# Table of Contents

1. **Overview**

2. About Us

3. Get Involved

4. What is a Healthy Campus Community?

5. Areas of Action

6. **Current Initiatives**
   
   6. Classroom Well-being Project
   
   7. Champions for a Healthy Campus Community
   
   8. Research Partnership: Bringing Theory to Practice
   
   9. Research Partnership: Guarding Minds at Work: A University Context

10. **Student Health Advocacy Committee (SHAC)**

11. **Resources**

12. Healthy Campus Community Handout

13. Classroom Well-being Handout

14. Classroom Well-being: Examples from SFU

15. Champions for a Healthy Campus Community: Description

16. Bringing Theory to Practice: Research Grant Proposal

17. Guarding Minds at Work: A University Context - Research Description

18. SHAC: Photovoice Project Examples
OVERVIEW

About Us
Get Involved
What is a Healthy Campus Community?
Areas of Action
For more than two years the Health Promotion team, within Student Services at SFU, has been working with a socio-ecological lens or ‘settings approach’ to create a healthy campus community. This is based on a growing need for tools and programs that move towards improving and understanding contextual and settings based impacts on student well-being in higher education settings.

This innovative approach to Health Promotion supports SFU’s Strategic Vision as an Engaged University that connects students, research and community. A Healthy Campus Community provides students with the skills and experiences they need to succeed in an ever changing and challenging world including resilience, collaboration and civic engagement. This work is also strategically aligned with the Academic Plan, and is an integral component of SFU’s Mental Health Strategy.

ABOUT US

How can you impact the health of your campus community? There are many projects already happening at SFU that support a healthy campus community. Contact us to share your success stories or learn how you can get involved.

health_promo@sfu.ca
http://www.sfu.ca/healthycampuscommunity
What is a Healthy Campus Community?

A Healthy Campus Community enhances health and well-being and enables all individuals and their communities to achieve their full potential. This can be achieved through collaborative and cross-campus action.

This is a World Health Organization supported approach which emphasizes the importance of moving beyond a health education model of health promotion, to actually understanding how systemic changes within a setting can positively impact health and well-being.

What do we mean by health & well-being?
Health & well-being are broad, holistic and positive states that include physical, mental and social dimensions. Being healthy is about much more than being free of illness or disease. Health & well-being are resources that enable individuals to thrive and reach their full potential.

Why is it important?
Health and well-being are essential for student success, engagement and retention and as such, are integral to the core business of SFU.

Areas of Action

Where can we make a difference?

- Learning & Working Environments
- Services & Supports
- Physical Spaces
- Personal Growth & Development
- Social Interaction & Community Engagement
- Campus Policies
“The challenge for higher education institutions is to address the dimensions of personal and collective well-being simultaneously, through both what they do and the way in which they do it.”

2 CURRENT INITIATIVES

Classroom Well-being Project
Champions for a Healthy Campus Community
Research Partnership: Bringing Theory to Practice
Research Partnership: Guarding Minds at Work: A University Context
Student Health Advocacy Committee (SHAC)
Partnering with the SFU Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC), fostering well-being in the classroom is an important focus in creating a healthy campus community. Facilitated by the Health Promotion team and featuring a panel of SFU instructors, a session was included at the 2012 TLC Symposium: Leading change @ SFU. This session offered perspectives on the classroom as an important setting to foster well-being. The Teaching and Learning Centre has partnered with SFU Health Promotion to further this initiative through various channels.

- A session entitled “Creating Community in the Classroom” was offered in partnership with International Services for Students at the Fall Teaching Assistant Training Day.

- A Health Promotion Specialist was a panelist for New Graduate Supervisor Orientation.

- A resource on Classroom Wellbeing was developed and included in new faculty orientation binders along with a Healthy Campus Community resource. [See Resources section].

- A website with instructor resources, including teaching practices which contribute to well-being, is currently in development.

