

# **Advancing a Mentally Healthy Campus**

## **Annual Report**

**2013 – 2014**

**Submitted by Mental Health Steering Co-Chairs: Lesley Beagrie; Leah State; Suzanne Killick**

**Submitted to Executive Sponsors, Janet Morrison, Vice-Provost Students and Gary Brewer, VP Finance and Administration**

York University's Mental Health and Wellness strategy aims to promote a healthy, inclusive and supportive environment that fosters mental health and wellbeing among members of the York community. The initiative was developed on the premise that wellness is a necessary pre-condition to learning and working, and that physical, emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual, mental, and cultural and environmental health and learning are interdependent. Through a variety of education, training and support programs, York University's Mental Health and Wellness strategy strives to promote a more holistic, and integrated approach to campus health that supports academic excellence, employee satisfaction and productivity, as well as the overall success of all York community members.

The strategy was endorsed by the President in March 2013 and the following report summarizes the activities undertaken in the first year of the strategy that demonstrate the progress made towards Advancing a Mentally Healthy Campus.

Before reviewing the specific achievements against the five priorities the Steering Group reflected on what excited and energized us; what opportunities did we seize; and what team assets contributed to our accomplishments.

### **What excited and energized us?**

- The Let's Talk Day events – Community Café; Launch of the Mental Health Contest; Information Fair with internal and external partners; Twitter trending second only to Bell's twitter feed; Community engagement (see Appendix A: summary of feedback from events)
- The partnership with York Region School Board that led to 600 Grade 12 students coming to York for the day to see a play, listen to a lecture, learn about mental health and wellness resources on and off campus. Faculty of Health, Fine Arts, Education,

Students Division, Creating a Better Workplace, UIT, and the Provost's office all collaborating to make it happen.

### **What opportunities did we seize?**

- Promoting events through multi-media – website; social media; Excalibur; Y file; Global News Network; Vaughan Citizen
- Promoting what York has done at CFS, CAUBO, and the “Not in the syllabus campaign”
- Met with union executives to share strategy and invite partnerships for future planning

### **What team assets contributed to our accomplishments?**

- The Steering Group has a cross representation of staff, faculty and students that is a forum for different perspectives and contributes to our vision of an integrated approach to a mentally healthy campus
- The dedication of all members in giving their time, commitment and passion
- Non-hierarchical nature of the Steering Group

## **2013-14 Accomplishments and Plans for 2014-15**

### **Strategic Priority 1: *Ensure leaders demonstrate institutional commitment through raising awareness and promoting a mentally healthy campus***

#### **2013 – 14 Accomplishments**

- Met with senior administration and union executives to build buy in for the development and implementation of a mental health strategy.
- Highlighted President's message on mental health through digital and print media
- Hosted multiple opportunities to create pan university wide awareness at the Let's Talk Mental Health Day and throughout the month of February

#### **Strategic Priority 1: Plans for 2014-15**

- Continue to focus on academic, non-academic and union leaders to be champions in promoting the strategy
- Create a symposium for leaders to build awareness, access resources and assist in identifying needs and gaps

**Strategic Priority 2: *Support and continually assess our systems to ensure they foster academic success and better workplace within a diversified community.***

**2013 – 14 Accomplishments**

- Reached out to multiple on and off campus resources to learn more about their services
- Documented all services and posted on the mental health website, and a brochure
- Created an inventory and database of resources for analysis and continuous assessment
- Invited resources to participate in Let's Talk Information Fair and Information Fair as part of York Region School Board event
- Highlighted resources on YouTube posted on the website

**Strategic Priority 2: Plans for 2014-15**

- Develop actions and recommendations based on the analysis of gaps in services
- Explore the development of a Mental Health specific application in collaboration with Shepell/fgi
- Develop tracking process to assess the user experience of resources on the website
- Explore the engagement of psychology graduate students to assist with application development and facilitating workshops on resource gaps
- Explore writing an addition to course syllabi that focuses on normalizing stress and directing students to campus resources (pilot in one department/Faculty)

