

Post-Secondary Student Mental Health and Wellbeing: Current State, Emerging Trends, and Supportive Approaches

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Overview

- “Mental Health Crisis” on Campuses
- Addressing Mental Health at Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions
- Case Study: UCalgary
- Discussion/Q&A

“Mental Health Crisis” on Campuses

There is a “Mental Health Crisis” on Campuses...

THE GLOBE AND MAIL CANADA

CHECKERED THE WELL-EQUIPPED 2019 LEASE FROM 0.99 FROM 24 MONTHS

As more students seek health care, they face

Psychology Today

Find a Therapist (City or Po

Gregg Henriques Ph.D.
Theory of Knowledge

SUPPORT QUALITY JOURNALISM

THE Times Higher Education IHE Inside Higher Ed

How to combat the mental health crisis on campus

From staff training to nap pods and on-campus emotional support animals, universities have well-established and novel ways to help students to better mental health and well-being

Student success Mental health and well-being Student life Feature article North America

Jonathan Koppell
Montclair State University

11 Oct 2023

conferences ([see here](#)) and [official report](#). the scope of the problem. It is a reality we the ramifications are difficult to overstate.

INOMICS The Career Site for Economists

Courses Programs Funding Events Institutions Insights

Worsens

forces at play. Researchers such as Jean Twenge and Turkle point to the relationship between the widespread technology and smart phones and increases in feelings of loneliness and challenges in interpersonal relationships. Without a range of supports, counseling services, and well-being initiatives, students will not flourish; in fact, they will academically. A successful mental health strategy for colleges and universities is, at its heart, a student success strategy. The academic impacts of mental health issues are far-reaching. In the 2018 ACHA-NCHA II, students were asked to identify factors that affected their academic performance, such as receiving a lower grade on an exam, receiving an incomplete or dropping a course. The top four factors—stress, anxiety, depression, and sleep difficulties—all have roots in mental health issues. A 2019 survey by Michigan State University Associate Professor Daniel Eisenberg and fellow researchers have found that some 30 percent of all students who suffer from depression would drop out of college without treatment, while only six percent would drop out if they received counseling support. This year, NASPA and NIRSA: Leaders in Collegiate Education have initiated a joint call to action: *Health and Well-being in Higher Education: A Commitment to Student Success*. This document affirms a commitment to student health and well-being, stating: “We believe it is time to transcend reactive, siloed, programmatic approaches to health and well-being and embrace proactive, and upstream-based well-being initiatives for the campus community. While students must receive appropriate and reactive care when needed, there are scale benefits to proactive, upstream approaches that will increase the number of students to flourish and thrive.” This joint effort is intended to accelerate campus-based programs that address resilience and well-being through collaboration across departments. Wake Forest University’s program and its establishment of an Office of Well-

Health Crisis

iversity campuses across the world. Compared to in history, current students experience more. Some reports suggest that 35% of freshmen in disorders. Since the 1950s, rates of suicides on now the second most common cause of death

This in-depth look at the mental health crisis on university campuses first appeared in 2012. Read the story, check out our [tips for dealing with stress](#).

In late August, as the first leaves changed from green to red and gold, university ghost towns

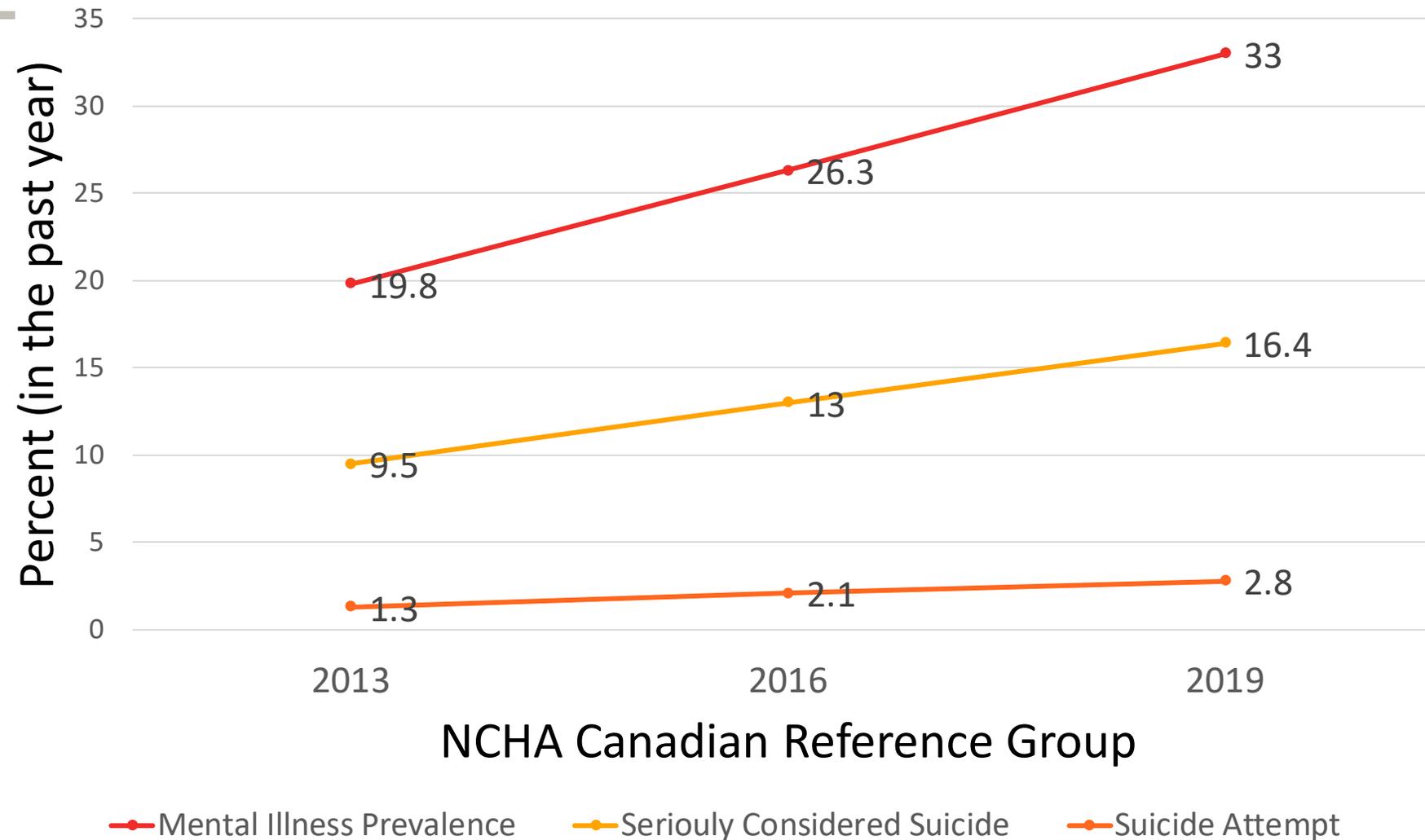
Factors Affecting Academic Performance

Factors include: received a lower grade on an exam, or an important project; received a lower grade in the course; received an incomplete or dropped the course; or experienced a significant disruption in thesis, dissertation, research, or practicum work