- Model instructors are being interviewed with profiles developed to feature tangible, SFU specific examples to be added to the website (see resources section for some specific examples).

- A "Think Tank" is planned for Spring 2013 which will help facilitate instructor-to-instructor sharing about teaching practices that enhance well-being.

- Future plans also include working with the TSSU to engage Teaching Assistants in this initiative.
Everyone plays a role in making SFU a healthy and supportive place and there is good work happening throughout SFU’s three campuses. Following nominations for initiatives on campus which enhance student well-being, the 2012 Champions for a Healthy Campus Community are Career and Volunteer Services and Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) First-Year Learning Communities. These ‘2012 Champions for a Healthy Campus Community’ will be recognized at a lunch reception this fall with videos which showcase their contribution. This will be followed by a full media launch, including a website to showcase the videos, to increase awareness about the concept of a healthy campus community at SFU and the role that different campus community members can play.

See the resources section for a detailed article on each of the Champions for a Healthy Campus Community.

This initiative is sponsored in part through Campus Capacity Development grants which are administered by Healthy Minds/Healthy Campuses and funded by the BC Ministry of Health.
Part of creating a healthy campus community includes investigating how learning environments can positively impact well-being. With a campus research partner (David Zandvliet in the Faculty of Environment), the SFU Health Promotion team has been successful in attaining a $11,000 research grant from the American Association of Colleges and Universities Bringing Theory to Practice program. A participatory action research design is proposed to investigate how classroom environments at the post-secondary level can be harnessed to enhance student well-being, engaged learning and civic development. Further development of resources that will assist instructors in supporting student well-being are also part of this collaborative research project.

For funding opportunities see:
http://www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/fundingopportunities.cfm
The Health Promotion team is partnering with researchers in the Faculty of Health Sciences and a Health Science honours student to amend the Guarding Minds at Work (GM@W) survey tool so that it can be validated for a university population. This tool has successfully been utilized within the workplace settings to determine how psychosocial risk factors (such as a sense of connectedness and autonomy) are linked to the mental health and well-being of employees. The ‘Guarding Minds @ Work: A University Context’ survey tool would enable better understanding of the psychosocial factors within the university context that are impacting student well-being in order to create new programs and approaches to address these determinants of health. This tool also has the capacity to influence the success of individuals within the organization as well as the productivity and success of the organization as a whole.

For more information about Guarding Minds @ Work visit http://www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/info/index
S.H.A.C.
Student Health Advocacy Committee

Following the success of the inaugural SHAC in 2011-2012, SFU Health Promotion has recruited another small group of engaged and dedicated students to investigate how the systems on campus can enhance or hinder well-being of SFU students. The 2011/2012 group used Photovoice as a means to investigate the barriers and supports to well-being. This year’s group will be focusing on social connectedness and its impact on student well-being. The students, supported by the Health Promotion team, are encouraged to work independently as well as collaboratively to identify priorities in this area.

See the resources section for examples from the Photovoice Project.
3 RESOURCES

Healthy Campus Community Handout
Classroom Well-being Handout
Classroom Well-being: Examples from SFU
Champions for a Healthy Campus Community Articles
Bringing Theory to Practice: Research Grant Proposal
Guarding Minds at Work University Experience Survey Tool
SHAC: Photovoice Project Examples
“Our capacity to keep students engaged hinges on the establishment of a healthy, caring environment which enables individuals to find a niche in the social and intellectual communities of the institution.”

-Bergen-Cico & Bylander, 2012, p.103
What is a Healthy Campus Community?
A Healthy Campus Community is one where the people, processes and spaces contribute to well-being and success for all. It is the words people speak; decisions that are made; actions that are taken, and the culture and systems that are created. It involves everyone.

What do we mean by health & well-being?
Health is viewed as a “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease” (WHO, 2011). Health and well-being are resources that enable individuals to thrive and reach their full potential.

