

Student Mental Health Innovative Approaches

Building Faculty Capacity Work Team Final Report Winter 2023



Work Team Introduction

The Building Faculty Capacity Work Team assessed current - and developed additional - resources, tools, and trainings for faculty, graduate student instructors, and other academic staff to further support and strengthen student wellbeing.

Executive Summary

Work Team Membership

Team Members:

- **Matthew Kaplan, Co-chair, Executive Director, CRLT**
 - **Joy Pehlke, Co-chair, Assistant Director, Wolverine Wellness**
 - Sara Armstrong, Director of the CRLT Theatre Program
 - Cynthia Arslanian-Engoren, Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Faculty Development and Professor, School of Nursing
 - Jamye Banks, Counseling Psychologist and Coordinator for Suicide Prevention Programming, CAPS
 - Devin Berghorst, Assistant Dean of Students
 - Pete Bodary, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education and Clinical Associate Professor of Kinesiology
 - Mika LaVaque-Manty, Director, Honors Program, Thurnau Professor of Political Science
 - Travis L. Martin, Associate Dean of Students and Director of Fraternity & Sorority Life
 - Kelcey Stratton, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry
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Work Team Charge

Work Team Objectives

Charge: As a member of this work team, you will help assess current and develop additional resources for faculty, graduate student instructors, and other academic staff to further support student wellbeing.

Scope of Building Faculty Capacity to Support Student Well-being:

- Building faculty confidence & skills to address mental health concerns of mentees or students in the classroom (undergraduate and graduate)
- Noticing Red Flags/Signs of Distress in students
- Awareness and utilization of resource landscape/Fluency in Referrals - When/how to refer or seek assistance with a complex issue
- Compassionate communication skills – evidence-based tools grounded in empathy and compassion, which relieves faculty members of having to fix or solve complexities around student mental health & well-being
- Modeling flexibility/transparency in expectations, instruction, grading practices, exams
- Supporting or challenging discipline-specific (harmful/toxic) norms
- Inclusive teaching - Establish class conditions and norms that promote well-being, social connectedness, inclusivity, and a growth mindset
- Reducing mental load (empathic distress fatigue) of deeply caring for students
- Increasing faculty mental health - taking care of own mental health
- Structural/process to shift the culture of overwhelm/burnout
- Cultural humility and DEI trainings – overlaps with the Identity and Well-being work group

Aspirational Change

That supporting the mental health and well-being of students would not feel like an additional burden or task to complete, and instead, faculty and instructor well-being would improve alongside student well-being as we continue to foster a culture that makes it easier (i.e. reduces barriers) for members of our community to be well, feel well, and succeed.

Work Team Timeline

Meetings June 2021-August 2022:

- 16 planning meetings w/ co-chairs: Matt & Joy (we continue to meet in an ongoing capacity at irregular intervals)
- 7 full meetings of Faculty Capacity Work Team
- 7 Easy to use tool subgroup meetings
- 5 Mental wellbeing subgroup meeting
- 7 Wellness intervention survey subgroup
- 2 Pre-meetings with Laura & Amy (Matt and Joy) before 3/31 all chairs meetings + 1 meeting 6/6 about Players & mental health = 3

- 3/31 All-Chairs meeting (Matt)

**Work on all 3 core initiatives is on-going (see below)

Data Review & Collection

[Summary of data/articles/resources](#)

Deliverables | Accomplishments | Work In-Progress

3 CORE INITIATIVES:

1. Develop an easy-to-use resource for faculty/instructors with advice on:

- Promoting student well-being
- Responding to students in mild to moderate distress
- Responding to students in severe distress
- Accessing mental health resources

Development of an easy-to-use resource for faculty. After discussions on the committee and focus groups with faculty, the current plan is to create a postcard highlighting 10 ways to support mental health and wellbeing, along with phone #s for a few key offices, and a QR code that will take visitors to a CRLT webpage (to be developed) that will include practical advice for responding to students in mild/moderate/severe distress (based in part on this CRLT Occasional Paper). Below is an early draft of the postcard text. We hope to have this ready for Fall 2023.