	2013 Cdn Reference	2016 Cdn Reference	2019 Cdn Reference
Stress	38.6%	42.2%	41.9%
Anxiety	28.4%	32.5%	34.6%
Sleep Difficulties	27.1%	28.4%	29.0%
Depression	17.3%	20.9%	24.2%
Cold/Flu/Sore Throat	21.6%	20.6%	19.6%
Work	17.0%	17.1%	17.7%
Internet/Gaming	21.0%	18.7%	16.3%

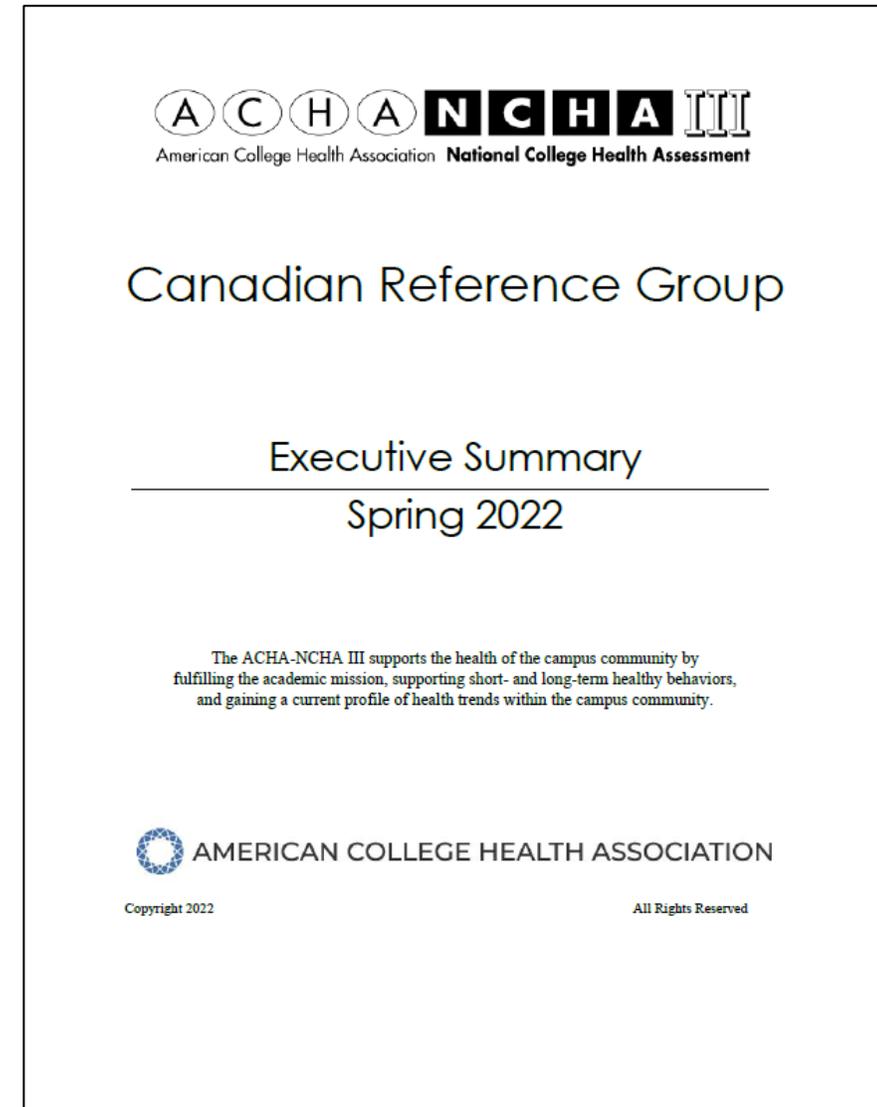
NCHA Canadian Reference Group, Spring, 2013, 2016, 2019

Prevalence: Mental Illnesses and Suicide Thoughts and Behaviours



More Recent Data

- NCHA 2022 Canadian Reference Group
 - Non-Specific Psychological Distress (Kessler 6)
 - No or low distress – 14.6%
 - Moderate distress – 52.0%
 - Serious distress – 33.4%
 - UCLA Loneliness Scale (ULS3)
 - Negative for loneliness – 41.4%
 - Positive for loneliness – 58.6%
 - Suicide Behavior Questionnaire-Revised (SBQR)
 - Negative screening – 64.5%
 - Positive screening – 35.5%
 - Suicide attempts in the last 12 months
 - 2.9%



What we are also hearing...

- Services and supports
 - Not enough services
 - Long wait times for counselling
 - Calls for more counsellors
 - Calls for more resources



Why the Rise?



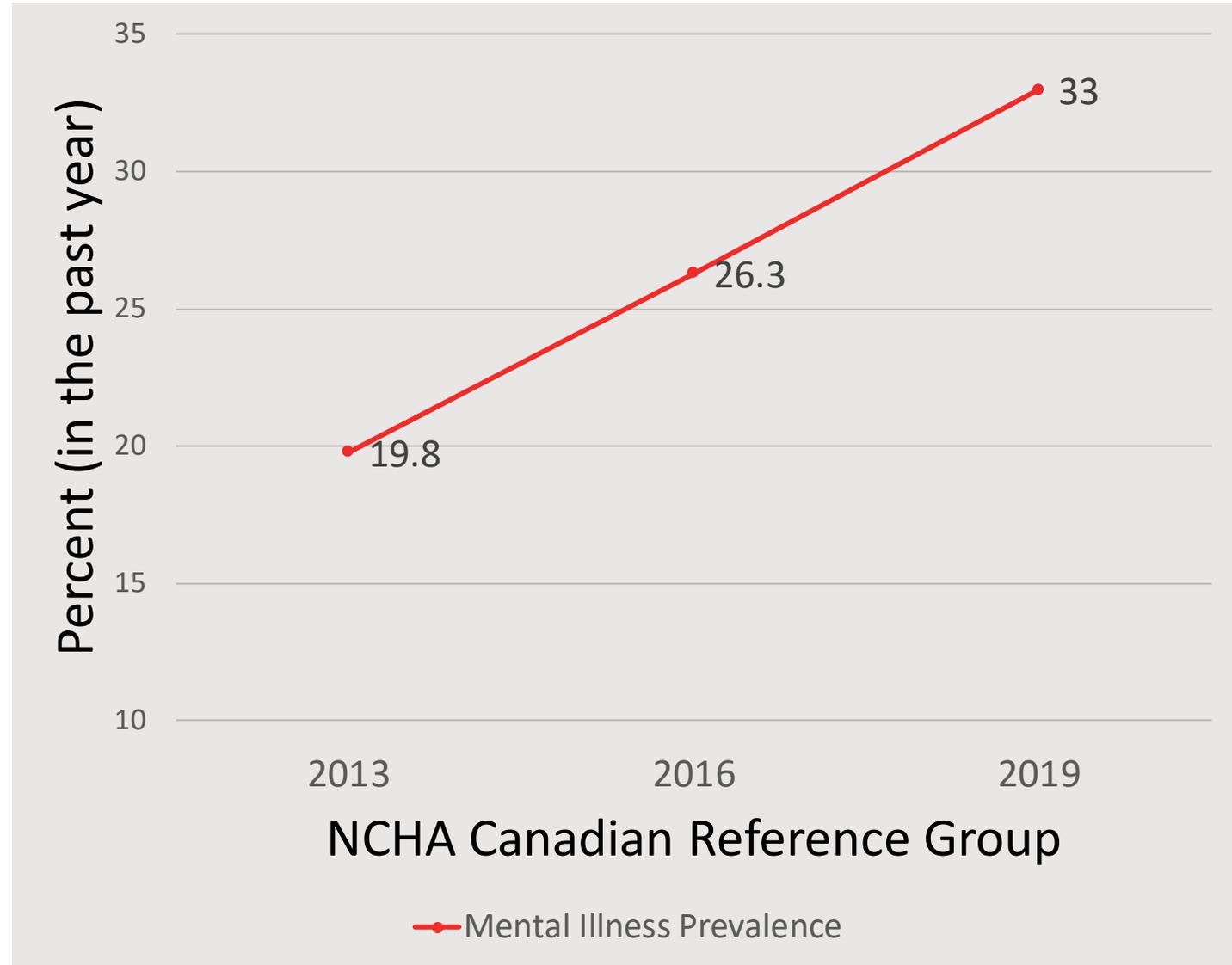
It's complicated!!

