides context for further research and an outline of specific design principles and considerations that can be used by individuals, groups, student services, university administration and government agencies as a framework for further innovation and enrichment of student life.

“We like to practice hospitality for people who come from all traditions... We have discovered that that diversity makes us better; that practicing hospitality towards a diversity of people helps us understand ourselves better.”

– UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN

a. Seeking Inclusion

Universities - faith-based and secular alike, are seeking to foster an inclusive environment for their students. University students often exhibit an aversion to anything that they feel is dogmatic or evangelizing. As a university chaplain mentions: “there is a perception (within the student population) that faith is more of an evangelical exercise and that people are trying to be converted or that faith will be pushed to the point they will feel uncomfortable” and because of this, students often shy away from faith-based services. Even though the majority of the student population do have a religious or spiritual background (Nagel & Sgoutas-Emch, 2007) university life also represents a time of exploration (OUSA, 2012).

Because of this new-found freedom, student services (especially faith-related ones) are looking more and more to find ways to address student needs in ways that are both welcoming and non-

“ I think sometimes with this age group of children/students 17-18 years of age... it is the first time they are away from home and the first time that they feel they (don’t have to go to a) religious service every week...and it is the first time they have freedom and they are not going to do it”

– UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN

threatening and that allow students to explore and be “free” while still being able to feel supported and ask questions.

Even though faith-based and secular universities are similar in their pursuit of an inclusive student environment, there are differences in their approach, due to variations in the mission of their institution-secular universities don’t have a religious mission while faith-based universities do. As an example the mission of University of Toronto is: “The University of Toronto

is dedicated to fostering an academic community in which the learning and scholarship of every member may flourish, with vigilant protection for individual human rights, and a resolute commitment to the principles of equal opportunity, equity and justice” (University of Toronto, 2016); while the mission statement of Conrad Grebel University college is: “Conrad Grebel University College is a liberal arts college founded by the Mennonite church and affiliated with the University of Waterloo. The mission and programs of Grebel are rooted in and inspired by its Christian identity and its Anabaptist/Mennonite heritage” (Conrad Grebel University College, 2016). Regardless of the difference in mission statements, both secular and faith-based universities are generally open to students of all religions and backgrounds.

To avoid any possible risk of repercussions or alienation due to political, social or cultural incorrectness - secular universities

avoid taking any specific position on religious and spiritual matters. Faith-based universities have more leeway in this matter since religion is at the core of their inception, and as such have more freedom to talk openly about religious and spiritual matters with their student body. They attempt to administer the university and run its programs in alignment with the foundational religious values of their institution, but they try to do so in ways that do not alienate students and administration from different religions, backgrounds or belief systems. As Mike Norris, director of communications at Centre College explains: “Our Centre maintains its historical connection with the Presbyterian Church and supports numerous voluntary faith-based campus organizations, while welcoming students, faculty, and staff of all faiths and creeds” (Turchioe, 2010). Similar sentiments were expressed by student service representatives of faith-based and secular universities (during the interview process)

were they highlighted that their services were open to all people, and not limited to students with a particular conviction.

Universities are open to all belief systems and this should be the case, but for fear of entanglements, universities have in many cases, lost clarity on how to direct students' inner development. For fear of being exclusive, universities approach students' personal development with great caution, with such broad definitions that they often end up being non-inclusive as well. Even faith-based universities are taking religion out of their university rituals. As a University Chaplain highlights: "In the past, at convocations for example, chaplains would offer prayer, that hasn't happened in probably 20 years now."

The challenge that many universities are currently facing are:

- 1) How can they be inclusive in their approach, while still being faithful to the mission and roots of their institution?
- 2) How can universities support students to achieve academic excellence, while also developing the emotional, spiritual and moral aspects of the individual? And how can universities teach their students to do the same?

The world is now a globalized one. It is now easier than ever for people from different backgrounds, cultures and countries to come together. It is now even more important for people to find a way to preserve and honor their roots (beliefs, background, culture), while still finding a common ground and creating spaces of openness, understanding and tolerance. Universities should aim to become a mosaic and avoid the

trap of becoming a melting pot, where the expectation is for people to focus primarily on how they are the same but in the process forget to celebrate their differences. Faith-based universities opening up to people from all backgrounds allows for the possibility of this conversation to happen. Breaking down barriers and divisions because of religious, spiritual, cultural, political beliefs is important but faith-based and cultural institutions, groups and services should also find ways to maintain their structure and their mission so that they can continue contributing in their unique way to the development of the student body. Each individual is different and as such it is a variety of student services and support systems from the university that will better fulfill their needs. Canada prides itself in believing that it is the celebration of diversity that makes it strong as a nation and it is important for Canadian universities to continue attempting to follow this mandate.

b. Faith and Student Life

Universities should not focus solely on academic excellence but also on graduating healthy, proficient, ethical individuals that are prepared not only for the work place but also for life. Well-being is one of the key concerns regarding the student population and as such this research project attempted to study not only traditional methods of student support (such as health services and academic advising) but also alternative support systems that universities offer mainly through student groups (such as faith groups, sport groups, among others), and partner programs and institutions, that also have the potential to benefit student well-being. There are some university services that are geared towards the entirety of the student population but there are others that are directed towards specific interests, beliefs, background and needs of smaller groups of students.

As discussed in the previous chapter, an inclusive approach to university life should not exclude support systems and

programs that are geared towards fulfilling the specific needs of each student's individual make up and that encompass all areas of an individual's well-being. The spiritual dimension of wellness is one such area - this area includes faith (the focus of this chapter), it also includes life meaning and purpose, religious and secular practices, questions on how the universe works, value systems and world views.

Faith and faith support groups and programs were selected as a primary area of exploration on this paper since research studies demonstrated that faith has the potential to positively impact student well-being. Scientific studies have shown that individuals that have faith are healthier than those who don't (Frankel & Hewitt, 1994; Byron & Miller-Perrin, 2009; Mishra, 2009). Since student services have limited resources, alternative support systems might work hand in hand to fulfill the variety of student needs and enhance overall well-being. Faith is not exclusively religious or spiritual by definition.

In this chapter the definitions of faith, spirituality and religion will be explored as well as a variety of students services that aim to support the spiritual, religious and existential needs of the student body. One of the key findings of the research was the range of needs regarding faith services. A ‘one solution fits all’ approach cannot be applied to students’ need for spiritual support.

Overview

About 85% of the global population is involved in some form of religious or spiritual practice (Harper, 2012).

It is a fact that the majority of the world population is influenced in some way by religion and/or spirituality, and university students are not the exception. Spiritual and religious support is vital to properly support student well-being. These topics must be handled with care and it is imperative to not exclude the approximately 15% of the population that is not involved in religious or spiritual practices but that often do have

existential questions about the meaning and purpose in life. It is also important to mention that aside from the approximately 15% of the student body that does not practice and follow a specific religious or spiritual practice there is a large percentage of students in the 85% that during university years for the first time question their religious and spiritual upbringing and are more interested in the ‘big questions’ of life rather than in a specific dogmatic practice. If an individual does not have a specific religious or spiritual practice, this does not exclude him/her from having faith.

If an individual does not have a specific religious or spiritual practice, this does not exclude him/her from having faith.

“Faith is definitely part of the conversation, especially if I think of the whole person and not just consider some segregated part of a person’s life.”

- UNIVERSITY SOCIAL WORKER

Faith can be connected to religion but it can also be connected to spirituality, humanity, nature, among others. Spirituality is a topic, that although controversial cannot be ignored, since it has a direct impact in student's health. Faith is common theme in most student's lives. Whether it is part of their daily ritual, gives them direction, is part of their upbringing or is a current source or concern due to a crisis of faith, it is likely in the student's psyche and framework. It is part of their daily lives, of their belief-system. It is often a source of strength, hope, or interest and also, especially when the concept of faith is confused with religion, it can also be a source of pain for students due to previous stressful, painful or traumatic experiences with their own religion.

Universities want to be supportive of students' faith needs and their spiritual and/or religious practices, but often find defining the word faith quite challenging, especially since there are many negative connotations around anything that looks religious. For

fear of being exclusive, universities often do not have a clear definition of faith.

Definitions

Faith: "akin to Latin *fidere* to trust —" (Harper, 2016).

Faith is defined as "*complete trust or confidence in someone or something or a strong belief in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual conviction rather than proof*" (Oxford University Press Online, 2016). Faith has no singular meaning and universal understanding, each person's life experiences, upbringing, culture, beliefs, views and choices significantly influence their personal definition and understanding of faith.

“If you have a negative experience with an institution in any way, sometimes we equate the institution or the actual doctrine we have with our belief system.”

– UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN

The research indicates that there are three main associations with the meaning of faith:

- faith: as a belief/trust in a higher and divine being/force/presence that cannot be proven but that people know exists.
- faith: as a belief/trust and commitment to a religious doctrine such as Christian faith, Jewish faith, Muslim faith.
- faith: as a belief/trust in oneself and others (Frankel & Hewitt, 1994; Lyon, Beaty, Parker & Mencken, 2005, Oxford University Press Online, 2016; Harper, 2016; Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2016)

As its Latin root indicates, faith is about trust (Harper, 2016), but trust and belief in what is the key question. Either through upbringing or circumstances, people often find the need to believe in something, to hold on to something that they know is there but that they cannot fully explain. Although some people do recognize that faith and religion are not the same, very often papers and studies, as well as the

individuals that were interviewed either:

- 1) use faith and religion interchangeably (Frankel & Hewitt, 1994)
- 2) or comment on the difficulty created by people that understand these two words as one.

Organized religions are often surrounded by negative connotations. Some feel liberated and supported by them, and others feel restricted. Wars have been fought in the name of religion, extremism in a religion has also lead to terrorism, discrimination, intolerance and pain.

But this is not due to a belief, but to the human limitation of attempting to impose one's views on another, and insisting that one belief is the best. Nonetheless, as a rejection of organized religion, many university students, teachers and administration avoid any groups, services or activities connected to faith or belief, confusing them for religious groups and fearing evangelization (Regnerus & Uecker, 2007)

As the quote below illustrates spirituality is also often confused with religion.

“What sometimes happens is that students relate religion and spirituality as the same thing. So they will say: “I don’t believe in Catholicism anymore, or I am struggling with my religion, so I have lost my faith.” What I try to help them see is that: “maybe you do not resonate with/or believe in some of the beliefs of the religion that you belong to, but this does not necessarily mean you lost your spirituality or you lost your faith.” - University Chaplain

It is important for universities to have the proper avenues and support systems in place so that students can stay connected to their pre-existing spiritual beliefs, faith and religious practices, that have proven to be beneficial for their health, development and even academic success (Frankel & Hewitt, 1994; Byron & Miller-Perrin, 2009; Mishra, 2009) while also having support systems

that address topics such as meaning of life, purpose and existential questions. The need for this type of services has led to the emergence of multi-faith centres, open-faith centres, faith groups and other programs.