DRAFT - 10 Ways Instructors Can Support Student Mental Health & Wellbeing

Course design considerations:

- Use multiple low-stakes assignments rather than one or two exams.
- Include flexibility, such as dropping the lowest quiz grade, allowing a certain number of absences.
- Create timelines/checkpoints for major assignments to assist students with time management.
- Develop accommodation and extension policies that are consistent across mental and physical health issues.

- Include a syllabus statement expressing support for student mental health and wellbeing. (<https://studentlife.umich.edu/syllabus-statement-well-being>; see QR code for URL)

Teaching practices:

- Emphasize that you care about students' wellbeing and encourage them to ask for help when they need it.
- Review academic and wellness resources and share them proactively with all students, with timely reminders at stressful times.
- Remind all students that learning difficult course material requires time and practice.
- Be attentive to changes in student behavior and reach out to students you are concerned about.
- Be prepared with strategies for responding to students who come to you in distress.

A second option is to organize the list in a "Temporal" format: Before the semester, ongoing practices, and assessments and exams

A third option is "Thematic" – organized by: supporting well-being, policies, assignments and assessments, and responding to students in distress.

In addition, we've started working on a structure for the website that will accompany the postcard, including sample language instructors can use when interacting with students in distress.

2. Create an interactive Canvas course:

- Modeled on CRLT Players course for leadership on sexual harassment
- Including research overviews, embodied case studies, reflection

Development of a Canvas Course for Instructors on Supporting Student Mental Health and Well-Being: A collaboration between the CRLT Theatre Program and Center for Academic Innovation.

This course will be designed for U-M instructors to learn to recognize role-appropriate ways they can support student mental health and contribute to a campus climate that fosters the well-being of its community members. Course modules will include topics such as exploring the landscape of mental health in higher education, considering the role of identity in student experience, teaching to support student mental health and well-being, responding to requests for accommodations, supporting students experiencing mild-moderate distress, supporting

students experiencing high distress. Each module will contain videos of CRLT Players scenarios designed specifically for this course. Planning for the course is under way, with the major development work to be completed in the 2023-2024 academic year.

- Work has begun on this project
- Goals have been drafted (see attached doc for description and goals)
- There are now several draft scripts for theatre components within the modules
- CRLT and CAI have begun working together and are establishing exactly how the collaboration will operate

3. Expansion of the [wellness check-in survey intervention](#) for large introductory courses/programs:

- Continued partnership between Wolverine Wellness and the Foundational Course Initiative
- Reduce barriers for students who need help (wellness and/or instructional) in large introductory courses or programs
- Improve faculty/instructor confidence (build faculty capacity) to support the well-being of their students
- Share broad wellness resources with instructors and students
- Help inform curricular additions/revisions to better support student wellbeing
- Improve course climate and holistic student success

Wellness Check-in Interventions administered in Fall 2022 and Winter 2023:

- BIO 173 (approx 800 students - Fall and Winter)
- EECS 203 (approx 900-1000 students)
- Honors program 1st year cohort
- Pharmacy 1st year cohort
- NURS 238 and NURS 240 (Winter 2023)

Deliverables	Accomplishments	Work-in Progress	Resources Needed
Easy to use resource		X	
Interactive Canvas course		X	
Wellness check-in survey intervention in large courses	Expanded in 2022 to include a large EECS course, and will be adding EARTH 222 &		Increased Wellness Coaching capacity to serve more courses

	ASTRO 107 in Fall 2023. Ongoing data collection in collaboration with FCI.		
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Recommendations

Recommendations for Future Work:

- Further expansion of Wellness check-in intervention based on student and instructor data (Fall 2022 and Winter 2023 data in progress)
 - Better understanding of faculty's definition of well-being (for themselves and their students), how well that aligns with understandings of the Well-Being Collective, and what misperceptions there might be
 - Developing mechanisms for uptake of resources such as the Canvas course or the postcard/website
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Continuity Assessment

CRLT and Wolverine Wellness are continuing this work.

Conclusion