Why is it important?
Post-secondary Institutions are increasingly expected to provide students with the experiences and skills they need to succeed in a complex and ever-changing world. This means fostering students who are not just educated, but are resilient, creative, collaborative and engaged citizens. Health and well-being are essential for student success, engagement and retention and as such, are integral to the core business of SFU.
About this Initiative
The Healthy Campus Community Initiative represents a strategic shift in how Health Promotion is practiced at SFU. It is based on the World Health Organization (WHO) Healthy University Framework which involves working collaboratively to create campus environments that positively influence the health and well-being of students, staff and faculty. This innovative approach has the potential to positively impact health and well-being to a greater extent than traditional health education initiatives targeting individual behaviors. It is an integral component of SFU’s Mental Health Strategy, supports the vision of an Engaged University and is aligned with the Academic Plan.

It takes a whole campus

“Health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play and love” (WHO, 1986).

What are the potential positive impacts?

Community
- Enhanced Learning
- Professional Development
- Success & Achievement
- Improved Health & Well-being
- Collaborative Citizens

Students
- Staff/Faculty
- Collaborative Citizens
- Enhanced Learning
- Professional Development
- Success & Achievement
- Improved Health & Well-being
- Collaborative Citizens

Have Questions?
Contact Health Promotion at Health and Counselling Services
Phone: 778.782.4674
E-mail: health_promo@sfu.ca

“Our capacity to keep students engaged hinges on the establishment of a healthy, caring environment which enables individuals to find a niche in the social and intellectual communities of the institution.”

-Bergen-Cico & Bylander, 2012 p. 103

“The challenge for higher education institutions is to address the dimensions of personal and collective well-being simultaneously, through both what they do and the way in which they do it.”

-New Economics Foundation, 2008 p. 12
Classroom Wellbeing

Literature suggests that instructors and the classroom setting can be central to student well-being. Positive well-being has important implications for learning and student success, as well as for physical, social and psychological health.

The SFU Health Promotion team and the Teaching and Learning Centre have partnered on an initiative to foster well-being in the classroom. The purpose is to recognize the important impact the classroom setting can have on student well-being and to highlight teaching practices that enhance well-being in the classroom.

How can we foster well-being in the classroom?
By creating...
- Opportunities for social interaction and experiential learning
- A positive classroom culture and sense of community
- Supportive physical spaces

By providing students with...
- A degree of control, flexibility and autonomy
- An enjoyable experience
- A healthy level of challenge
- An education for ‘life’ (educating the whole person, making learning applicable to life)

Exactly how do we put this into action?
Select examples from SFU instructors:

Stephen Brown is a Senior Lecturer within the department of Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology. He believes that student well-being can be impacted by both content of his courses and the environment he sets in the classroom.

Dr. Kate Tairyan is a Senior Lecturer within the Faculty of Health Sciences. She believes that fostering positive, enjoyable and engaged learning experiences within her classroom contributes to student well-being.

Dr. Rochelle Tucker is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences. She has developed a set of teaching strategies that help students become connected to one another – even within her large first year health science classes with 200 students or more.

For more information, detailed examples from SFU instructors, and a list of teaching practices that can enhance student well-being visit: http://students.sfu.ca/health/classroom-wellbeing.html

Your input:
Do you foster well-being in the classroom or have additional ideas on how to enhance student well-being in the classroom? Perhaps you know of other SFU instructors who are creating supportive classrooms for student well-being? We’d like to hear from you, please contact us: health_promo@sfu.ca
How does the classroom impact well-being?
There are a variety of ways through which the classroom setting can enhance health and well-being. For example, the classroom setting and curriculum can impact the level of stress that students feel, the degree to which they feel connected to others and the extent to which they feel meaningfully engaged in their university experience.