Faith Support Systems in Ontario Higher Education System

There is a wide variety of faith-support groups, centres and programs in Ontario. The breadth of options reveals that a blanket solution for faith-support does not work, and that a multitude of approaches are necessary to address variety of students’ and universities’ needs. In order to offer integral support to students’ development, universities offer a variety of faith-based, spiritual and religious services and programs, often as part of student services. Ontario universities offer faith-based support to students in four main ways:

a) Chaplain Centres

Chaplain centres seek to support students' spiritual development through one on one consultations, often referred to as spiritual care or pastoral care, through group activities and outreach programs. Faith-based universities have chaplain centres and resident chaplains as part of their holistic approach to student's development. Although chaplains and chaplain centers are connected to a specific denomination, they are usually open to students of all denominations, even to students who do not belong to any particular denomination but that have questions about the meaning of life, etc. In faith-based universities chaplain centres are part of the university's student services department. Being part of the university allows them to better interact with other departments of the university such as the health center. Chaplain centres that exist within a university, yet are independent and self-funded are also common, especially in secular universities. One of the challenges

that this type of chaplain centres have is lack of recognition as official support groups for students and thus have difficulty in interacting and collaborating with other departments within the university.

One of the benefits of chaplain centres is that by identifying themselves as part of a particular faith, religion or belief system, they are able to openly discuss and use vocabulary connected with this specific belief system without the fear of being exclusive or insulting to other faiths.

Chaplain centers are available to support students, but they are not a requirement of a student's academic life. What this means is that a student may go to a chaplain center, but they do not have to. Often chaplain centers struggle with reaching a majority of the student population. If a secular university has a multi-faith or open-faith group, this group may often act as a mediator between all the chaplain centers and chaplains on campus and the other university services.

b) Multi-Faith or Open-Faith Groups

Multi-faith and open-faith groups again fall into two categories: those that are officially part of the university and those who collaborate with the university and provide services to its students but operate independently. Again, those that are not officially connected with the university face greater challenges as they are sometimes unable to have a very stable presence within the student body, and many times, often due to lack of funding, do not have a permanent physical space but are forced to operate from different locations within campus, often dependent in other departments for meeting space.

Multi-Faith groups are open to students of all faiths. An example of a multi-faith group is the multi-faith Centre in the University of Toronto (University of Toronto, 2016). These groups are open to students of all faiths and belief systems. Open-faith groups are different in that they are open

to all students alike - whether students are connected with particular faith or profess to have no faith at all, as long as they have questions about life and are willing to be respectful, they are welcome. They seek to support students in asking the 'Big Questions': Who I am, what am I meant to do, among others. As a director of a university student support group explains, aside from spiritual and religious questions, students wonder about "What am I really going to live for? What are my values?... When I look back at my 80th birthday party, what do I want people to say about me?"

c) Student run Faith Groups

Faith groups are also found among university special-interest student groups. These groups, although recognized by the university and announced in their websites, are independent in their funding and administration. They are often dependant on student leaders, and often rest on university or community facilities for meeting space.

They operate within campus. Students of all faiths are able to start their own faith group, and register it with campus.

d) Counselling

This is not a service that directly offers spiritual care and counseling, but university counsellors, interviewed in this research, mentioned that faith is a topic often discussed by students during therapy, either as part of their paradigm and understanding of life or because they are currently questioning either the belief system they were brought up in, or their beliefs and value system in general. Even though counsellors do not discuss their own faiths with students and do not provide spiritual counsel, they do support students in a self-discovery process of their faith from a psychological perspective. In faith-based universities counsellors and chaplain centres try to refer students to one another. More often the faith-centers refer students to counselling. In secular universities there is usually not much

communication and interaction between the health centre and the campus faith groups.

Benefits and Challenges of Faith-Support

Faith support programs play a significant role in enhancing student well-being and in supporting students through university life. As mentioned above, faith encompasses a variety of areas (from religious, to agnostic, to spiritual). It supports student's belief systems, students with questions about life and meaning, students seeking to explore their value systems, students going through a spiritual crisis or students merely looking for guidance. These programs are valuable and necessary. They should be supported and strengthened by the university but it is also important to understand their limitations.

Faith support programs although open and welcoming to the entire student body, are usually geared to smaller groups

within the larger university population. Additionally, because of the afore mentioned connotations around the word faith - there is a resistance by many students to any service, program or centre that has the word faith in it. Having said this, it is important to highlight that faith services are still needed and sought by students with particular interests and needs and this greatly contribute to their well-being. For these reasons, even though it is recommended that programs that will reach the entirety of the student body be developed, the enhancement and support of faith-services is still necessary to support the diversity of needs and beliefs of the student body.

“It may even be that the greater good is expressed in non-theistic terms. That doesn’t necessarily make the life changing recognition any less valid.”

– (SUDWORTH, 2009)

3. The Challenge with Definitions and the Need for ‘Safe Words’

One of the challenges in reaching and communicating with the entirety of the student body is the difference in perception and understanding of concepts that each individual has. As the director of a university student support group expresses: “people communicate with each other but they do not share vocabulary... Two people can hear (the same word) but they are not really communicating because they are thinking of something completely different.” In order to be able to reach the entire body of students, it is imperative to find ‘safe words’ and approaches that can be used and understood by all, regardless of religious and spiritual beliefs, upbringing or cultural background. Such words, would be words that have very little or no connotations, but that the understanding of that word is still very loyal to its denotation.

A connotation is an emotional or cultural association that is given to a word, that is

different from its literal meaning (Dictionary.com, 2016). It is an understanding of the word that is not accurate in terms of the word’s explicit meaning, but is an understanding based on people’s own perceptions, views and experiences. For the purpose of this paper, safe words are defined as: words that still retain their meaning, words that have not been used so many times over that their true meaning has been distorted. In summary, words that are not heavily burdened with connotations. Safe words are words that are inclusive and words that are dangerous are words that create exclusivity between the haves and have nots. In this sense, faith is a “dangerous word”; it is often confused as a religious or spiritual term. It is a word that makes people think of belief systems that can cause people to do extreme activities. Faith in the scientific age is also dangerous because people think of it as something that people experience when they are not logical anymore, when

they throw away their reason. They do not understand that the true definition of faith is the perception of something that is genuine but indescribable by the five senses. As such, even though faith does play a key role in students lives it is not a word that can be used by universities to address the entirety of its student body. It is thus important to search for words that are inclusive, rather than exclusive. Faith seems to be a word that is exclusive because there tends to be a natural discrimination of people who have different forms of beliefs. Organized religion has a history of being a type of rigid system, and people often connect it with terrible things being done in its name. In a time where religion seems outdated and science seems to be the only religion to be accepted it is relatively safe to say that words that do not carry any type of illogical attachment to a certain way of being and to certain parameters, is what people are comfortable with today. So if you take a word like faith,

that makes one immediately think of a type of rigidity and an attachment to a way of being that is exclusive of other people, this makes people immediately very uncomfortable. Words have evolution so at a certain time in history a word may seem very innocent but for some reason later in the future, the name means something completely different and has entirely different connotations.

The interview process and literature review revealed that there are many connotations around the word faith and this in turn limits faith-support services from reaching all of the student body, due to preconceived ideas in the student population that alienates them from such initiatives. The need then, to find a word and a concept that can be used to communicate with the entirety of the human body in a way that the denotation of the word is stronger than the connotation became apparent. The intent of this research is to understand the landscape of the Ontario

student population and find ways to support student well-being through both traditional and alternative means. Faith has shown to have a positive impact in student well-being and although full of connotations is still very valuable for reaching specific groups of the student body. Purpose, on the other hand is a word that has been less diluted from its original meaning, and as thus is still a 'safe word.' It is an inclusive word were people of all religions and all walks of life can have purpose (without feeling they are compromising on their beliefs).

“Man is not destroyed by suffering; he is destroyed by suffering without meaning” (Frankl, 1984)

4. Bringing Back Purpose

With a struggling student population, the need for universities to find a way to guide students in a common direction and promote a unified culture while still honoring the uniqueness of each student becomes apparent. When people lose direction they no longer know what their goal is, or were to move towards, this makes them more vulnerable to external stressors such as financial stress, academic pressures, relationships, among others. This vulnerability results in health and mental challenges that affect both academic performance and overall student well-being.

One of the issues with university life is that it has gone from being a stage of formation to a simple “stepping stone” to real life, that comes with a lot of responsibilities, and if unprepared for, individuals will not be able to properly manage and respond in ways that are beneficial for them and others.

One of the challenges is that in a way people, and university as an organism, has lost a

sense of direction because even though most students have expressed their intent and purpose in their letters of application, they are rarely asked about this again during the university years, and are often unable to connect how their courses contribute to the greater goal that they had set for themselves, and to the greater mission of their university.

Victor Frankl, when he wrote about his life as a prisoner in Nazi concentration camps said: *“Man is not destroyed by suffering; he is destroyed by suffering without meaning”* (Frankl, 1984)

After reading some very interesting articles, (and from the findings in the interviews) I am recommending to use purpose to give students direction. “Purpose- a cognitive process that defines life goals and provides personal meaning.” (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009, p.242), has been proven to be a mediator between faith and well-being. Students are looking for purpose and direction; they



*Figure 11. Diagram
Illustrating Connection
between Faith and Wellness
found in Byron & Miller,
2009 (Kornet, 2016)*

are looking for meaning in their lives.

“Students are reflecting in their lives and what gives meaning to them.” – University student support group director.

McKnight and Kashdan (2009) discuss the importance of purpose, as it “stimulates behavioural consistency” and gives individuals the strength and motivation to be able to stay motivated and concentrated on their goals, regardless of the challenges and environmental circumstances. (p.249). It also “stimulates psychological flexibility and fosters efficient resource allocation and leads to more productive, cognitive, behavioural and psychological activity.” All very important skills for university students, to both achieve their academic and life goals, despite the stressors around them.

Studies have found that purpose also has a positive effect on longevity and well-being. Moomal (1999) found that “having a sense of purpose in life was positively

correlated with well-being.” Katie Byron & Cindy Miller-Perrin (2009) and Adam & Bezner (2000) found a positive relationship between life purpose and perceived wellness, as measured by a six dimensional measurement of well-being. (Byron & Miller 2009) Purpose then, is able to provide some of the great benefits of faith, without the controversies associated with its definition.