Why the Rise?

- Rise in the incidents of mental illnesses and access of resources on our campuses
 - More complexity in cases
 - Increase in accessing of resources
 - Mental illness stigma reduction
 - Awareness of services
 - There are more services, resources, and supports
 - Decrease in funding
 - Transition from secondary schools
- Negative perceptions about services on campus
 - Expectation about what resources and services do

Why the Rise?

- What about the numbers?
 - Inflation of rates??
 - NCHA
 - Self-report
 - “diagnosed or treated by a professional”
 - see Weins et al 2020
 - Increased distress



Why the Rise?

- Impact of the “Crisis Narrative” at PSIs (Bantjes et al., 2023)
 - Pros
 - Focussed attention to this topic
 - Has generated lots of research into the topic
 - There is (more) positive change happening
 - Cons
 - Inadvertently discourage help seeking
 - Students may misattribute experiences of mild distress to more severe forms of mental illnesses
 - Inflated numbers may minimize/trivializing those with severe mental illnesses
 - Perpetuate that all students need professional mental health care and take away agency
 - Medicalize/pathologize human experiences

What we are hearing from students and campuses: Continuing issues and gaps

- Stigma
- Lack of awareness of resources
 - We haven't been found the right way to get this info across
- Mental health literacy
- Skills deficit
 - Resilience and Coping
 - Understanding of emotions
- Loneliness
- More accessible services
- Faculty (and staff) engagement in mental health
- Funding
- Government mandates
- Still lots of work to be done!

Addressing Mental Health at Canadian Post- Secondary Institutions

Can't Forget...

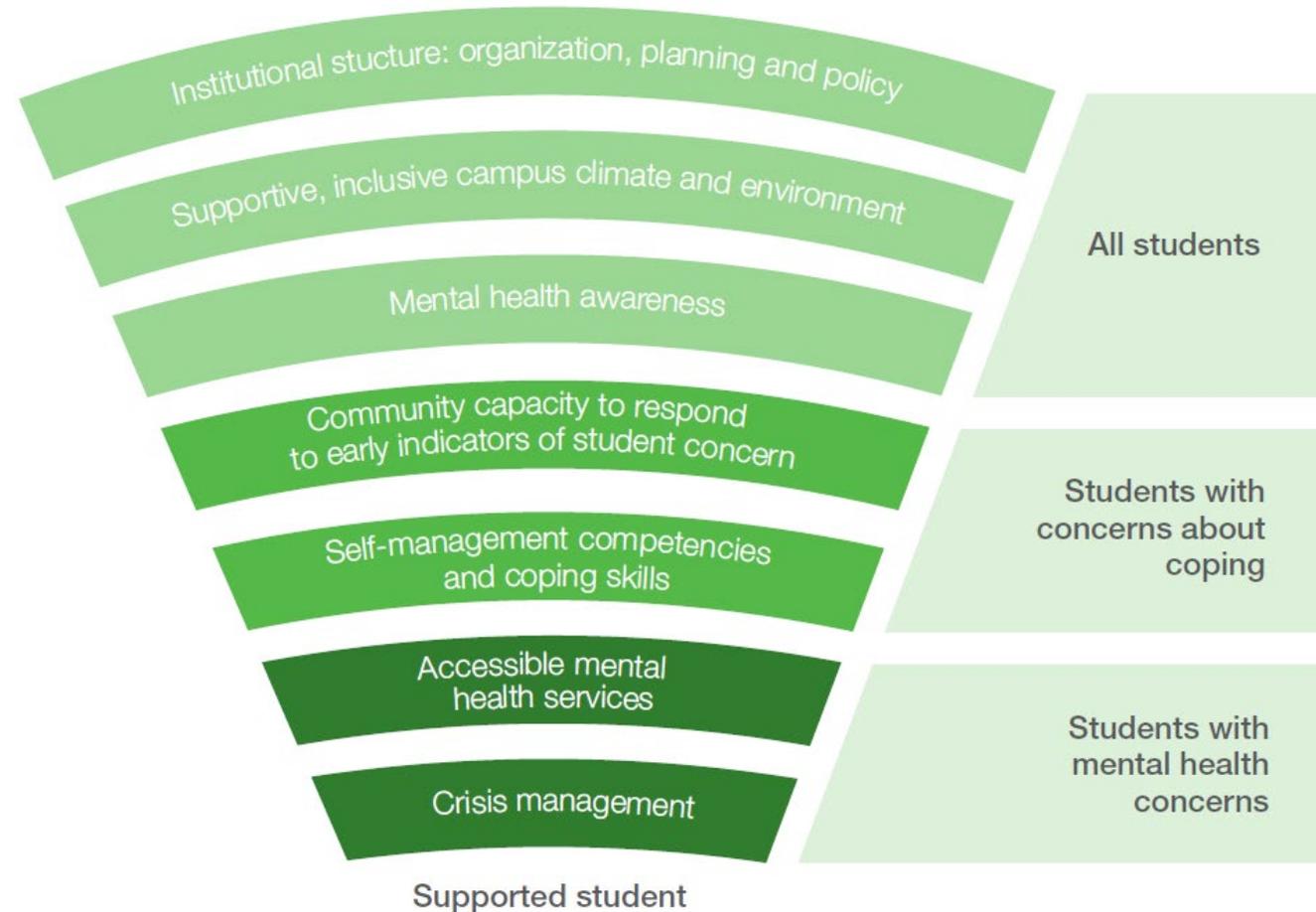
- Post-secondary institution and their services get a bad wrap
- Many students are flourishing/thriving
- Lots of great things happening on our campuses!