What are the potential outcomes of fostering well-being in the classroom?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Instructors</th>
<th>For Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Increased student engagement and participation</td>
<td>- Health and well-being are positively correlated with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>academic success and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Student satisfaction and positive course evaluations</td>
<td>- Well-being has a positive influence on retention and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the student experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Enhanced learning experiences in your classroom</td>
<td>- Improved health and well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reduced student demands on instructor time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Positive impacts on your own well-being</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This initiative is part of a broader strategy to build a healthier campus community at SFU, visit http://students.sfu.ca/health/healthy-campus-community.html for more information.

Select References
Examples from SFU

Based on student recommendations we have connected with instructors who foster well-being in their classrooms. We have compiled the feature profiles below to recognize these individuals and to provide tangible examples for others. There is good work happening across SFU classrooms to support student well-being. The below list is not comprehensive. We continue to add new profiles and look to the SFU community to identify faculty members who prioritize and recognize student well-being in the classroom.

“The college experience poses significant and complex challenges to student well-being. Traditionally, these challenges have been addressed in residential halls, campus clinics, and counseling centers - everywhere but the classroom.”  -Georgetown University, 2011 p.3

**Mr. Brown**

Mr. Brown is a Senior Lecturer within the department of Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology. He believes that student well-being can be impacted by both content of his courses and the environment he sets in the classroom.

**Examples of well-being strategies employed in the classroom:**
- Uses a journal exercise to gain feedback and learn how students are managing in his course.
- Ensures tables and chairs are set in a way that facilitates discussion.
- Uses mindfulness activities in class.

**Dr. Didicher**

Dr. Didicher is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English who strongly believes in “learning centered teaching”. When preparing for a class, she tries to think “what is good for the students” in terms of their learning. Many of the strategies she uses are also good for student well-being.

**Examples of well-being strategies employed in the classroom:**
- Awards participation points for a variety of participation activities so that all students feel included.
- Enhances students’ sense of autonomy by using contractual evaluations, in which students choose their assignments, the weighting of the assignments, and the due dates.
### Dr. Fouladi

Dr. Fouladi is an Associate Professor within the Faculty of Psychology who is a consistent advocate for student well-being. She creates an environment that is supportive of student well-being by making herself available to students and letting them know that she cares.

**Examples of well-being strategies employed in the classroom:**
- Organizes opportunities for students to participate in group events and social activities.
- Tells students that she cares about them as individuals.
- Acknowledges student stress and anxiety and tries to provide students with resources to work through these.

### Dr. Lechner

Dr. Lechner is the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS). He currently teaches Health Sciences 321 and 100 and although he may not explicitly aim to impact student health and well-being, his students say he is doing many things that support their well-being.

**Examples of well-being strategies employed in the classroom:**
- Provides a personality assessment handout that helps students think about their own strengths and values and the different strengths and values that diverse individuals bring to a group.
- Continuously responds to feedback provided by students through comment boxes.

“Our capacity to keep students engaged hinges on the establishment of a healthy, caring environment which enables individuals to find a niche in the social and intellectual communities of the institution.”

- Bergen-Cio & Bylander, 2012 p.103

### Dr. Tairyan

Dr. Tairyan is a Senior Lecturer within the Faculty of Health Science. She believes that fostering positive, enjoyable and engaged learning experiences within her classroom contributes to student well-being.

**Examples of well-being strategies employed in the classroom:**
- Kate makes herself approachable and relatable for students. For example, she openly shares about her own academic and career path. She also provides students with her skype ID and holds skype office hours with them.
- Provides students an opportunity to work with professionals in their field. Uses experiential education (“real life”) projects.

### Dr. Tucker

Dr. Tucker is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS). She has developed a set of teaching strategies that help students become connected to one another—even within her large first year Health Science classes (classes of 200 students or more).

**Examples of well-being strategies employed in the classroom:**
- Continually reminds students about the value of working collaboratively, and provides opportunities for students to form friendships in class.
- Uses an online forum to encourage students to form study groups.
- By providing challenging assignments and encouraging students to work together, Rochelle finds students are more likely to form friendships.
First-Year Learning Communities

First-Year Learning Communities (FLCs) are positively impacting the health of our campus community. A FLC is a group of students in the same area of study, who are enrolled in core courses and who meet regularly outside class time to take part in academic, developmental and social activities. Developed by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) at Surrey, FLCs were launched in September 2011 to expand the range of first-year experience options for new students at the Surrey campus.