It is important to keep existing faith/religious/spiritual services and practices available to students while also promoting ‘Purpose for all’. Purpose is a common concept that can be shared with all students, teachers and administration and will help give them direction, and support their journeys as students and as individuals, while avoiding the delicate discussion around beliefs and religion. In this way not having to sacrifice by over-generalizing and pluralizing the meaning of faith, but at the same time offering a common-ground for well-being and direction.

5. Going Beyond the Band-Aid Approach

The Band-Aid approach is a “hasty solution that covers up the symptoms but does little or nothing to mitigate the underlying problem” (Business Dictionary, 2011). This type of “hasty” solutions are often the only approach student services have, as the demand for their services greatly surpass the supply, especially when pertaining to counselling services (OUSA, 2012).

Students need support and student services are eager to help them. It is not lack of disposition to help, but lack of time and resources to be able to properly address the time-sensitive issues at hand, while at the same time being able to find solutions that solve the root cause of the problems that are negatively impacting student’s well-being. A shift from a purely Band-Aid approach to a long-term one is necessary for universities to be able to not only attend to the immediate needs of their students but to also develop systems of support for students that will mitigate such issues and/or prevent them from happening in the first

place. It is the difference between the ER and preventative medicine. Universities need more resources and time for “preventative medicine” which in the long run will end up saving them thousands in resources and will permit them to wholesomely educate and prepare students for work and for life.

A recurring topic during the interviews was the need for more resources for student services, especially to hire more personnel, so that there they have enough time for:

- a) One on one sessions and attention for students in need to both support the student in finding a long-term solution for the issue at hand and,
- b) for student services personnel to be able to identify commonalities in the struggles of their students and implement preventive measures to support the entirety of the student body.

“I believe everyone has some sort of struggle in their life.” - University student

Most students arrive at student services because they are going through some type of crisis, often in a state of emergency.

“People are in and out of crisis a little bit... school is hard.” - University Counselor

In health centres for example, due to limited staff, counsellors are limited in how much time they can actually spend with each student. As one counsellor mentions: “In my role, I cannot see people for as long as it would be desirable, even if there is interest in their part.” Often, counsellors have to deal with the emergency at hand and are able to provide temporary solutions, but not enough time available for them to properly counsel the student limits their understanding of the root cause of the problem and as such are unable to provide long-term solutions. Some universities even acknowledge such type of approach in their description of counselling services. As the University of Prince Edward Island explains in their website: “Counselling Services offers confidential,

short term help to students dealing with personal, relational or mental concerns” (University of Prince Edward Island, 2016).

Another challenge that was highlighted in the interview process was the need to create a long-term support plan for students, that transfers over to life after university. In the majority of the cases, when students graduate, they lose their connection with student services and the support they have been receiving thus far is suddenly cut. If there is no proper transition plan in place, graduates often find themselves without a support system and in many cases not having finished the process for what they were dealing with. Using again counselling as an example - when students go to a counsellor they develop a relationship of trust with their counsellor. As soon as they graduate from university their interaction with their counsellor is also cut. Students then have to find outside support and rebuild these interactions from scratch with another counsellor. One of the solutions

provided by one of the health centres was to try to connect students from the beginning with community services that they can continue to use after university.

The goal of going beyond the Band-Aid approach is one that is relevant not only to universities, but also to the government and the corporate sector. Any issue that is unresolved during university years will remain, and often grown, as the individual moves on to the next phase of their life. This means lower productivity, unsafe communities, higher costs in health care for both the government and companies, among others. To better illustrate this, it is valuable to take a closer look at mental health as an example of the difficulties brought about from a primarily Band-Aid approach to student services.

As mentioned before, university students are in the age group of ages 15 to 24 and this is the age group that has the highest probability of developing a mental condition and/or

suffer from substance abuse. Pearson, Janz & Ali, 2013 in CAMH, 2016. If these issues are not handled on time, they grow over time and affect all other areas of society.

Every week, half a million Canadians miss work because they are suffering from mental health problems (Institute for Health, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2011 In CAMH, 2010). Mental health costs Canada approximately 51 billion a year (Smetanin et al., 2011 In CAMH, 2016). As mentioned in OUSA (2012) report: “early interventions aimed at post-secondary students can lessen the future need for health care, with \$1 invested in early mental health treatment saving an estimated \$30 in lost productivity and social costs.”

6. The Need for Service-Integration

Henry Ford once said, “Coming together is a beginning, staying together is a process, and working together is a success.”

The health of an individual, and the subsequent community, is impacted by many non-biological variables- environmental, social, mental and spiritual. Partnerships between health care and faith-based organizations are important because by working together we can better address the broad spectrum of human need” (National Center for Cultural Competence, 2001).

After meeting with several wellness and faith centres from universities throughout Ontario, one of the common challenges that came up, was the lack of service integration of student services. All the departments interviewed, seemed to be open to the possibility of interacting and collaborating with other departments but there was often no formal partnership or joint strategy of student support. Although medical services and mental-health services

share the same space and administration and make an effort to work hand in hand, collaboration with other departments is mostly informal and unstructured, making it dependant on the initiative of individuals, who are often overworked.

One of the challenges of collaboration is that since there is no official cooperation agreement between services, any type of partnership is mostly dependant on the relationships that staff members of different departments are able to build with each other. Building these interactions takes years, and if a staff member leaves, departments suddenly find themselves having to re-establish these partnerships over and over again, as it is dependant on the individuals and not on the system.

The professionals in health centres and faith services all demonstrated a true wish to support students in their journey’s through university life but often do not have the resources to support them

properly. They try to refer them to other services if they find it useful and in some circumstances even accompany them in their first visits, but this is on a case to case basis, dependant on the staff member and in the student as well. There are some instances of collaboration within student service departments but they are often in the form of short-term workshops such as yoga, meditation, anti-stress, among others but not in long-term programs.

One of the challenges is that student profiles, due to anonymity regulations, are not shared within services. Students often have to go to one service, explain their whole situation and do so the same, every time they visit a new one. The lack of integration leads to students being seen as a series of parts, rather than a whole. It is also challenging for counsellors, doctors and staff members because they often see one or a few angles of a student's life and thus are not able to fully understand the depth of

their character, history and needs and this way are unable them in a complete way. Faith-based universities do seem to have a more holistic approach to student care and in this way, even though the services are separate, there is a greater effort in connecting and communicating with one another, especially in attempting to support students in a wholesome manner.

Further, it is important to mention, that the current study is based on academic research and on a small sample of the Ontario Higher Education system, more specifically in a limited specifically in university health centres and faith groups. To deepen the understanding of the topic, a more extensive research would be necessary. Not only would student health centres be included, but the student population as a whole and, staff and administration who, according to current research, are often the ones who have misconceptions about the definition of faith. The other limitation of the research was the

challenge with the definition of faith. Since faith is often confused with religion, it was puzzling both during the interviews and when reading academic papers due to the difficulty of differentiating between the two.

Research Conclusion

After having completed this research, the current conclusion is that student well-being is and must continue to be a priority for universities, government and the corporate world, as problems that are not solved during university years are inherited into the workplace, society and individuals' lives. Even more importantly, students are the next generation of leaders, world-changers, teachers, innovators, entrepreneurs, environmentalists, etc. and healthy individuals are needed to lead a healthy world. Unwell students cost resources; resources that could be better allocated in prevention, innovation and initiatives for change. Continued

research on the area of student wellness and student services, specifically on the dimension of spirituality (with a definition that transcends religion and includes purpose and life meaning), is necessary for Ontario universities to continue to thrive.

It is more important than ever to focus in the internal and external development of the individual and in this the research has shown that spirituality - within it faith, does play a key role in promoting health and wellness. Because the definition of faith is not clear and is often seen as religious and dogmatic, the effectiveness of faith support systems is often hard to measure. Most people wrongly associate faith only with religion, rather than with purpose and meaning in life. Faith limited to religion will not reach the entirety of university students who actually require support throughout their university life, more than at any other time of their lives as it is a stage of transition and formation. It is often the first

time students find themselves living away from their homes, families, friends and community and thus a time where many of them are asking questions about who they really are and who they want to become.

This study also revealed that for lasting change to happen the directive of change must be acknowledged and embraced by top of the organization and it must reach every part of the system and every person. Administration and teachers play a key role in the formation of students and have the potential to positively influence their well-being. Further in depth research in the areas of student well-being, spirituality, purpose and life meaning and student services, and more specifically in opportunities for collaboration and system change that take into account teachers, students, administration and student support systems would further highlight opportunities for change that will enhance and positively transform the student support system.

With a clear direction for student services, proper and creative allocation of resources and with a focus of intrinsically driving purpose from each university student it is possible for universities to fulfill both their academic and moral purpose of educating the generations of now and of the future.

5 INTER- VENTIONS

Interventions for Prototyping

- a. Design Principles
- b. Design Interventions and Transactional Model of Stress
- c. Design Interventions
- d. Journey Mapping

Design research serves to guide innovation of products, services and systems. By having a clear understanding of Ontario's higher education and wellness landscape it becomes possible to solve current systemic challenges, enhance and innovate on already successful programs, services and products and succeed in making Ontario the leader in university student well-being and in student success by properly preparing students for both work and for life.

As noted previously, university life is a complex, transitional period in an individual's life. Simple solutions that focus on every aspect of the student (academic, physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social) as the starting point for

any design intervention and that consider the student, not as an isolated being, but as part of his/her environment will produce both immediate and long-term results, that add value – not only to the student, but also to the system as a whole.

a. Design Principles

People Focused

The individual must be at the center of every design: students, student services staff members, teachers and administration. Understanding student needs and the needs of their support network is vital for the proper execution of positive change initiatives.

Focus on the Whole Person

All aspects of the individual must be taken into consideration for the design intervention to be successful. Following Hettler's 6 dimension of wellness (1976) all aspects of student well-being must be considered (physical, social, intellectual, spiritual, mental and occupational) when designing and implementing solutions.

Simplicity

University life is hectic and a time of transition and formation for students. With limited resources, increased demand of student services and an often overly bureaucratic system, solutions must be effective and easy to implement for change to happen. It is vital to find systems, programs and initiatives that already exist and find ways to make minor adjustments that will result in a big impact. It is necessary to learn how to optimize existing resources and come up with solutions that require the least amount of complexity in terms of permits and execution.

Give Meaning

Students are looking for purpose and for meaning. Purpose and meaning build resilience. Design interventions must contribute to the university's mission and student's purpose.