CACUSS/CMHA Document (2013)

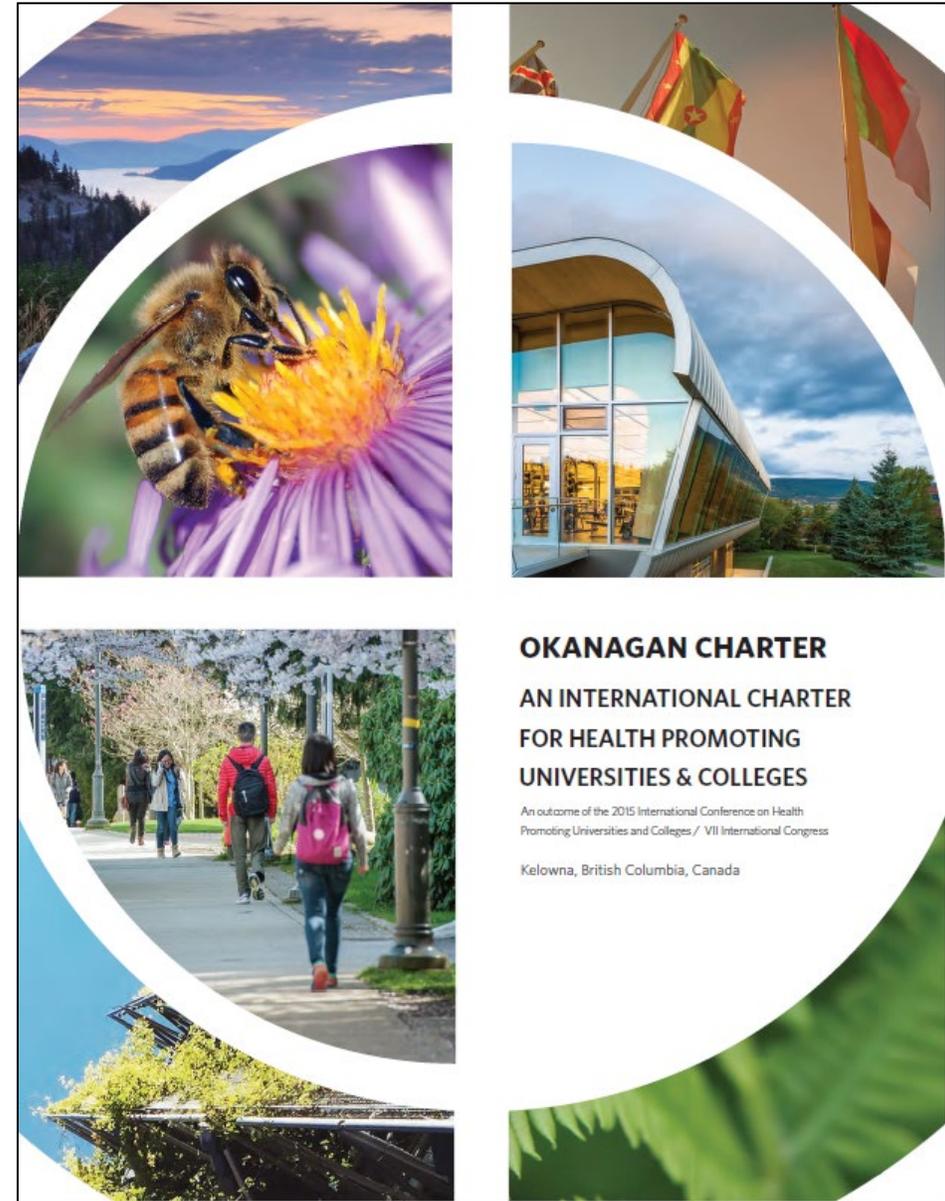
- Post-Secondary Student Mental Health: Guide to a Systemic Approach

Figure 2: Framework for Post-Secondary Student Mental Health



Okanagan Charter (2015)

- Builds on the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion
- Two calls to action for PSIs:
 - “Embed health into all aspects of campus culture, across the administration, operations and academic mandates”
 - “Lead health promotion action and collaboration locally and globally”



Regional, Provincial and National Networks

The Healthy Campus Alberta community is a valuable resource for anyone working on campus or in mental health. Ways to get involved include [attending webinars and summits](#), joining the dialogue through the Community Hub, taking part in training opportunities, arranging a campus visit, and attending community meetings to share and learn with others. To get started and be a part of this supportive community of practice, [sign up for our newsletter](#), [join the online community](#), or [contact us](#) today. We're always happy to chat!

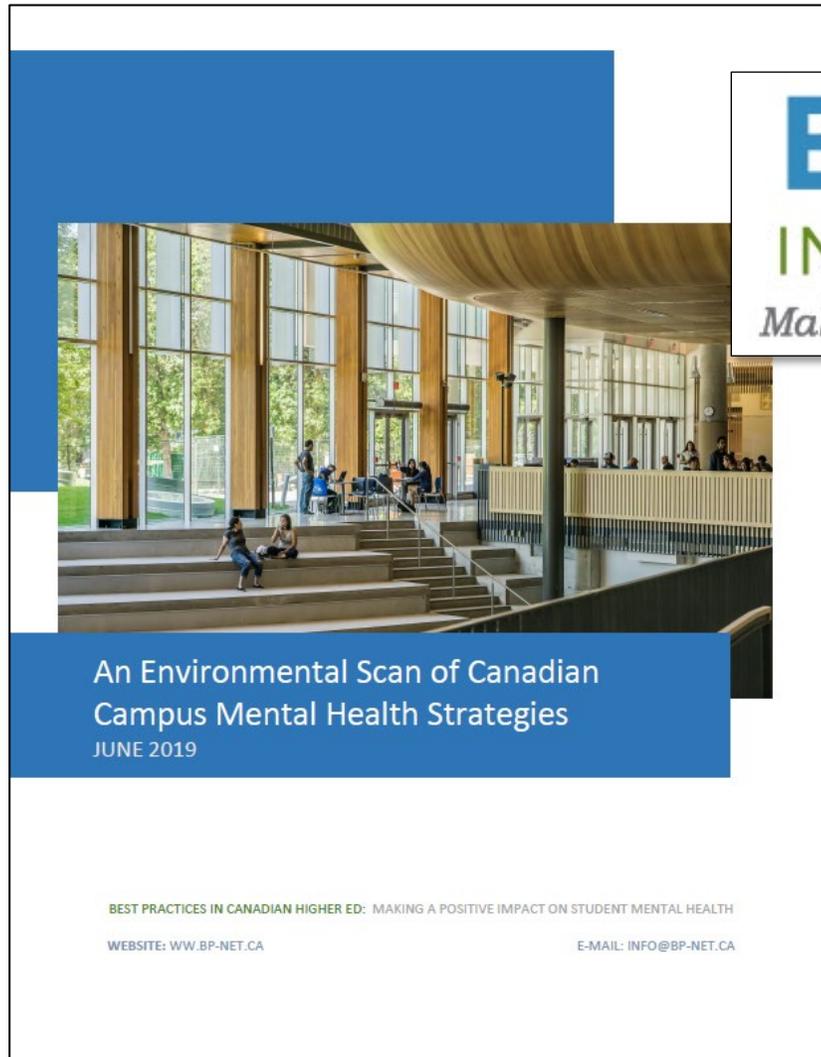
National Standard for Mental Health and Wellbeing for Post-Secondary Students (2020)

- Builds on the Workplace Standard
- Set of voluntary guidelines for post-secondary institutions
 - Improve mental health and wellbeing for students
 - Technical committee
 - Shift culture on campuses
 - Everyone has a role and responsibility
 - Teaching and learning
 - Content
 - Values, principles, definitions, foundational documents and ideas
 - Standards/clauses (i.e., things institutions should be doing)
 - Annexes (i.e., practical resources)



Case Study: UCalgary

Mental Health Strategies in Canada (2019)