**Strategic Priority 3: *Establish institutional policies and procedures that respond to existing and emerging community needs.***

**2013- 14 Accomplishments**

- Draft framework has been developed by a sub-group of Steering that illustrates current policies and provides an easy reference guide

**Strategic Priority 3: Plans for 2014-15**

- Position framework as a discussion paper and conduct focus groups to solicit feedback and gap identification
- Seek advice from Counsel Office on the framework

**Strategic Priority 4: *Communicate and enhance institutional capacity to support mentally healthy campus***

**2013 -14 Accomplishments**

- Communications sub-group provided focused and effective multi-media communication actions in support of events and initiatives through 2013 – 14
- Developed increased awareness of York’s commitment to a mentally healthy campus
- Launched York's Mental Health & Wellness website to provide information and support with a list of resources on and off campus (yorku.ca/mentalhealth)
- Held Mental Health Conferences for Peer Leaders and the York Community with a focus on building capacity, raising awareness, sharing needs, and strengths.
- Trained selected staff to deliver Safetalk and ASIST. Trained over 600+ community members in Safetalk. Over 175 faculty/staff completed MentalHealth EDU
- Held a month long event to extend focus on mental health awareness beyond the York U Let’s Talk Day event.

**Strategic Priority 4: Plans for 2014 -15**

- Leverage processes and actions from 2013-14
- Sub-group will continue to work closely with those organizing events and activities to ensure supportive communication plans are in place
- Continue to enhance capacity of York community to address issues relating to mental health through continued on-going training in programs listed above.

**Strategic Priority 5: *Reinforce existing and develop new strategic partnerships to collaborate a coordinated response to a mentally healthy campus***

**2013-14 Accomplishments**

- Outreach to on and off campus resources set the foundation for partnership
- Continued relationship with the Mental Health Collaborative in York Region
- Collaborative event with York Region School Board – Maple High School
- Invited Good2Talk Coordinator to present at Let’s Talk Day

### **Strategic Priority 5: Plans for 2014 – 15**

- Continued relationship with the Mental Health Collaborative in York Region
- Explore how we could replicate the Maple High School experience
- Focus on addressing the challenges for 1<sup>st</sup> year students
- Strengthen the relationship with Employee WellBeing Office

## **Appendix A: Summary of Feedback from Community Engagement Events in 2013-14**

**Note: The plans developed by the Steering Group for 2014-15 took into consideration the following feedback.**

### **Awareness and Stigma**

- Letting everyone know the resources available. Institutional commitment requires political will; a lot of people will dismiss it.
- Super important institutional level.
- Faculty must also help to affect change – eg. Resources in syllabus, classroom structure being a safe environment.
- Staff should also be involved. They have power (leaders) so if they show they care others will follow.
- Need to keep the conversation going. Make sure message of Hope is manifested!
- Issue is highly stigmatized anything that can be done to support managers, to support staff creating welcoming environment. People freely talking and supporting mental health

### **Support**

- Assessing how a campus is healing – we need to collect voices. Participatory research is needed to get stories – lived experience. We could bring surveys to classes. Anonymous drop box or online app to share their story. Leave a blank book for people to fill out
- Very important aspect because it can (1) build on existing support to make better, 2) need to be more proactive
- We need to assess whether resources on campus are working. We need tools to measure wellness. Use the psych department.
- Having health services on campus.

### **Policies and Procedures**

- So many people suffer from mental health issues. They are coming out of the closet. You need to feel safe to share; a policy that supports sharing is needed. Policy gives permission to have this discussion.
- Important to hear students' perspective in terms of policies preventing discussion.
- Increased education and sensitization of managers.
- Every door should be the right door. Policy statement needs to address wellness so everyone is responsible for promoting health and wellness.

### **Communication**

- Mental Health information on syllabi. Incorporating information re: Mental Health in university language.  
Note: look at Western Wellness statement on syllabi
- Phone app for discussing and supporting mental health .

## **Partnerships**

- Visible presence with many partners collaboration together
- Building on what was done and collaborate to expand reach and resources on and off campuses.