Respect Context - “See the Big Picture”

Students come from all backgrounds, nationalities, belief systems and personal life experiences. It is imperative to understand that one same thing can have different meanings and implications for different people and as such design solutions for university students must take context into consideration when implementing strategies for student well-being. It is imperative to be inclusive and understanding of different contexts, while still staying loyal to the universities mission and direction. It is vital to understand the role that all the different parts have in composing the whole.

Visibility

Students and staff are overwhelmed with information. So It is necessary to bring student services into the forefront of student life and to constantly remind students of the university’s mission and their personal purpose so that this is the driving force of their studies. Additionally, often short on time, students are unable to do in depth research on current student service offerings and student support systems. One of the main issues is that there are many services and offerings available to students that students are unaware of (some services are community services that even universities are unaware of as well). Visibility is a necessary component of successful design interventions, especially in the hectic lives of university students.

b. Design Interventions and Transactional Model of Stress

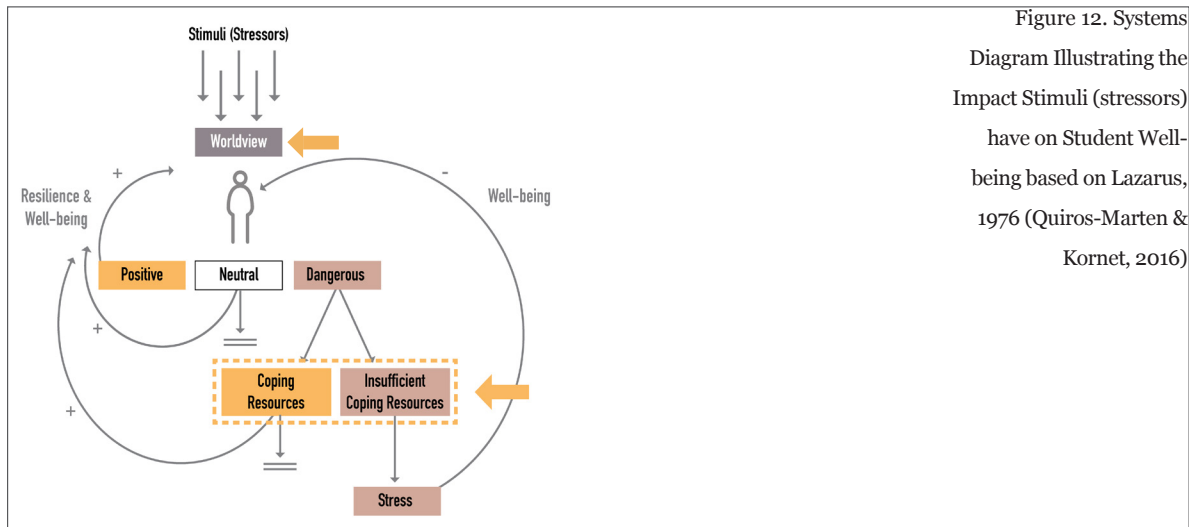


Figure 12. Systems

Diagram Illustrating the Impact Stimuli (stressors) have on Student Well-being based on Lazarus, 1976 (Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016)

The aim of the design proposals is not to eliminate the stimuli (stressors) endemic to university life but to provide students with the right skills, tools and support systems that will properly prepare them to deal with stimuli and stressors so that they do not turn into a source of stress, which has proven to be detrimental to student well-being. It is not possible to control all aspects of student life – both external and internal, but it is

possible to support and prepare students so that they are more and more able to make choices that will be positive for their well-being instead of negatively affecting it. University life is full of new stimuli such as academic pressures, a new environment, new relationships, financial responsibilities, housing, among others. Each student will appraise each stimulus differently. A situation that can feel dangerous

for one person can be perceived as a positive situation by someone else.

There are three proposed interventions that aim to enhance student wellbeing:

- I. **‘Driving Purpose’** - an ambassador advocating clarity, simplicity and direction.
- II. **‘Home Base’** - all students’ needs met in one place.
- III. **‘Inter-University network’** - working together for the enhancement of all aspects of student life.

These interventions seek to intercede in two main areas:

At the level of worldview:

- Driving Purpose:

By giving students purpose and direction, the challenge of dealing with a new environment and student’s search for meaning will have a clearer direction. It will allow students

the space and safety to explore and find their own way without the fear of getting completely lost. Purpose and life meaning also enhances resilience which positively contributes to student well-being.

At the level of coping resources:

- Driving Purpose
- Home Base App
- Inter University Network

This is the primary area of intervention. Once a student has appraised a situation as being dangerous (whether it is real or perceived) it is hard to convince the student of the opposite, but it is in this moment that the university has a great opportunity – the chance to support the student by giving him the right tools to handle the stimuli (stressor) in a way that it is either positive or neutral for their overall well-being.

The three above mentioned designed interventions will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

c. Design Interventions – Prototypes and Implementation

c1. Driving Purpose:

An ambassador advocating clarity, simplicity and direction.

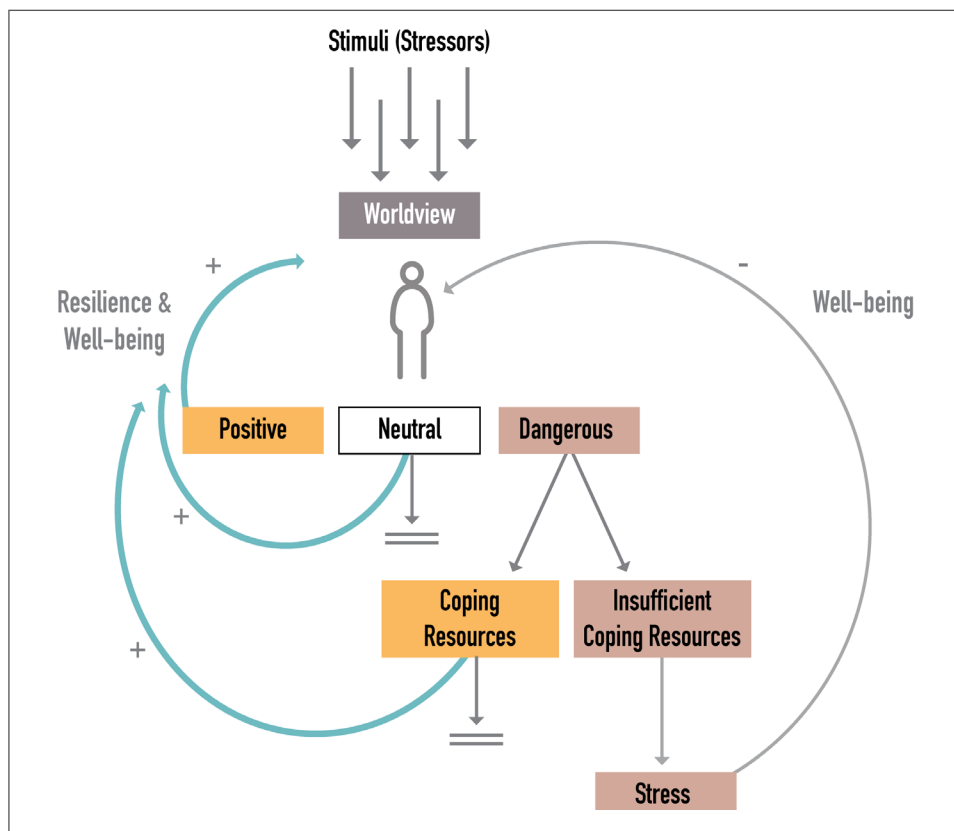


Figure 13. Systems Diagram illustrating the Impact Stimuli (stressors) have on Student Well-being (based on Lazarus, 1976) to Illustrate the Impact of the Driving Purpose Intervention in Student Well-Being (Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016)

Driving purpose is a proposed design intervention that seeks to enhance student well-being. Its goal is to positively intervene in the areas of: 1) worldview and 2) coping resources by bringing purpose into the frontline of all student activities. As discussed on the findings section, point 4, it is necessary to bring back purpose into student life as purpose has a positive impact on student well-being. It has proven to be beneficial in helping individuals achieve their goals, it increases a person's resilience to stress and gives students direction and a sense of meaning to their lives. Often at university there are so many things happening at the same time, that it is easy for students to lose sight of why they are there in the first place. It is important for students to have direction to be able to grow both academically and personally during their university years so that their time at university truly helps shape who they want to be and where they want to go in the future.

'Driving purpose' is a proposed systemic change that seeks to align, through several key interventions in the system, student's academic life (course work), student support systems and activities, extracurricular activities and student's personal life with the university's motto and the student's individual purpose and life mission. It seeks to enhance the positive loops of student well-being (in blue in diagram above) and weaken the negative loops of student well-being (in grey above). As stated by Love & Talbot (1999), "It is important to encourage college students to develop a sense of life purpose in order to increase their sense of well-being. Counseling that focuses on the development of life goals and self-awareness of perceived strengths should be an important priority." Purpose aside from giving student direction, has some of the same positive effects in well-being, that academic papers and scientific articles have demonstrated that faith has, with the added bonus that it is a concept that can be shared with the entirety of

“Simple solutions are the ones that work because they are realistic, they can actually be implemented and that is why change happens.”

- UNKNOWN

the student population without the high level of risk of misunderstanding and resistance, that talking about faith entails.

Purpose does not face the same challenges faith does in regards to student’s actual understanding of its definition and as such is a safer approach for a university wide intervention. The need for a word that gives students direction, without creating unnecessary confusion, controversy or distress is necessary. Student’s life is already a full of challenges and transitions. Stability and simplification are key for the implementation of any long-lasting and comprehensive solution.

The proposal: Promote a culture of purpose by bringing it into the heart of student life including academics, well-being and personal development.