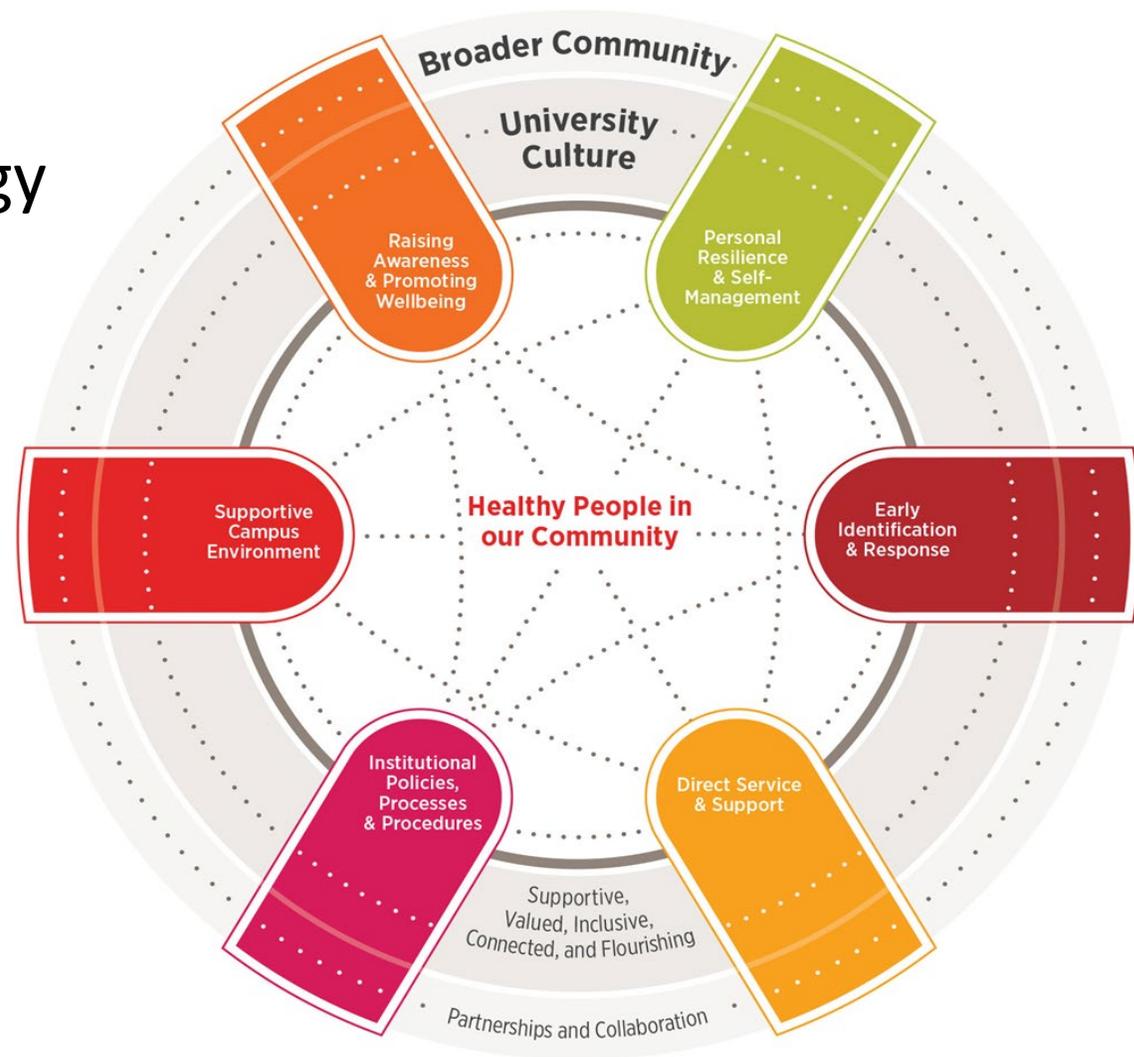


Best Practices
IN CANADIAN HIGHER ED.
Making a positive impact on student mental health.

- Reviewed about 30 strategies
- Various PSIs
- CACUSS/CMHA framework
- Trend towards whole campus approach

UCalgary's CMHS/Community Mental Health & Well-Being Strategy

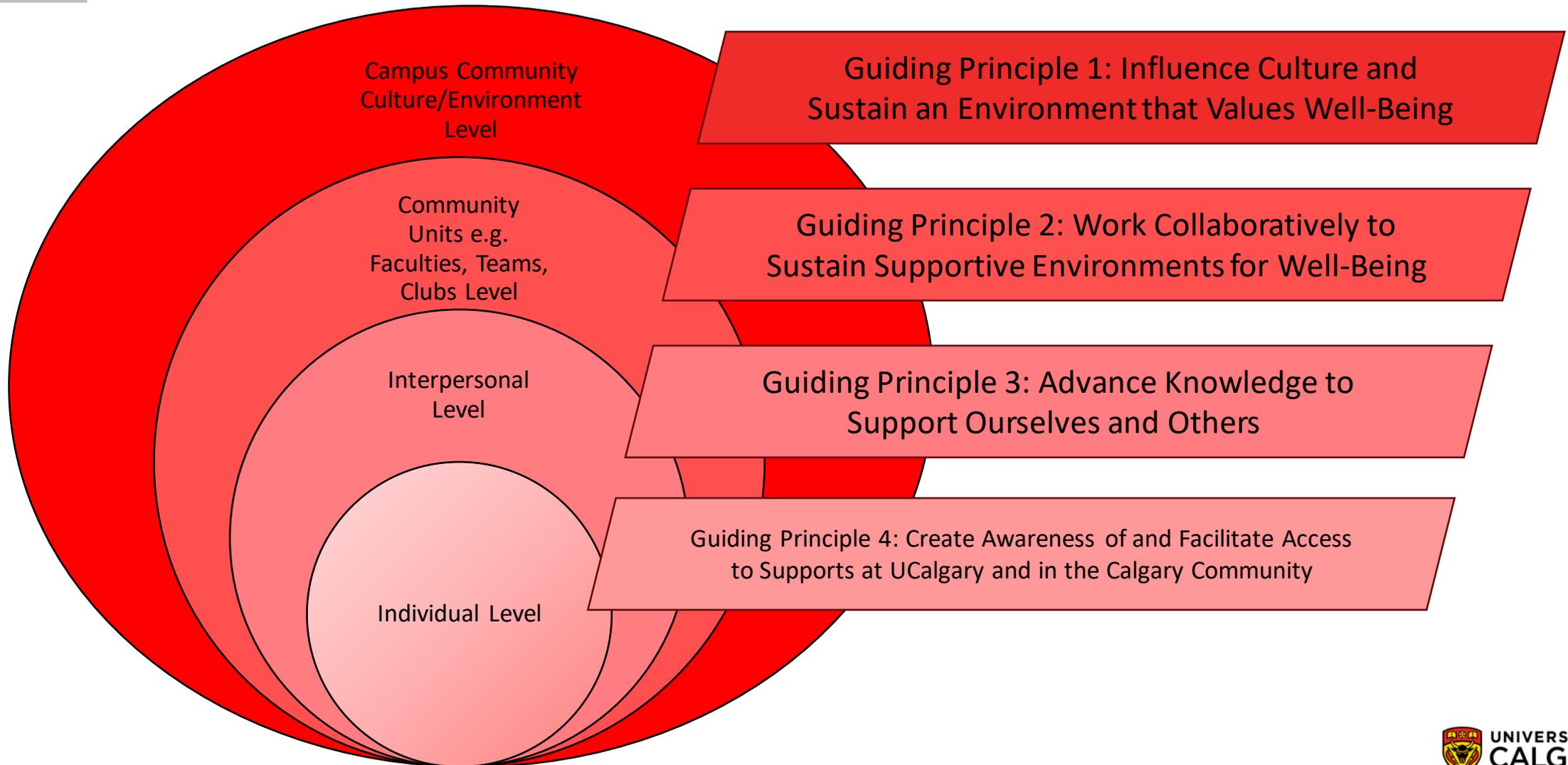
- Campus Mental Health Strategy
 - Launched Dec 2015
 - 6 strategic focus areas
 - 28 recommendations
 - Whole campus approach
 - Under the CMHS
 - Both National Standards