FLCs support the concept of a healthy campus community by focusing on the opportunity to meet classmates, form meaningful friendships as well as develop academic and personal skills. FLCs encourage students to feel part of a thriving and supportive community. This is in line with viewing health and well-being as broad, holistic and positive states that include physical, mental and social dimensions.

SFU’s FASS has followed the footsteps of other world-class universities that developed FLCs in a bid to enhance the first-year experience, as well as improve student retention and engagement. In addition to core courses taken over the first fall and spring semesters, FLC students meaningfully connect with one another through weekly group meetings facilitated by trained peer mentors, senior SFU students in third year or beyond. This positive learning and working environment fosters resilience, academic success and well-being.

The transition into university often presents challenges for student health and well-being. “First-year students negotiate an entirely new educational setting after five years in high school, dealing with issues such as study-work-life balance, confusion about course selection, new social circles, uncertainty about where to get help and so much more,” says May Doerksen, FLC advisor. “Research has shown that making this transition successfully increases the odds of academic success for students as well as overall satisfaction with university studies. Our FLCs aim to do just that.”

The university classroom setting and the Faculty culture can significantly affect student well-being. It can impact the level of stress that students feel and ways they cope with that stress, the degree to which they feel connected to others and the extent to which they feel meaningfully engaged in their university experience. All of these are important contributors to a student’s overall health and well-being. FLCs also introduce students to various campus resources, opportunities as well as the culture of SFU Surrey and the campus community, playing an important role in smooth student transition to university.

Student feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. “My year in the Global Issues FLC was the best remedy for my first-year anxieties!” Renita Bangert, an FLC alumna, comments. “It opened my eyes to the wide range of resources at SFU, reassured me that I didn't have to rush into a major, got me thinking about building exchange and Coop into my academic career, and gave me a chance to make some fantastic friends. From the great lineup of courses to the weekly workshops and presentations to our incredibly helpful mentor and advisor, this FLC has changed my university experience for the better.”

Everyone plays a role in building a Healthy Campus Community at SFU. Congratulations to all involved in the First-Year Learning Communities for contributing to the well-being of first year students.
Career and Volunteer Services

Career and Volunteer Services are champions in creating a healthy campus community. They have shifted their way of working to go well beyond a traditional approach of simply helping students get a job or volunteer opportunity to instead focus on the holistic and complex concept of career and life exploration. This approach encourages students to think holistically about their future, including the personal and social dimensions that will allow them to thrive as people.

The new approach taken by Career and Volunteer Services impacts students' well-being by normalizing and helping positively reframe feelings of indecision and pressures to make the ‘right decision’ about their future academic and career paths. This can help reduce the insecurity, stress and anxiety associated with career discovery. The staff are helping students focus on their strengths instead of weaknesses and supporting students to view mistakes as powerful learning opportunities. This approach creates a positive focus, helps to build resilience and optimistic feelings about the future and thus supports overall well-being.

The change in philosophical approach and associated organizational changes that Career and Volunteer Services has undertaken are commendable. Impacting well-being often requires structural and cultural change, which can be challenging to carry out but extremely impactful. In addition, this approach helps to engage and connect students with campus opportunities that relate to their career and life development. Being involved on campus can help students build social connections, feel that they are making a contribution and experience a sense of community which are all also positive impacts on well-being.

In response to what others can do to help create a healthy campus for SFU, David Lindskoog, Career Services Advisor, noted, “Think of the bigger picture. Try to give students a long lasting message. It is not cultivating an attitude of ‘I have to be a great success’. It is encouraging them to think about ‘what does success mean to you’”.