In order to promote a culture of purpose, current university tools, offerings, values and policies were analyzed to find areas that are

Purpose An Ambassador Advocating Clarity, Simplicity & Direction

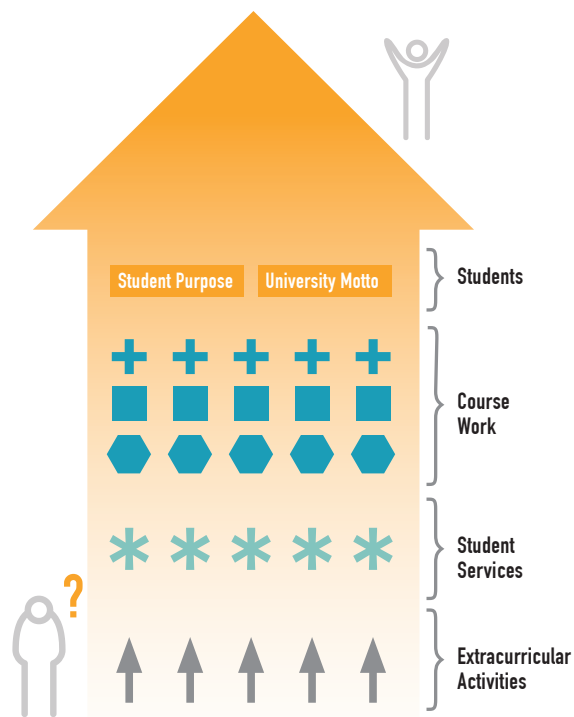


Figure 14. Driving Purpose Model (Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016)

already working within the university, where incorporating purpose would be simple and yet create a big impact for student life. Four main points of intervention were selected:

1. Orientation week
2. Students' personal university pages, apps, among others
3. Course Evaluations
4. Student groups

Design proposal in detail:

1. 'Driving Purpose' workshop in orientation week

Every year, orientation week, welcomes new students to their fresh lives at university. During this week students are introduced to the university system: curriculum, services, rules, teachers, administration and to each other. There are workshops, conferences, fairs, social events, among others. It is the beginning of university life and it is here where it is suggested that "Driving Purpose"

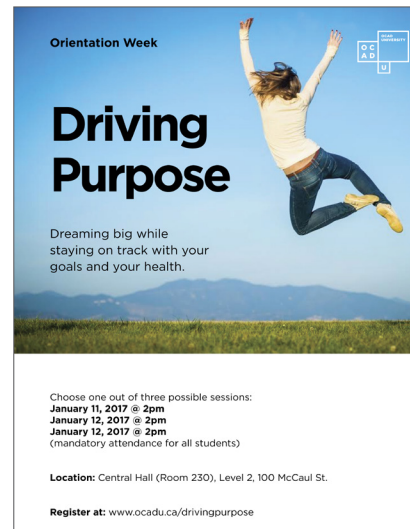


Figure 15. Image Illustrating Poster for Driving Purpose Orientation Week Workshop for University Students in Ontario (Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016). istock.com/FerranTraiteSoler

workshops be introduced. Orientation week is already part of the program of university induction so including an extra workshop within orientation week will optimize on time and resources, ensure maximum exposure and give students the necessary framework and resources, from the very start of student life, that will be their guiding compass

during the rest of their university years. The 'Driving Purpose' workshop would be mandatory for all incoming students and follow-up 'Driving Purpose' workshops will be offered every year during reading and study weeks. Attendance to the follow-up workshop every 6 months will be mandatory to all students and teachers. The proposed name for the workshops would be: "Driving Purpose – Dreaming big while staying on track with your goals and your health." The recommended time for each workshop would be 2-3 hours and could be offered online for students that are unable to attend orientation or study week, had an emergency or any other circumstance (accepted by the university) that does not allow them to be present live.

The goal of the workshops would be for students to develop their:

- 1) Personal Purpose: How their studies connect with their greater purpose in life.
- 2) Connection to University Motto: How their studies and personal purpose

connect with the university's motto.

It is important to mention that prior to the introduction of this workshop both teachers and staff would be trained to properly support students in achieving their purpose, as teachers are often the first point of contact for students whom are seeking help. It is imperative that all areas of the university work together with a common direction and goal.

Follow-up

Once students have been introduced into 'Driving Purpose' and they developed their personal purpose and the goals that will allow them to fulfill it, as well as how they wish through their classes and life to contribute to the university's mission, visibility of their purpose and follow up will be necessary to keep students on track. Student life is busy and students are dealing with many stressors, so constantly finding ways to remind students of their 'compass' and giving them tools to stay on track will be necessary for the successful

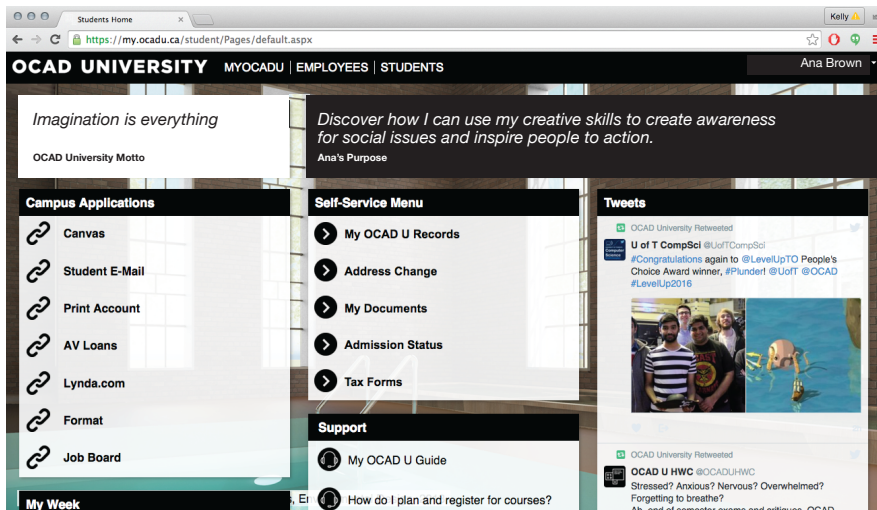


Figure 16. Snapshot of OCAD University Student Page (OCAD, 2016) Modified to Illustrate Visibility of Purpose (Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016)

implementation or such an initiative. It is proposed that visibility of this initiative and follow-up be offered in three main ways:

- Students' personal university pages, apps, among others.
- Course Evaluations
- Student groups

2. Visibility of purpose through students' personal university pages and apps.

Include a purpose and university motto section in university student's personal page and student apps. The goal of this is to remind students over and over and over again of what they are here for and what they seek to achieve. Students will be able to edit and modify their purpose at any moment, as their studies and life experiences might influence and change the direction they wish to follow.

3. 'Driving Purpose' - revisiting your purpose' student course evaluations

Student course evaluations happen every semester and are mandatory in very university. By using existing university mechanisms to spread 'Driving Purpose' student will be able to stay on track with

Figure 17. Illustration of Student Course Evaluation for Driving Purpose Intervention (Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016)

their health and their goals, in a way that incurs minimal costs to the university. The goal of adding ‘Driving Purpose’ questions to student evaluations is for students to remember and revisit their personal purpose, to assess whether they want to enhance it or modify it, and continue to explore how it connects to the university’s motto. It allows universities to track student progress and support them in achieving their purpose in a way that is beneficial for both students and the university. The recommendation is to include a mandatory section for purpose development and analysis in the course evaluations. Three questions could be added to the course evaluation as follows:

- How did this class contribute to your understanding and application of the university’s motto?
- How has this class enhanced/supported your personal purpose?
- Has your personal purpose changed in any way? If it has please update it here and in your student page.

4. *‘Driving Purpose’ student groups*

Student run groups are a vital source of support for individuals during university years. Student groups are usually independently run, but are endorsed by universities and announced in their websites. Universities have sport groups, special interest groups, faith groups, among others. Universities have faith support groups that seek to provide a place for students with common interests, beliefs, questions and needs, to get together, meet and support one another. These groups help ease the stresses of student life and in the case of faith groups, academic and scientific articles have proven that they are beneficial to student’s well-being. Since universities will now be promoting a culture of purpose, that will as a result enhance student well-being, it is necessary to provide students with the right environment and opportunities to share with one another and help each other stay on track with their goals. It is recommended that as part of the follow up and as complement to the “Driving Purpose’ orientation workshops

and other initiatives, that universities also start “Driving Purpose’ groups where student and teacher leaders will be trained to support individuals in their daily struggles and challenges and teach them how to make choices that are aligned with their individual purpose and the university’s purpose.

The aforementioned four interventions seek to promote meaningful learning that will as a result help promote a culture of well-being for university students. It is recommended that this intervention be complemented with proper statistical research to measure the impact of each intervention and in this way give universities the necessary information to be able to modify/enhance these and other student support programs in ways that will be beneficial for students, staff, universities and the future of academia.

c2. Home Base' App:

All students' needs met in one place.

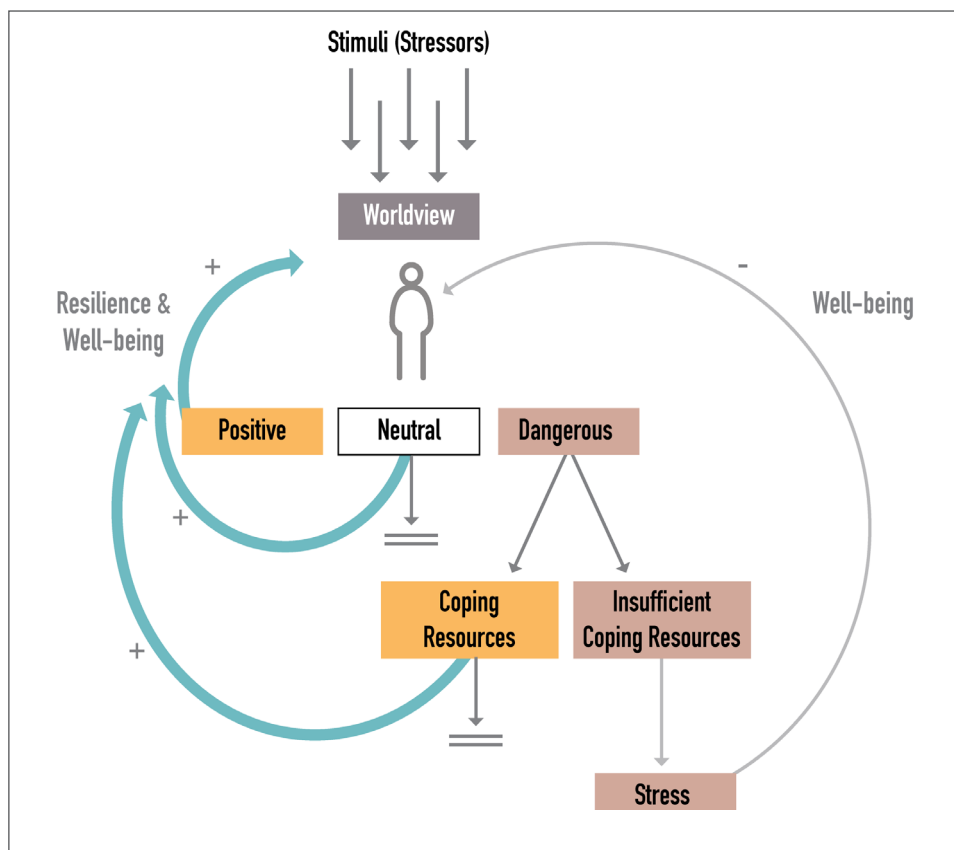


Figure 18. Systems Diagram illustrating the Impact Stimuli (stressors) have on Student Well-being (based on Lazarus, 1976) to Illustrate the Impact of the Home Base Intervention in Student Well-Being (Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016)

The ‘Home Base’ design proposal seeks to enhance student well-being through knowledge sharing and optimal utilization of resources. Its goal is to positively intervene in the area of coping resources by offering a simple, attractive and efficient way for students to access the wide variety of services, tools and offerings available to them by the university, partner organizations and the province of Ontario.