UCalgary's CMHS/Community Mental Health & Well-Being Strategy

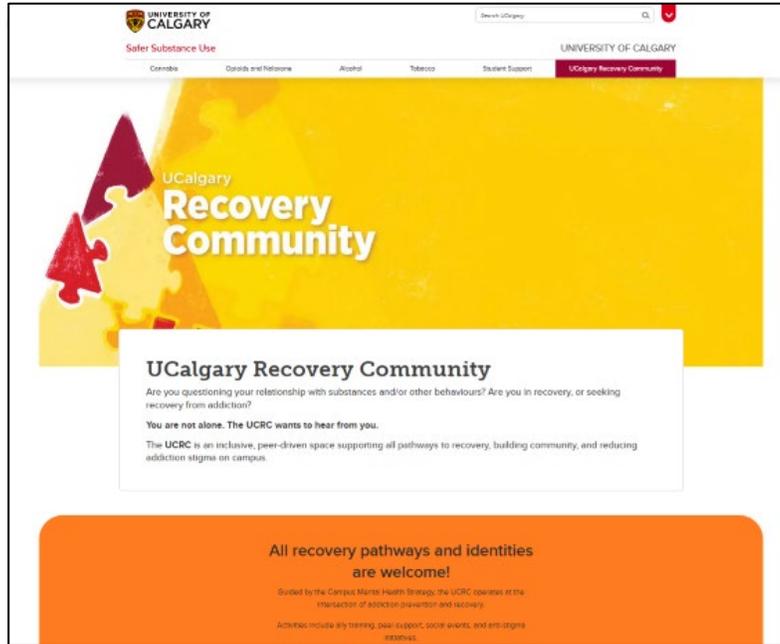
- Community Mental Health & Well-Being Strategy
 - Holistic approach
 - Not just mental health
 - Upstream approach
 - Emphasize (mental) health promotion and (mental) illness prevention
 - Shift thinking about mental health services and supports
 - Shift academic and workplace culture
 - Competition within a caring, kind, supportive environment
 - Relationships

UCalgary's Community Mental Health & Well-Being Strategy

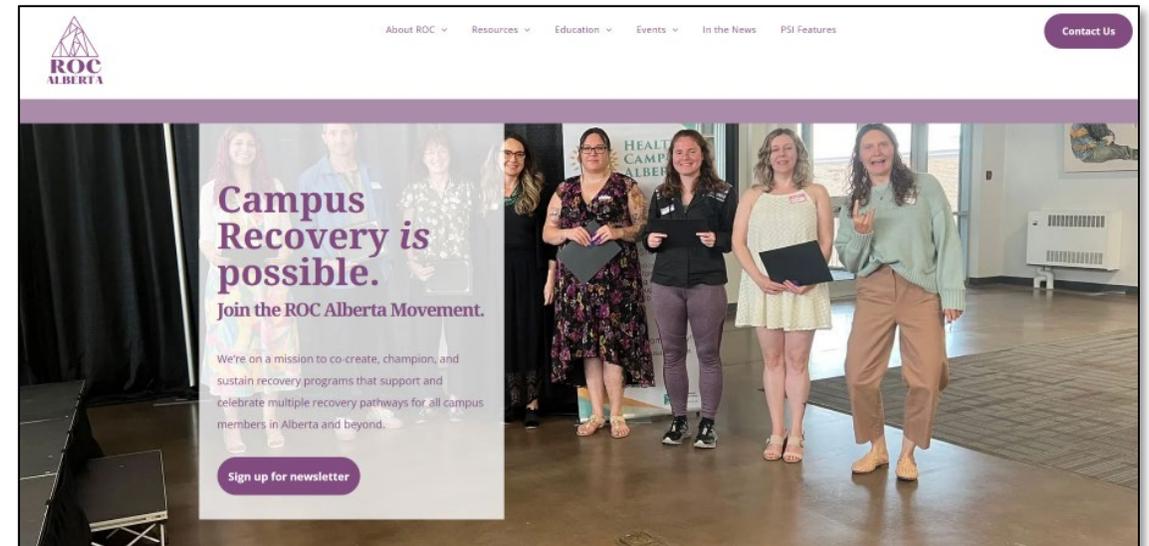




UCalgary Recovery Community/Recovery On Campus



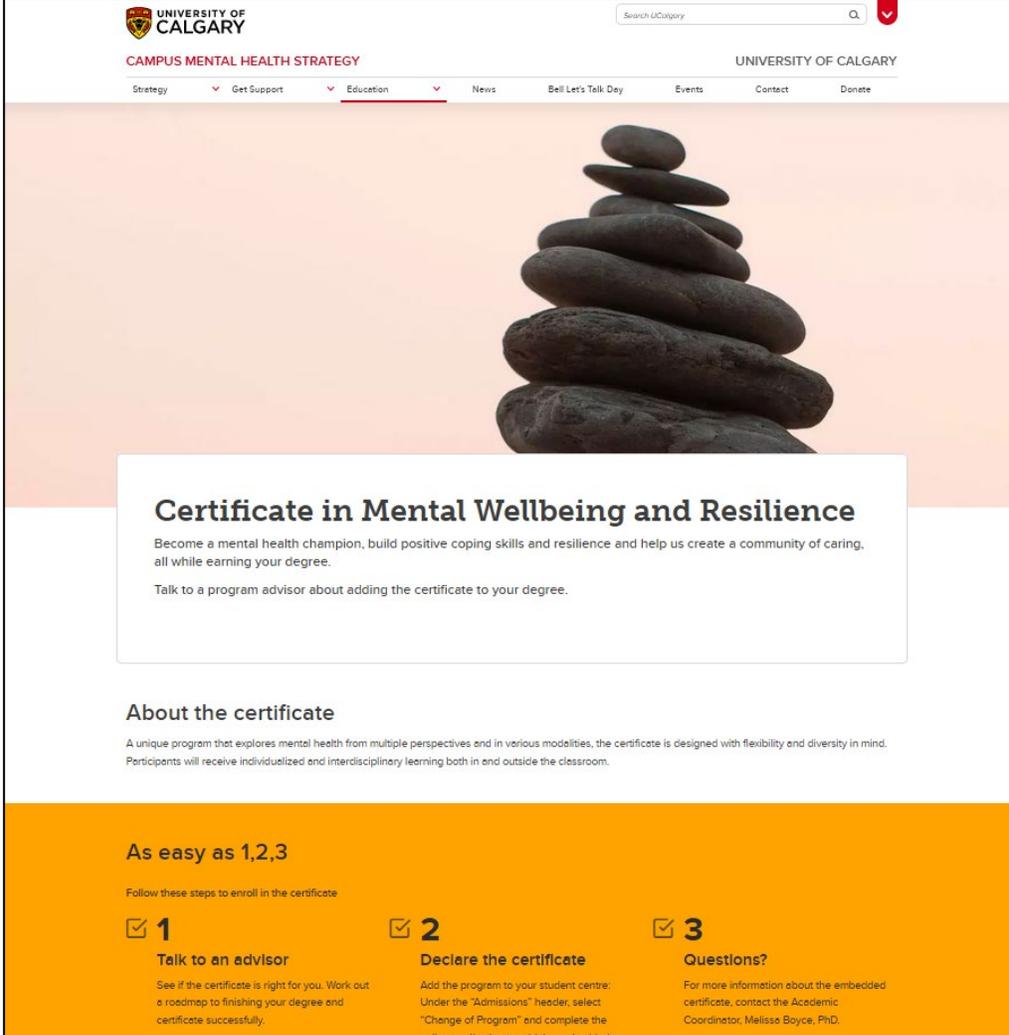
UCRC is an “inclusive, peer-driven, all pathway addiction recovery campus initiative to support individuals with addiction and mental health challenges through a recovery-oriented system of care”