Everyone plays a role in making SFU a healthy and supportive campus community, congratulations to the staff at Career and Volunteer Services for making changes that will positively contribute to student well-being.
Fostering Student Well-being and Engaged Learning through Supportive Classroom Settings
Program Development Grant Proposal
Bringing Theory to Practice

This project is a collaborative initiative between David Zandvliet, the Institute for Environmental Learning at Simon Fraser University and the Health Promotion Unit within Health and Counselling Services at Simon Fraser University.

Dr. David Zandvliet: Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Director, Institute for Environmental Education, dbz@sfu.ca
SFU Health Promotion: please contact health_promo@sfu.ca

Purpose of the Project
The purpose of this project is twofold:

1. **Research Component:** To understand how classroom environments within higher education settings can be harnessed for the enhancement of student well-being, engaged learning and civic engagement.

2. **Program Development Component:** To build on a current Health and Counselling Services initiative that aims to foster well-being in the classroom. This will include the development of an online resource for instructors, and the creation of a community of practice in order to provide instructors with strategies and tools to create classroom contexts that support student well-being.

This project will therefore contain both a research and a practice component and will support both the advancement of new knowledge as well as improved practice.

Supporting Institutional Priorities and BTtoP Objectives
This work supports Simon Fraser University’s recent vision of becoming Canada’s Engaged University (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2H_GvkWomuo) which emphasizes the importance of creating experiences for students that will not only prepare them academically but will also prepare them “for life in an ever changing and challenging world” (Envision SFU, 2012). This project will help us to understand how classroom environments can contribute to engagement in addition to well-being and learning outcomes. We will be applying research expertise and student services expertise to understand how classroom environments can contribute to student well-being, student engagement and learning outcomes. This supports the BTtoP objectives of understanding the interrelationship of student well-being and engaged learning. It also provides an opportunity to support the development of the “whole student” within a higher education setting.

Research Component: Approach
The proposed research is at once ecological and holistic in its approach. The strength of the methodology lies in examining a wide range of learning and well-being outcomes as well as psychosocial factors and community contexts that together make up the whole learning environment and therefore the true context for the planned evaluation strategies. Also, it employs a wide variety of methodologies to accomplish this including: questionnaires, case study, observation and interview techniques. The project would build gradually during each year with surveys conducted during the first year, followed by case studies of exemplary settings (identified by the surveys) in the second. An additional year would extend the case studies while focusing on hypothesis testing, and the development and implementation of pedagogical interventions with paired objectives of both improving the learning environment in these settings and providing non-formal educators with data on which to base further program decisions. The research will also make a unique contribution to knowledge about environmental learning in that the combination of quantitative and qualitative data will provide grounds to elaborate and specify links between psychosocial learning environment factors that may ultimate influence the attainment and retention of learning outcomes and student well-being.

Research Questions
This study will investigate several linked research questions, focused at multiple levels: the individual (factors related to teaching and learning outcomes as well as student well-being outcomes),
the university classroom (factors related to the collective, classroom learning environment), and the community (factors related to program implementation in specific contexts and the influence of local conditions). This multilevel view reflects an ecological framework in that each successive set of research questions broadens the context of the inquiry and provides another layer of description about the entire system.

Teaching and Learning: Given the overall pedagogical intent for various educational strategies, to what extent are stated cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural outcomes met? Do differences in program implementation across classrooms or faculties enable or constrain this intent? For example, do programs of longer duration or specific approaches more productively influence learning outcomes than other models?

Student Well-being: Given what we know about the potential impact of learning environments on student well-being, this study will explore what aspects of the learning environment impact student well-being outcomes. It will also explore what associations exist between well-being outcomes and learning outcomes within higher education settings.

Learning Environments: How is the psychosocial environment in higher education perceived by participating students, and (further) how are these perceptions associated with the various types of learning outcomes and well-being outcomes? Are there differences between the different implementation models observed? For example, are learning environments perceived more favourably in classroom-based, field-based or community-based settings?