Students constitute the heart of university life. As detailed in the background section of this paper, much of the student population is struggling and even through university student services are working overtime, they are currently unable to keep up with demand for their services, often due to limited budgets and time. In the words of a university social worker that was interviewed for this project:

“Our staff has increased and we still can’t keep up.” – University Social Worker

Student services are meant to help enhance all aspects of student life. A university chaplain echoed the sentiments of a number of the study participants in noting that one of the main challenges is that students are often so overwhelmed that they do not even know how to ask for help or where to look for it.

“I still think the biggest challenge is to get students to ask for help. It is hard to always identify students that need help, unless they ask.” – University Chaplain

In the interview process, a crucial aspect that came up was the need to teach students how to ask for help and to train staff members and instructors/professors how to be able to identify signs of distress in students in need, and then know how to properly re-direct them to the appropriate services. Students often feel embarrassed to ask for help or simply don’t know where to find it.

Universities offer an array of services to promote and enhance student well-

being but this are not always visible and easy to access for students. Another major obstacle is that these services often work independently of each other and finding the right services is often tedious and time consuming for students.

The proposal: The development of a ‘Home Base’ app that will provide a “home away from home” resource hub for all students; with the goal of offering them easy access to all student support resources within the reach of one click.

To better support students, help staff members be more cost-effective and able to provide support, and make efficient use of the university’s and province’s resources, a ‘Home Base’ app for student service information is recommended, as a solution that will allow students to have all their needs met in one place.

Students come from multi-ethnic backgrounds and are busy and on the move,

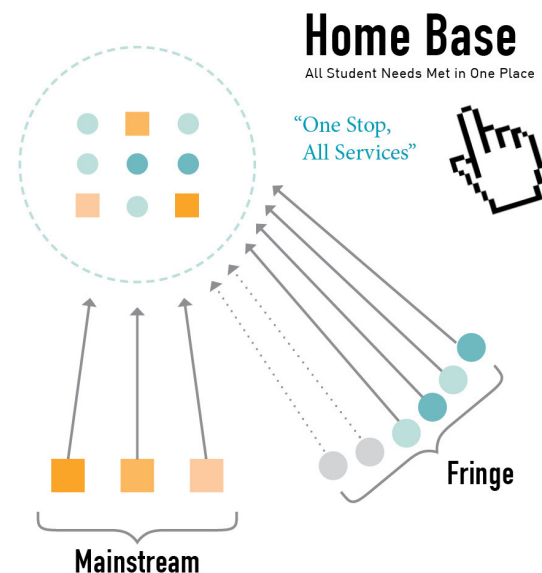


Figure 19. Home Base Model (Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016)

so a solution that is visually appealing, easy to understand, simple to use and time saving, is necessary to give them access to services that they would otherwise be unaware of, uninterested in or too busy to interact with. More and more the world is moving towards a virtual one, where transactions, information, and interactions

happen online. University students were born in an age of technology and as such will find an app a friendly and efficient way to find the tools and support services they need to properly deal with stressors of university life and get help fast. An app is an ideal solution since most students have access to cellphones and this will provide students a user-friendly and cost-efficient solution that will direct students to resources 24 hrs/day, anywhere, anytime.

1. *The 'Home Base' app – all student needs met in one place*

will have access to a wider spectrum of support programs and main stream services that are currently overcrowded will have increased breathing space without sacrificing student well-being. Mainstream services can recommend services offered by other organizations or the province to their students, that will enhance and complement the support they are giving them, or that due to lack of resources are unable to provide.

Students Who Thrive

services have a harder time collaborating with mainstream student services and many opportunities for partnership and joint interventions and programs are lost due to lack of avenues for cross-collaboration.

By creating a one place for all, universities will offer a greater gamma of students services, that will be easily accessible by all students and where university will still be able to have quality control through the endorsement (or lack of) of other community services available for students. Quality control would also be achieved by a student rating system, that will allow students to evaluate services and then use peer-evaluations as a filter in their own selection process. By having a centralized online booking service, universities will also be able to measure what type of services students search for and make appointment for the most often and thus will be able to provide better support in the future. It will also allow the university and other programs to gather data on how they are doing and through

this make the necessary adjustments to provide better support to their target group.

The app would offer four main solutions:

- Provide a centralized, easy & customized information hub for student services.
- Allow for online booking of university run or approved services (and provide direct links to the contact information for those that cannot be booked online).
- Quality control and data collection for future improvements.
- Increase visibility of 'Driving Purpose' initiative- student's purpose and services that can support them.

Student services will be divided in three sections:

- Blue: Official university student services, run by and offered by the university.
- Pink: University endorsed student services, independently run (often student-run).

- Yellow: Community services that are available to students but are not officially endorsed by the university, independently run.

Main categories:

- Driving Purpose
- Wellness (Physical, Mental, Emotional, Spiritual (Faith/Religion))
- Academic Advising
- Career development
- Sports/ Recreation
- Interest groups
- Skill development
- Safety
- Emergency Services

Each category will have a drop down menu that will allow students to easily see the different student service offering within and around their university campus (both in person and virtual offerings). They will be able to see which ones are university run, university endorsed and fringe, based on the color code detailed above.

Additionally the services with highest ratings will be at the top, allowing students to see the best-rated services first.

The Emergency services button will, within one click, give students access to emergency services such as 911, police department, fire department, student emergency phone lines, suicide prevention phone lines, 24-hour phone line for victims of sexual abuse, among others. Student will not have to actually dial the number but by just clicking on the emergency service button, their phone will dial the desired phone directly, saving students time in situations of high risk and high stress.

Additionally, the student's purpose and university motto will be visualized as soon as the student logs in to the system, serving as a reminder of their goal and direction during their life as students.

c3. 'Inter-University Network (IUN)':

For the enhancement of all aspects of student life.

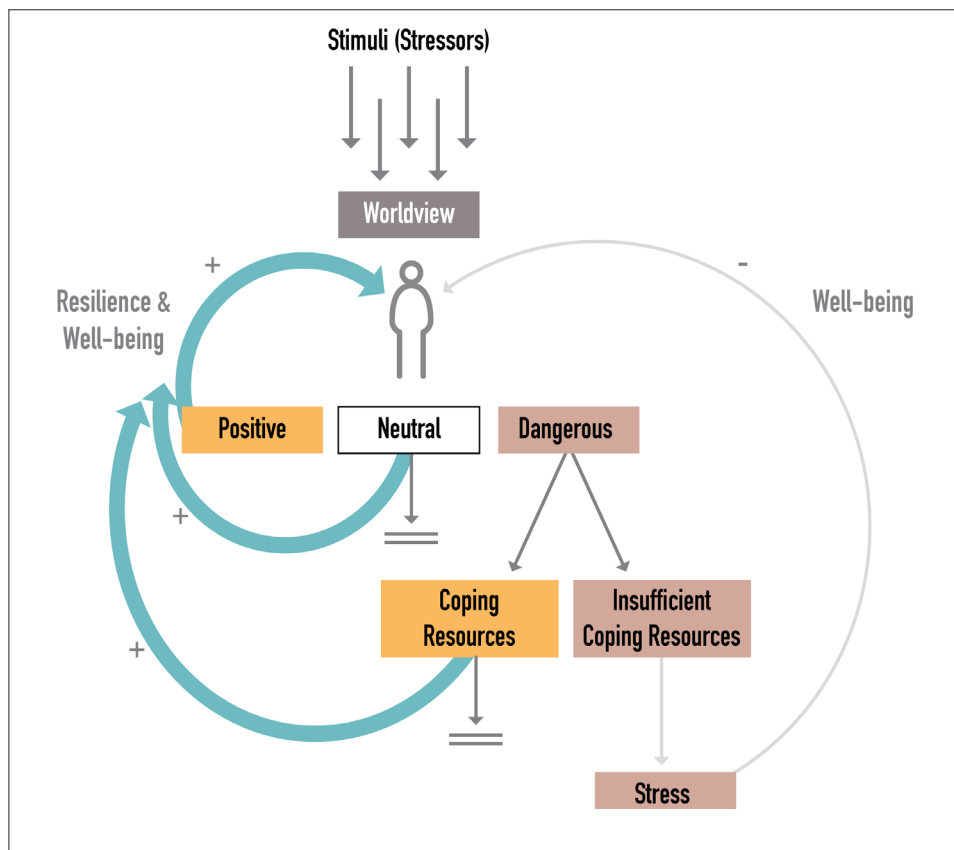


Figure 21. Systems Diagram illustrating the Impact Stimuli (stressors) has on Student Well-being (based on Lazarus, 1976), to Illustrate the Impact of the Inter-University Network Intervention in Student Well-Being (Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016).

The ‘Inter-University Network’ will focus on collaboration strategies between student support departments and offerings, specifically student wellness and spiritual development services and student support services with an emphasis on well-being and purpose.

There are only 20 publicly funded universities in Ontario and one associate member, the Royal Military College, a total of 21 institutions that are part of COU. COU “works with members to find consensus on a wide range of university issues and advances them with government and other stakeholders” (COU, 2012).

Collaboration and sharing of best-practices is necessary for the advancement of higher education in Ontario. It is important that the focus is not singularly placed in academic advancement but also on student development (student’s well-being being a key component in this).

The government of Ontario is already promoting inter-university cooperation through “the Ontario government’s Productivity and Innovation Fund (PIF) – a \$45 million investment in Ontario’s postsecondary sector” that seeks to promote partnerships and collaboration among Universities to cut-costs and improve “services for students and staff” (COU, 2015) through projects ranging from graduate students’ skill development workshops necessary for the job market, to data and technology innovation lectures, to information on tracking utility usage, among others.

COU has currently published two reports:

1. In 2011 “Innovative Ideas, a report that highlighted how Ontario universities were improving efficiency by finding new ways of doing business.”
2. In 2015 “Faster, Cheaper, Smarter: Improving Efficiency at Ontario Universities, focuses on innovation through partnership” (COU, 2015).