ROC’s mission is to “co-create, champion, and sustain recovery programs that support and celebrate multiple recovery pathways for all campus members in Alberta and beyond”

Embedded Certificate for Mental Wellbeing and Resilience

- First of its kind in North America
- Give students skills to support themselves, others, and be mental health and well-being champions as they go into the community and the workplace
- Program requirements
 - 3 core courses
 - 3 option courses (from ~100)
- Positively evaluated



The screenshot shows the University of Calgary website for the 'Certificate in Mental Wellbeing and Resilience'. The page features a header with the university logo, a search bar, and navigation links for 'CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY' and 'UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY'. A large image of stacked stones is centered on the page. Below the image, a white box contains the title 'Certificate in Mental Wellbeing and Resilience' and a description: 'Become a mental health champion, build positive coping skills and resilience and help us create a community of caring, all while earning your degree. Talk to a program advisor about adding the certificate to your degree.' Below this, a section titled 'About the certificate' explains that the program explores mental health from multiple perspectives and is designed with flexibility and diversity in mind. At the bottom, a yellow section titled 'As easy as 1,2,3' lists three steps: 1. Talk to an advisor, 2. Declare the certificate, and 3. Questions? Each step includes a brief description of the action required.

Certificate in Mental Wellbeing and Resilience
Become a mental health champion, build positive coping skills and resilience and help us create a community of caring, all while earning your degree.
Talk to a program advisor about adding the certificate to your degree.

About the certificate
A unique program that explores mental health from multiple perspectives and in various modalities, the certificate is designed with flexibility and diversity in mind. Participants will receive individualized and interdisciplinary learning both in and outside the classroom.

As easy as 1,2,3
Follow these steps to enroll in the certificate

- 1** **Talk to an advisor**
See if the certificate is right for you. Work out a roadmap to finishing your degree and certificate successfully.
- 2** **Declare the certificate**
Add the program to your student centre. Under the "Admissions" header, select "Change of Program" and complete the online application to add the certificate.
- 3** **Questions?**
For more information about the embedded certificate, contact the Academic Coordinator, Melissa Boyce, PhD.

The Working Mind & The Inquiring Mind



- TWM & TIM PS core components
 - Stigma reduction content
 - “Big 4” skills (positive self talk, SMART goals, visualization, diaphragmatic breathing)
 - Mental Health Continuum Model



- TWM

- Employee (3 hr) and supervisors (full day)
- Workplace videos
- Workplace scenarios



- TIM PS

- Students (3 hr)
- Student videos
- Student-focus scenarios

Supporting Others

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ASSISTING A COLLEAGUE IN DISTRESS

This resource will help you recognize a colleague who is in distress and identify internal and external resources that are available to help.

ASK **SUPPORT** **REFER** **FOLLOW-UP**

Possible indicators of distress:

- Significant low mood with feelings of extreme worry/anxiety, sadness or pain
- Withdrawing from colleagues, family or friends
- Prolonged irritability and/or unpredictable outbursts of anger
- Expresses hopelessness or references suicide, self-harm or harm to others
- Unusual disinterest in or disregard for work with marked changes in concentration

For imminent life-threatening situations, call 911. All other concerns, call Campus Security at 403.220.5333.

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HELPING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

Quick Reference Guide

As a faculty or staff member this resource will help you recognize a student in distress. Helping you to respond with care and concern is a critical factor in supporting a healthy campus community.

ASK **SUPPORT** **REFER** **FOLLOW-UP**

Immediately report the following situations:

- Violent or destructive behaviour
- Immediate safety concern related to suicide thoughts or behaviors
- Medical emergency, including drug or alcohol poisoning
- Aggressive or threatening behaviour with high risk of harm