Community Environments: Are environmental education program implementation models implemented as designed? Which professional/cultural/geographical factors (in participating communities) influence and enhance the implementation of the various strategies? What are differences among the community settings studied and the implementations observed?

Anticipated Outcomes
1. **Research Component**: Enhanced understanding of how classroom environments can contribute to student well-being, engaged learning and civic development in higher education.
2. **Program Development Component**: The development and uptake of the “fostering well-being in the classroom” online resource and subsequent benefits to student well-being.

Evaluation and Subsequent Action Steps
1. **Research Component**: Outcomes will emerge through the research process (see description above). Follow up steps would include publishing the results of the research findings.
2. **Program Development Component**: Statistics will be kept on the uptake and use of the online resource. Interviews will be held with users of the resource regarding its applicability and the benefits of its use. Opportunities to improve the resource will also be identified through the interviews. Benefits to students will be assessed through qualitative feedback from students in courses where the resource has been used, as well as student surveys within these courses.

Dissemination of Outcomes
As mentioned above, a partnership has been formed with the teaching and learning center in order to promote and disseminate the online resource to instructors through the teaching and learning center’s various communication channels. In addition, support for this work has been established with the Canadian Mental Health Association who are in a position to disseminate the findings and “fostering well-being in the classroom” resource to other institutions within BC through the Healthy Minds Healthy Campuses Community of Practice (http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/connect/campus). Findings from the overall project and the research component will be disseminated through campus news, the TLC blog and website, Health and Counselling Services website, and at

[Please contact Health Promotion (health_promo@sfu.ca) for the full proposal including, background theory and rationale, research approach, methodology, program development and references]
Are there parallels between a student’s experiences in a university/college setting compared to an employee/employer setting in terms of risk to mental health-Guarding Minds @ Work: A University Context

Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University
Vitaliy Cherneko, BSc
Elliot Goldner, MD, FRCPC, MHSc
Merv Gilbert, PhD, R.Psych

Health & Counselling Services, Simon Fraser University
Martin Mroz, Director, Health and Counselling Services
Carolyn Harrison, MSc, RCC
Alisa Stanton, MPH

Research is being carried out under the supervision of the Faculty of Health and in collaboration with Health and Counselling Services at Simon Fraser University.

Purpose of the Research
The purpose of this research is to investigate whether parallels exits between a student’s experiences in a university/college setting compared to an employee/employer setting in terms of risk to mental health. To this end, survey information will be gathered from students about their university experiences. This information is being collected as an extension of Guarding Minds @ Work (GM@W), an evidence-based measure developed by researchers at Simon Fraser University, that employers can use and access to identify areas of psychosocial risk in the workplace. The university experience can be thought of as similar to a workplace environment if students are thought of as employees and professors as employers. Similarities can be drawn between the work and university experience in terms of stresses, performance expectations, power relationships and many other factors. The original GM@W resource was designed by mental health and legal experts to provide employers and employees with information and tools to create and sustain a psychologically healthy work environment. We have tailored the questions to be more indicative of a university experience in order get a snapshot of overall mental wellbeing of students in terms of 12 important psychological risk factors that have been shown to impact mental health.

Description of the Research
Students will be asked to participate in an online survey. Participants will be asked 60 questions about their experiences in their current university as they pertain to psychological safety and health issues. Questions will be asked in a range of areas, including: university work/life balance, university workload, leadership and communication.