Initiatives such as the ‘Ontario Mental Health Addiction Strategy’ (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2016) and the ‘Centre for Campus Innovation on Mental Health’ (CICMH, 2016) are two more examples of organizations that are generating opportunities for collaboration - they specifically work in the areas of addiction and mental health, which are two of the main problems for university students and concerns highlighted in this paper. CICMH, as an example, collaborates with “Colleges Ontario, COU, Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, the College Student Alliance and the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario Division.” (CICMH, 2016). Such initiatives and organizations could serve both as partners and as templates for the IUN initiatives on student well-being and purpose.

Currently, the ACHA National College Health Assessment contains no questions around the topics of spirituality and purpose, indicating that their importance and impact in students well-being is not

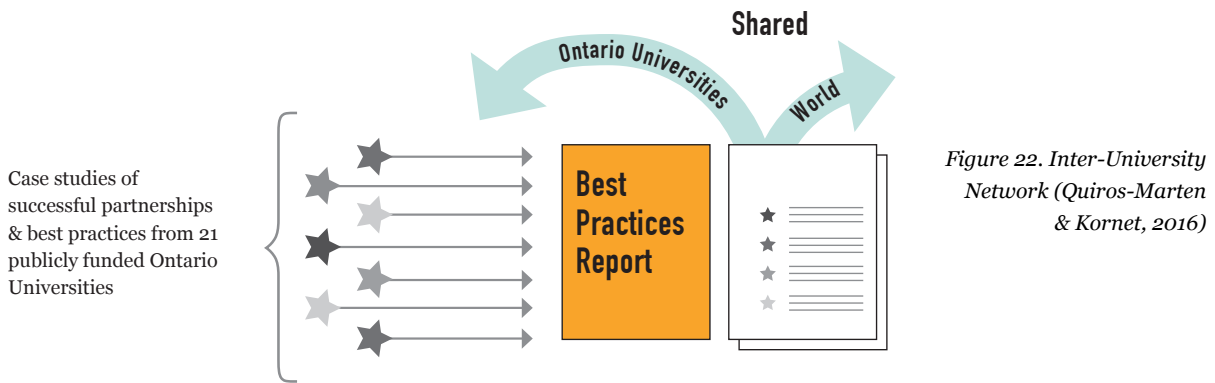
currently recognized. The need for creative solutions and joint initiatives becomes even more apparent in the following quote from the interview process:

“We can never keep up with the volume because it is always increasing, so we have had to come up with creative ways to give people services.”

– Health & Wellness Centre Staff member

Two examples of a successful collaborations between universities in Ontario:

1. “Seven universities – McMaster, Guelph, Ottawa, Queen’s, Toronto, Waterloo and Western – collaborated to create the Ontario Consortium for Graduate Professional Skills Training Development, saving time and money by working together to create resources for all Ontario universities. The Consortium was able to draw on the strengths of each university to develop leading content in each course area” (COU, 2015).



2. “Many organizations are facing pressure including work backlogs due to competing priorities, limited financial and human resources, and aging infrastructure. Queen’s University brought together 12 institutions that use PeopleSoft, a resource planning platform/shared services model for IT, to better understand how individual institutions are using the software and to identify operational challenges. By revealing shared problems, the project explored a ‘shared responsibility model’ as a potential solution. The group made recommendations about how to move forward in six core PeopleSoft support functions: knowledge sharing, testing, application development, reporting development and maintenance, enterprise architecture and service desk. The study identified more than \$11.2 million in potential productivity gains, future operational savings, and service delivery improvements over a 10-year period. Savings will be realized through common technological platforms and reduced duplication.” (COU, 2015)

The proposal: To avoid the continual ‘reinventing of the wheel’; and instead focus in properly allocating and utilizing university resources through the creation of joint projects and initiatives focused on purpose and spirituality as key interventions for student well-being.

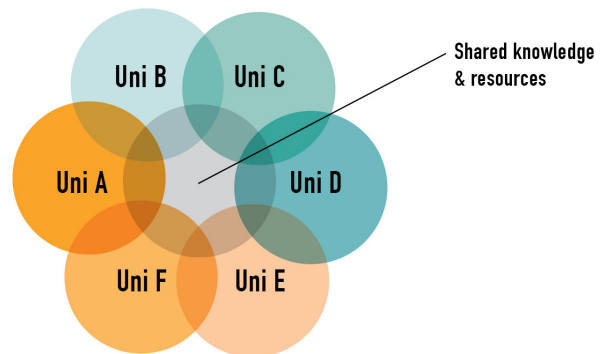


Figure 23. Illustration of Inter-University Network (Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016)

This paper, proposes that COU include in its efforts, the topic of student wellness as a top priority within its current initiatives. It

is recommended that the 'Inter-University Network' (IUN) establish a group in charge of sharing best practices on the topic of students services with a special focus spirituality and life purpose with the goal of refining and distilling methodologies to achieve even better practices for Ontario universities that promote a holistic approach to students' university life.

Design proposal in detail:

'Inter-University Network' Annual conference and report

The IUN will specialize in documenting, in the form of case studies, best practices on student-wellbeing and purpose initiatives in Ontario with the goal to identify and disseminate the most cutting edge practices around student development and student health.

The best findings will then be shared with different departments of universities within Ontario and around the country



Figure 24. Image Illustrating the Inter-University Network Report (Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016). istock/AJ_Watt.

as a yearly report (virtual and in paper), that hopefully will lead to policy changes. It will also be an opportunity for health centres to network among themselves, and with other student services such as faith/religious/spirituality services.

*It is important to mention that students' well-being and academic development goes

hand in hand. Collaboration to promote joint efforts to enhance all aspects of students' life and research on its impact is crucial for the success of such initiatives. Student services will not succeed unless it is connected with academic services because people go to university for academia so unless this is a compulsory aspect of academia this is not going to work. A focus on partnerships among student support groups such as health centre and faith groups and, academia should be prioritized.

Universities are already moving in the right direction, this proposal seeks to help them be more cost-effective and be able to adjust and streamline student services for the well-being of its students.

This would raise the profile of Ontario's Higher Education system, not only within Canada, but around the world.

d. Journey Mapping – Personas and Design Interventions

The Newcomer

Ana is a second year undergraduate student who moved to Ontario, Canada from Latin America to pursue a degree in biology. Moving to a new country was challenging for Ana, especially being away from home and her friends, trying to adjust to life in a new city: new people, new language, new norms, Ana started to get dizzy spells. She was not sure what to do about this or who to ask for help. She had met a few students and teachers, but not well enough to ask for assistance. Suddenly she missed her family and her home even more.

Ana remembered an app she had had to download during registration as part of orientation. They had told her it was called 'Home Base' and that she could find all resources necessary here, to help her during university. She liked the design of it - it was simple yet colourful and she was especially amused to observe that as soon as she logged in, the life purpose she had written about just yesterday, was right there

staring back at her through her phone screen. She re-read her life purpose and suddenly felt a tinge of excitement- right, she was here to make a difference in the world! Ana explored the app for about five more minutes. "Wow, so many options", she thought. Skimming through it, she came across an all-female basketball team that met twice a week by her dorm and made a mental note to take a look at it again later. It had 4 out of 5 stars. "Not bad", Ana thought. Suddenly, Ana realized it was almost time for class. She went to the section of wellness and within 1 minute was able to set up an appointment with the student wellness office for 3 days from now. Ana sighed in relief - she felt like she was not alone.

The Struggler

Veer moved to Ontario from Delhi on a scholarship. Veer's parents were raised in a strict religious system but they had been very flexible with him. Veer arrived in Toronto and moved in with

some distant family members. His commute to school took two hours but at least it was cheaper than living in the city. In his first week at university, during orientation week, he went to the mandatory “Driving Purpose” workshop. At first he thought it was a waste of time: “I mean, I am at university to get my degree, what else was there to talk about?” But as the workshop progressed he got more and more interested. He started remembering his application paper and why coming to this university had been a big dream for him. His passion was clean water and his application essay on his goal to bring clean water to all of India is what had landed him his scholarship. He wrote down his goal and felt very proud of himself for doing so. It had been more than a year since he had submitted his application and he realized how much had happened that year – he had spent so much time and energy preparing to come to university: organizing finances, packing, etc. that he forgot why he had wanted to go to university in the first place.

Classes started and though Veer did read his purpose every time he logged into his student page, he was not sure how to even get started and how he would achieve it. Just thinking about it made him anxious. Even though the academic part of school was easy for him, he soon discovered that arranging scheduling was always very stressful, especially because of his part time job. He started to feel light headaches but did not pay much attention to them. Suddenly, during one of his group meetings, one of his classmates mentioned how he had joined the new ‘Driving Purpose’ student run group. His classmate kept going on and on about how great it was and how it was helping him stay on track with school. Veer was curious, so he joined it the following week. Suddenly he felt he had a group of friends that were not only trying to survive university but also to excel in it. He started to feel better and his headaches slowly started to disappear.

Resolution

This research clearly demonstrates that student well-being is, and must continue to be, a priority for universities (CACUSS, 2013; ACHA, 2013; Wong, 2014; CFS, 2016). One of the key issues the investigation highlights is the fact that: to enhance student well-being, all aspects of wellness must be considered and supported (HERI, 2013). Support systems must go beyond academic and intellectual dimensions, to encompass all aspects of a person: “occupational, physical, social, intellectual, spiritual, emotional” (Hettler, 1976). Promoting an integral and wholesome approach to well-being represents a crucial step towards being able to nurture students, so that they can excel academically and in life.

University life is especially challenging as it is a time of transition (OUSA, 2012). Existing university wellness and faith groups are vital in supporting students during these years. As the study shows, life purpose and faith play a key role in most students’ lives, and furthermore endow a positive effect on students’ well-being (physical, mental, emotional) (Frankel & Hewitt, 1994; Byron & Miller-Perrin, 2009; Mishra, 2009). Faith can be spiritual,

religious or humanistic (Frankel & Hewitt, 1994; Lyon, Beaty, Parker & Mencken, 2005, Oxford University Press Online, 2016; Harper, 2016; Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2016). As such, it is important to enhance what these centres are already doing effectively, so that the inner unfoldment of the student goes hand in hand with his/her academic development. In a society that is focused more and more outwardly, it is essential to not lose sight of the inner aspects of the individual.