CAMPUS SECURITY 403.220.5333
CALGARY EMERGENCY SERVICES 911

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
WELLNESS SERVICES

Responding to Students in Distress Training for UCalgary Faculty & Staff

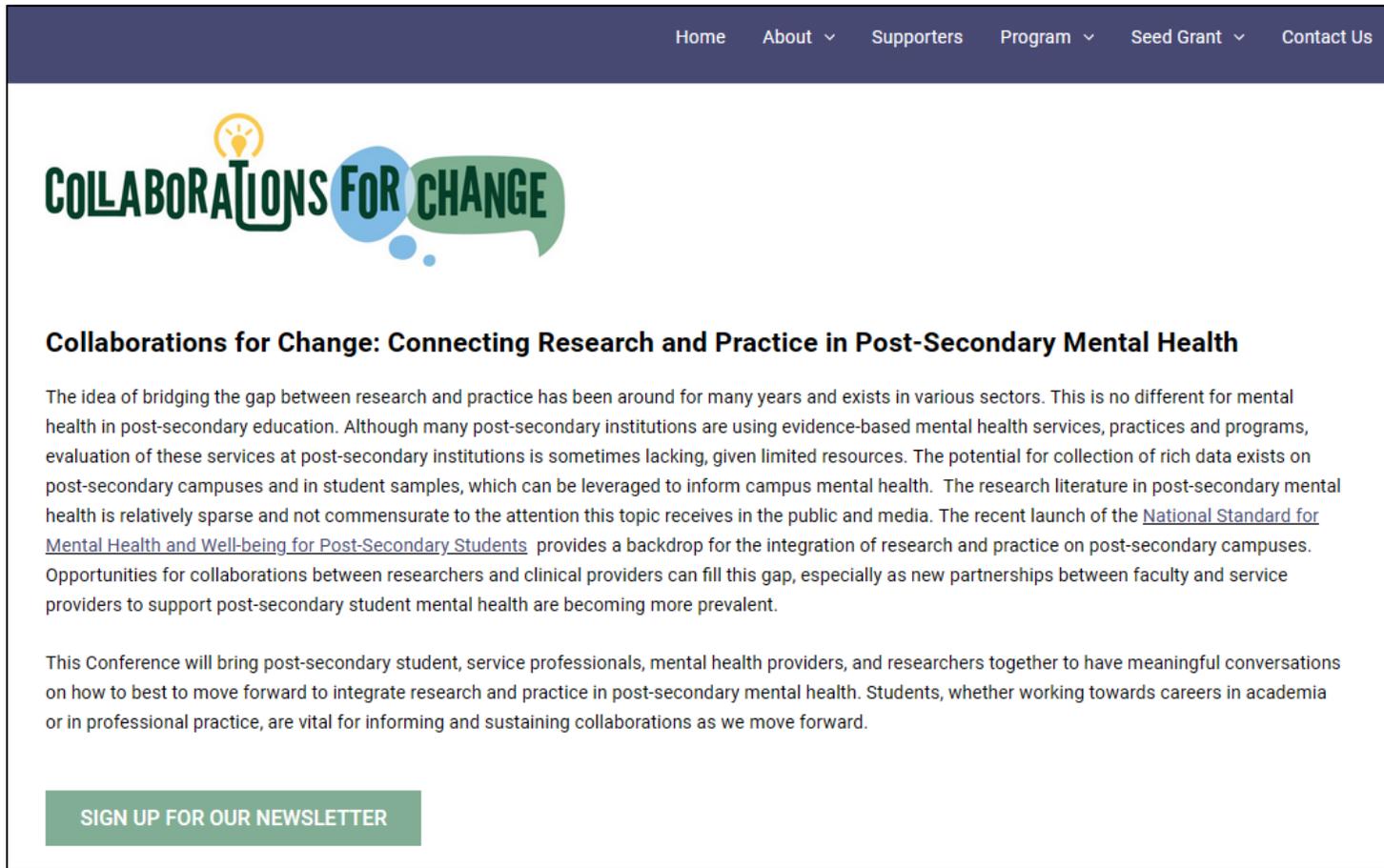
Community Helpers Training

Faculty, in working closely with students, are frequently called upon to respond to student mental health concerns and play a vital role in supporting student wellbeing. At the same time, it can be challenging to know the best ways to help students who are struggling or in distress and these situations can at times be difficult to navigate. This 3-hour training aims to equip UCalgary staff and faculty with skills to respond to student mental health concerns and promote wellbeing, and provides an opportunity for questions and interactive discussion.

Topics that will be covered include:

- Recognizing signs of distress
- Strategies for having supportive conversations
- Navigating and setting boundaries
- On and off Campus Resources
- Strategies for making an effective referral
- Policies and practices that exist at Student Wellness Services and on campus to support students

Research, Practice, and Beyond



Home About ▾ Supporters Program ▾ Seed Grant ▾ Contact Us

COLLABORATIONS FOR CHANGE

Collaborations for Change: Connecting Research and Practice in Post-Secondary Mental Health

The idea of bridging the gap between research and practice has been around for many years and exists in various sectors. This is no different for mental health in post-secondary education. Although many post-secondary institutions are using evidence-based mental health services, practices and programs, evaluation of these services at post-secondary institutions is sometimes lacking, given limited resources. The potential for collection of rich data exists on post-secondary campuses and in student samples, which can be leveraged to inform campus mental health. The research literature in post-secondary mental health is relatively sparse and not commensurate to the attention this topic receives in the public and media. The recent launch of the [National Standard for Mental Health and Well-being for Post-Secondary Students](#) provides a backdrop for the integration of research and practice on post-secondary campuses. Opportunities for collaborations between researchers and clinical providers can fill this gap, especially as new partnerships between faculty and service providers to support post-secondary student mental health are becoming more prevalent.

This Conference will bring post-secondary student, service professionals, mental health providers, and researchers together to have meaningful conversations on how to best to move forward to integrate research and practice in post-secondary mental health. Students, whether working towards careers in academia or in professional practice, are vital for informing and sustaining collaborations as we move forward.

[SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER](#)

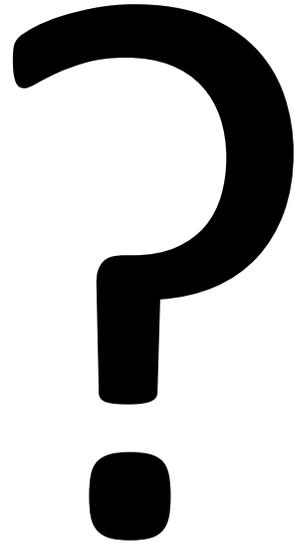
- Collaborations for Change
 - BP Net and UCalgary CMHS co-hosts
 - First national post-secondary mental health conference
- Centre of Excellent/Research and Knowledge Hub
 - CMHS & Mathison Centre

Discussion/Q&A

Some Practical Things...

- What are practical ways we can all support student mental health and wellbeing on post-secondary campuses?

Questions



Thank you

Andrew Szeto
aszeto@ucalgary.ca
ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth



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Support for students

- [Student Wellness Services](#) provides a broad range of support including counselling, support advising, peer navigation, workshops and more.
- Looking to help others or establish your own effective strategies to maintain positive mental health? Register for a [workshop](#) or a [training](#) through [Student Wellness Services](#).
- Concerned about another student? E-mail the Student at Risk team at sar@ucalgary.ca. Learn more about responding to distress [here](#).
- **For more mental health supports and resources visit:**
ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/get-support

Support for faculty, staff and postdocs

- UCalgary's [mental health consultant](#) offers a broad range of support and can connect you with mental health resources on and off campus. For benefit-eligible faculty and staff, as well as all postdocs, the [Employee and Family Assistance Plan](#) is available.
- UCalgary faculty and staff have access to mental health [trainings](#) at no cost. Take a scheduled [The Working Mind](#) training or have a UCalgary facilitator offer it at your next development day.
- Many of the mental health and wellbeing resources can be found at the [Wellbeing and Worklife](#) website.

- **For more mental health supports and resources visit:**
[**www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/get-support**](http://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/get-support)

Local and national crisis and distress resources available to all

- For local 24/7 mental health support, call [Distress Centre](tel:403-266-4357) at 403-266-4357 to speak with a highly trained volunteer who can connect you to further resources.
- For Canadians aged 5-29, [Kids Help Phone](tel:1-800-668-6868) operators are professional counsellors, call 1-800-668-6868 to access or text CONNECT to 686868. To access the support you need in the country you reside in, visit the [Child Helpline International website](https://www.childhelplineinternational.org).
- [Alberta Mental Health Help Line](tel:1-877-303-2642) is a confidential 24/7 service that provides support, information and referrals to Albertans experiencing mental health concerns. Call 1-877-303-2642 (toll free) to access.
- [Wood's Homes Community Support](https://www.woodshomes.ca) has call and text services, visit [their website](#) for more information for how to connect to a trainee counsellor or social worker.
- If you are having thoughts of suicide, call or text [9-8-8](tel:9-8-8), where you will be connected with responder who will listen to you, support you, and keep you safe.
- For Indigenous peoples, [Hope for Wellness Helpline](tel:1-855-242-3310) is operated 24/7 by experienced and culturally sensitive counsellors. Call 1-855-242-3310 to be connected or [chat online](#).
- **For this list and other resources, including substance use and addiction, sexual or gender-based violence, visit:**
www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/get-support

Additional community resources

- **Wellness Together Canada** offers support for mental health and/or substance use. Connect with a trained counsellor, free of charge. For adult phone counselling call 1-866-585-0445. For youth counselling, supported through Kids Help Phone, call 1-888-668-6810. If you're unsure of what you need, call 1-866-585-0445 to reach a program navigator.
- **Community Connect YYC** connects Calgary's communities with affordable and barrier-free access to in-person, phone or video counselling sessions. **Learn more**.
- **For this list and other resources, including substance use and addiction, sexual or gender-based violence, visit:**
www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/get-support