Potential Benefits
The creation of a Guardingminds@Work: A University Context tool would provide a unique opportunity for researchers and student services professionals at SFU to work together to support the enhancement of student mental health and well-being. The application of this tool to the university context is relevant for several reasons. Firstly, there are growing concerns regarding mental well-being and psychological distress among higher education students (Byrd and McKinney, 2012; Goh & Chiu, 2009; Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2011; Storrie et al, 2010) and increasing recognition that intervention and treatment methods alone are not sufficient to address these concerns (Association of University and Colleges of Canada; 2012; MacKean, 2011; Byrd and McKinney, 2012; Warwick, Maxwell, Simon, Statham and Aggleton, 2006). This project would therefore help to fill a much needed gap in the literature regarding the development and application of ecological approaches to mental health promotion in higher education. Secondly, this project would enable us to build off of literature from both the K-12 system and the workplace system which has highlighted the important role that psychosocial factors within these various settings can play in terms of impacting mental health and well-being (Cohen, 2006; Wyn, Cahill, Holdsworth, Rowling and Carson, 2000; Glover, Patton, Butler, Pietro, Begg and Cahir, 2000; Harter, Schmidt and Keyes, 2002). Given that similar sets of psychosocial risk factors have been demonstrated to be important for mental health promotion within both the workplace and the K-12 setting (Consortium for Organizational Mental Healthcare 2009; Hammond, 2004; Rowe, 2007; Morrison and Kirby, 2010; Wyn, et al, 2000) it is important to consider whether these same factors may also be important within higher education settings. This tool would enable us to explore the significance of these psychosocial risk factors within the higher education context.
SHAC 2011-2012

PHOTOVOICE PROJECT Examples:

_Are we supposed to compete with each other?_

This photo highlights two issues that impact student mental health and well-being.

It represents the current course registration system and how it is a barrier to student’s mental health, academic success, and SFU experience. The current course registration is based on the number of credits completed and the student’s GPA. Those with a higher GPA and more credits within their year have an earlier registration date. The chair represents the student who is more privileged with an earlier registration date, allowing him/her to select courses that would advance their studies and eventually graduate earlier. All the empty carrels without seats represent the majority of SFU students who cannot graduate “on time” because they cannot get the courses they want because of their later registration date, because they are not doing as well in school with the stress of juggle a part time job, because they need that job to pay for the extra tuition fees and unnecessary courses, because they need to maintain a full time status for their student loans, because the system categorizes students based on the number of credits they have and their GPAs because…?

This photo also highlights the competitive nature of studying at SFU. Because some faculties curve final grades, students are being compared to other students as a means of determining what mark they receive. Are we all supposed to compete with each other for this chair? Are we all supposed to compete with one another so that I can get an A, meaning that you might get a C? Should I wish that everybody did poorly on the exam so that it would appear that I did well? How is this learning environment preparing me for a successful future?

The strong divide in the middle of this picture emphasize the division of students. The chair represents the support present in a learning environment. To the left, students are kept in the dark and are struggling to “survive” in this competitive learning environment. Without the chairs, what is it about the learning environment that hinders their learning? To the right, the student is given more light, allowing him/her to easily find his/her way and continue to strive in university. With the one chair, what is it about the learning environment that supports his or her learning?
Leaning on one another for support. Learning from one another to succeed.

This photo represents interactive learning in a course setting and how it is a positive contributor to students’ mental health and academic success.

The area outside the circle represents the students learning in their lectures. They are absorbing the course content and information. Once they enter the “circle”, they are placed in an environment where they can apply that information.

The circle represents an interactive learning environment where students are doing group work or are entering into a different learning environment. Here, they are able to translate the information they learned in the course to practice and application of it in a different setting. This allows students to develop practical skills.

The chairs that make up the circle represent the different perspectives and ideas that can be generated when one works in a group or in a different setting. The individual sitting in the chair facing the windows can bring a view about a topic that is different from the views of those facing the inside of the building. Together, these students as a group can bring in information from all different backgrounds and perspectives to learn from one another.

When you are in an environment that allows you to practice skills and share knowledge, you retain the information a lot better, which is represented by the silver metal circle surrounding the chairs. The silver poles represent pillars of support that are more evident when working in a group or in an environment that fosters service/interactive learning.

As represented by this photo, you need both structures in a course to foster a positive learning environment. Both of these teaching and learning methods lean on each other for support to enhance a student’s experience and education in a course.