The challenge with faith is that even though it can garner positive benefits for the individual, its definition is not universally shared or understood. Faith, being frequently confused with religion and spirituality, causes many people, especially during their university years, to have an aversion to faith, as they connect it to an organization that feels overly restrictive to them (Regnerus & Uecker, 2007). Instead of attempting to persuade the entirety of the student population to share a common understanding of faith, which would be quite challenging and time-consuming, it is best to choose other complementary approaches to student well-being, the offerings of which

do not carry such controversial overtones, but rather would still give students benefits similar to faith. Studies show that ‘purpose’ functions as a mediator between faith and well-being, and bestows similar health benefits (Byron & Miller-Perrin, 2009; Mishra, 2009), the reason being that when people develop a sense of purpose and meaning, they also demonstrate higher levels of resilience, and are able to better deal with the obstacles in life in comparison to those without purpose (Byron & Miller-Perrin, 2009; Mishra, 2009).

Students are often asked about their purpose in life in their college applications, and yet this question is rarely asked again in subsequent years. In order to marry the academic and psycho-emotional aspects of the individual, it is necessary to find safe words and approaches to wellness, such as the promotion of ‘purpose’, that can be used to help give meaning and direction to a student’s life, while not restricting or limiting their individuality and respective heritages.

Based upon the results of this investigation, this paper proposes

that resources be deployed to:

- (1) continue to support and improve current faith, spiritual, existential and religious services – to better support all aspects of student life and promote well-being,
- (2) find a common direction and mission for the student body, teachers, and university administration to move forward as one cohesive whole.

Universities have the unique challenge of: a) providing both diversity and inclusion; b) giving students both freedom and space to explore; c) as well as providing them with a stable support system and direction for their studies and their life. Universities must attempt to remember to prioritize the unique nature of each person and his/her beliefs, culture and background, while not losing the identity of the university-institution. It is a time of change, of advancing technology, of globalization, and as such, the development of a healthy balance of the inner and outer aspects of each human individual becomes ever more paramount.

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Appendices

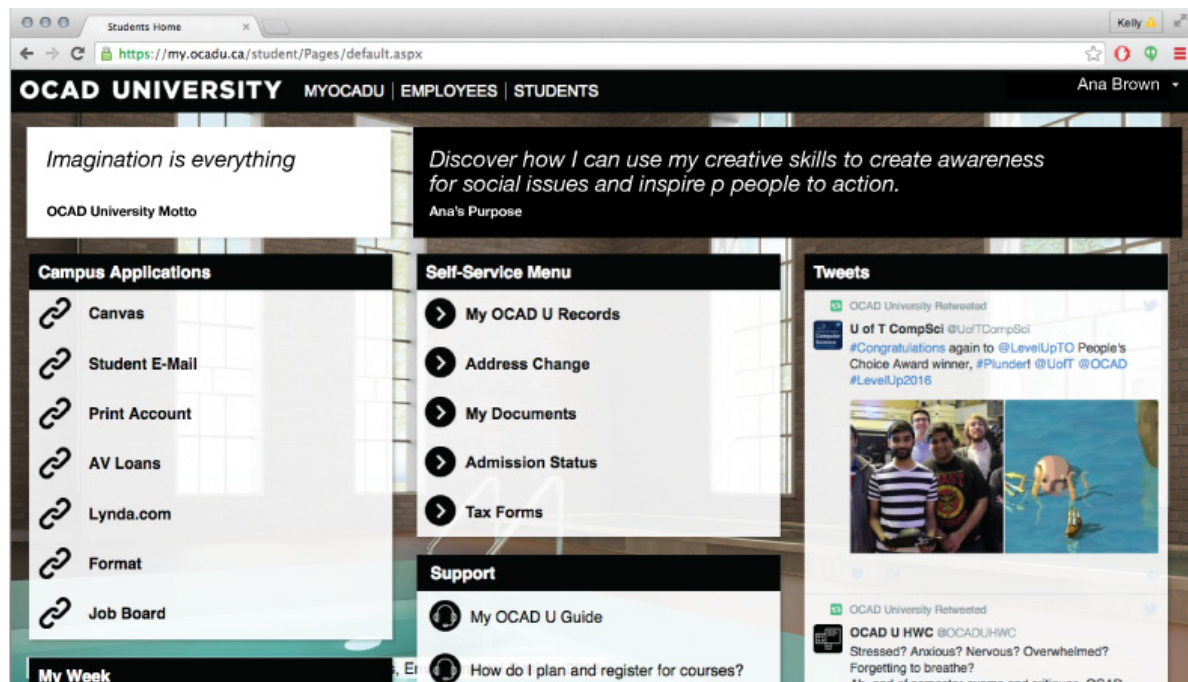
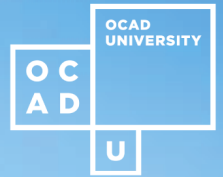


Figure 16. Snapshot of OCAD University Student Page (OCAD, 2016) Modified to Illustrate Visibility of Purpose (Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016)

Orientation Week



Driving Purpose

Dreaming big while
staying on track with your
goals and your health.



Choose one out of three possible sessions:

January 11, 2017 @ 2pm

January 12, 2017 @ 2pm

January 12, 2017 @ 2pm

(mandatory attendance for all students)

Location: Central Hall (Room 230), Level 2, 100 McCaul St.

Register at: www.ocadu.ca/drivingpurpose

Figure 15. Image Illustrating
Poster for Driving Purpose
Orientation Week Workshop for
University Students in Ontario
(Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016).
istock.com/FerranTraiteSoler

Driving Purpose



Checking In

Dreaming big while staying on track with your goals and your health.

OCAD University Motto:

To be the university of the imagination

QUESTION 1:

How did this class contribute to your understanding and application of the university's motto?

Ana's Personal Purpose:

Discover how I can use my creative skills to create awareness for social causes. //

QUESTION 2:

How has this class enhanced/supported your personal purpose?

QUESTION 3:

Has your personal purpose changed in any way? If so, please update it here and in your student page.

Figure 17. Illustration of Student Course Evaluation for Driving Purpose Intervention (Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016)

Version 3 - April 11

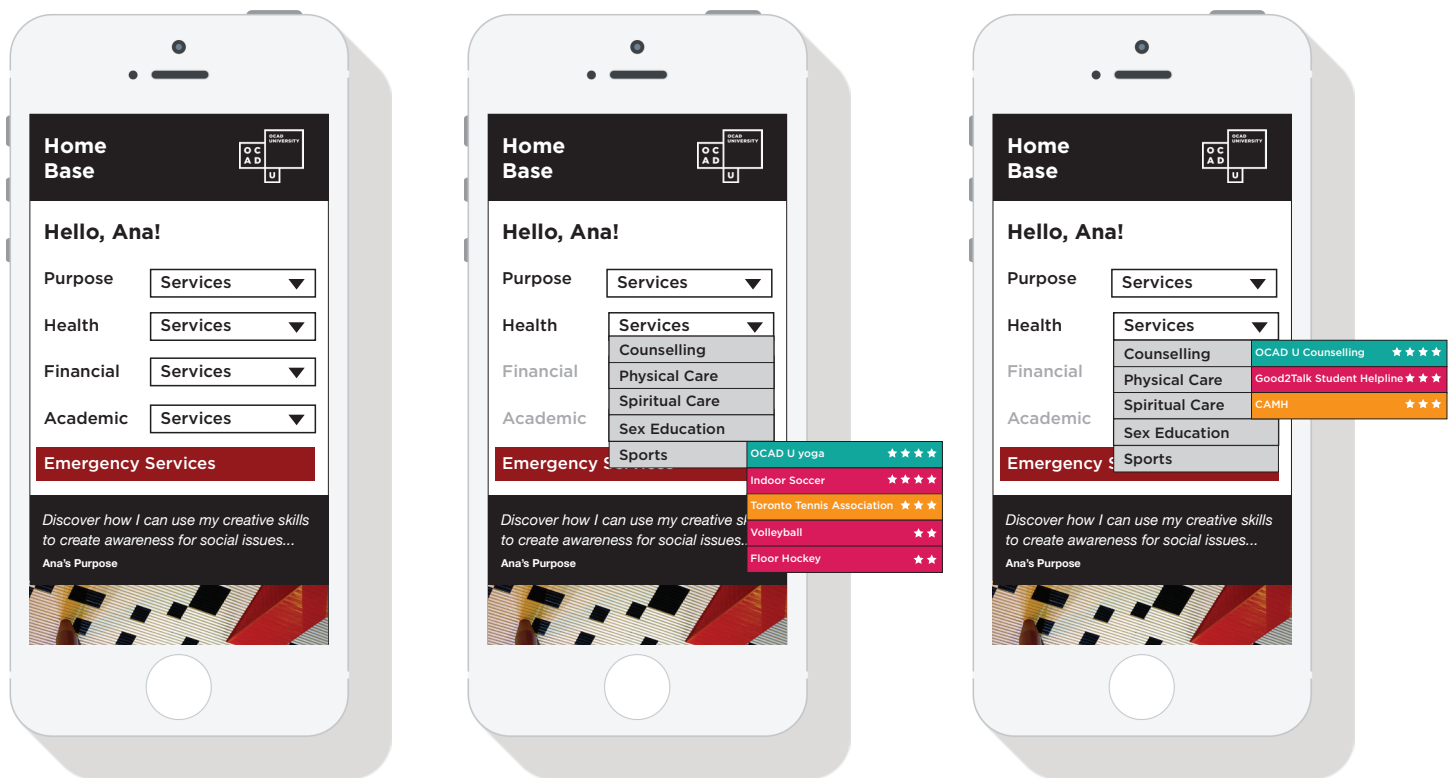


Figure 20. Image Illustrating the Home Base App (Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016)



2017 Best Practices Report

**Case Studies of Successful Partnerships
& Best Practices in Student Wellness From
21 Publicly Funded Ontario Universities**

Figure 24. Image Illustrating the
Inter-University Network Report
(Quiros-Marten & Kornet, 2016).
istock/AJ_Watt.



**ONTARIO
INTER-UNIVERSITY
NETWORK**

About the Author

A rising social entrepreneur - and martial artist - with a flair for both innovative, arresting design and lucrative business, Ms Quiros Marten specializes in piloting and nurturing business ventures on an international scale, such as TEDx Youth Costa Rica - Pura Vida, World Hug Group Education Against Child Abuse, Fundacion Gente, Fundacion Accion Joven, Creative Living Corp.

Ms Quiros Marten, a visionary who 'delivers', is also well-known for her sound and social business ethics. She is/has been on the Board of Directors for Toyota Costa Rica, Maarten Corporation, the World Hug Group Education Against Child Abuse, Fundacion Accion Joven, Fundacion Gente. Volunteer work is always something that Ms Quiros Marten finds time for - one of her most memorable experiences is building schools in Madagascar.

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