

Engage, Belong, Thrive... Measure? How a Wellbeing Assessment Can Inform Campus Recreation

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WAKE FOREST
UNIVERSITY

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Campus recreation contributes to students' holistic wellbeing by supporting their:

- **Physical health**
- **Mental health**
- **Sense of engagement and belonging**



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Recreational programming provides students with outlets for holistic wellbeing including engagement and social interaction with students, faculty, and staff (Belch, Gebel, & Maas, 2001)

60% to 80% of students say campus rec programs helped them feel “more at home” at the university (Henchy, 2011; Watson et al, 2006)

Students who feel a sense of belonging report better health and greater wellbeing, as well as show higher GPAs and rates of retention (Walton & Cohen, 2011).

Students who participated in campus rec activities report being happier and more satisfied with their college experience (Downs, 2003)

We want our students to thrive at our universities, and too often stress, anxiety, loneliness, lack of rest, and other things get in the way.



Students say it has been very difficult or traumatic to handle (past twelve months):

47% academics

35% finances

31% intimate relationships

29% other social relationships

30% sleep difficulties

25% career-related issue

21% personal health issue

In past two weeks:

53% felt overwhelmed by all they have to do

51% exhausted (not by exercise)

26% felt very lonely

25% felt overwhelming anxiety

19% felt hopeless

Students say academic performance was impacted negatively by (past twelve months):

- 32% stress
- 23% anxiety
- 22% sleep difficulties
- 15% depression
- 10% relationship difficulties

Low levels of wellbeing negatively impact college student learning, development and experiences; and increase the risk of poor performance and behavior, as well as drop-out rates.



Attending to holistic student wellbeing!

Interventions that improve wellbeing also reduce depression, anxiety, and substance use and therefore reduce demands on mental and physical health care systems

People who are high in wellbeing have better grades, jobs, relationships, and health than people who are low in wellbeing

Colleges face obstacles in their efforts to increase student wellbeing due to a lack of:

- Effective models
- Demonstrated interventions
- Adequate assessments

All necessary tools for developing effective programs and policies.



Does your school use any measures to assess student wellbeing (or aspects of student wellbeing)?

Yes

100%

No

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20%

40%

60%

80%

What are those measures? (If you don't know the names, you can say what they measure, like "depression", "physical activity", etc.)

“Wellbeing”

6 minutes ago

“Hdhd”

5 minutes ago

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What's the big deal about assessing student wellbeing?



Need to understand what students' wellbeing needs are so that we can:

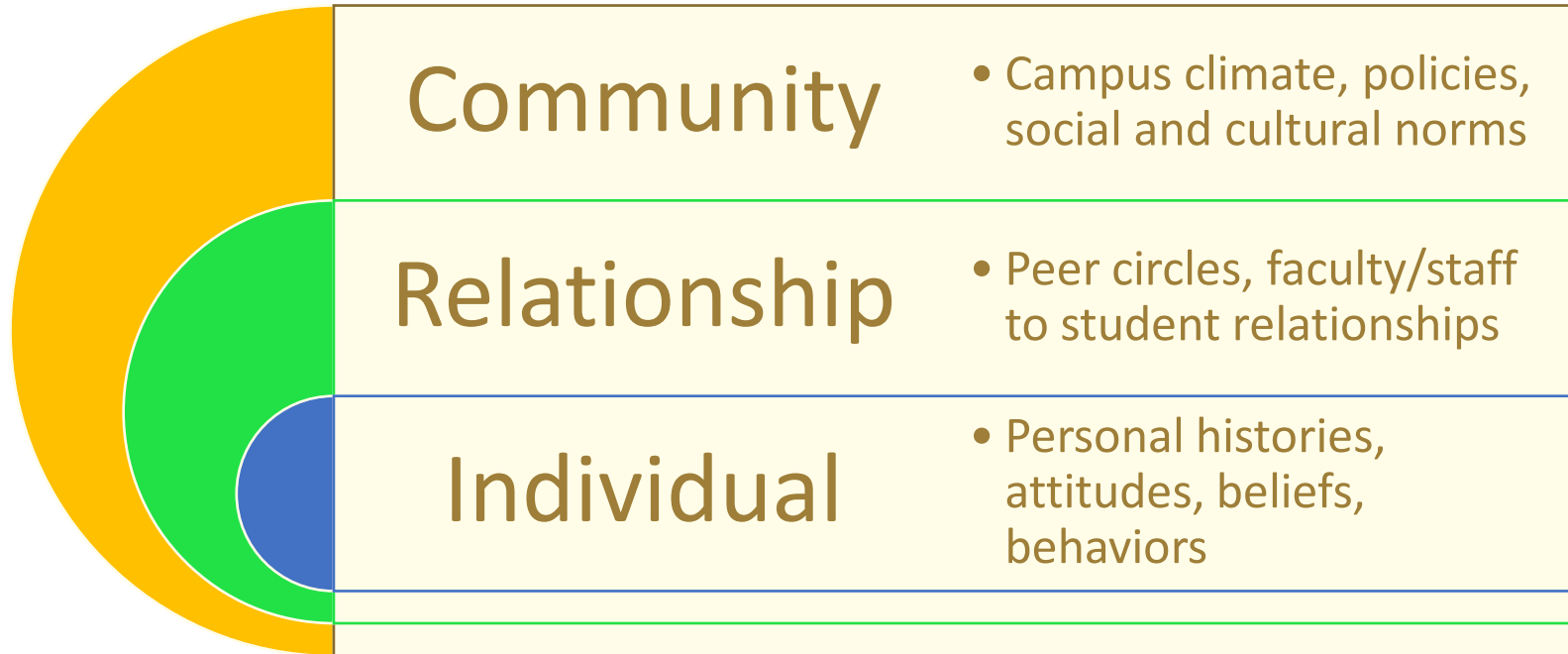
- Describe the problem & demonstrate need
- Develop targeted programming

Need to show that programs are working

- Evaluate
- What *makes* them work



Socio-ecological Framework



Understanding and assessing wellbeing at multiple levels can help us to:

- Develop and evaluate campus recreation programs that support student wellbeing
- Effectively communicate the value of these programs to campus stakeholders

Where do I start?



The Wake Forest Wellbeing Assessment is:

- Based on deep academic research on holistic wellbeing
- Designed to assess undergraduate students' wellbeing over time
- For use by university programming staff to develop targeted, effective wellbeing interventions and wellbeing researchers
- Expertly crafted over years of research and development

Collaboration for Best Practices in Wellbeing Programs

The **survey/research team** and the staff members of WFU's new wellbeing initiative "**Thrive**" are working together to ensure that the **survey and programming** inform each other.



By developing the survey in conjunction with program staff, we are helping to ensure that it will be **relevant and useful in developing programs** at WFU and other universities.

We have conducted:

- 3 rounds of student interviews
- 3 pilot administrations

Our Spring 2017 pilot:

- 11 participating schools, representing:
 - 5 private & 6 public institutions
 - 8 states across the country
 - A range of full-time enrollment from 1,300-25,000 students
- **3864 students completed the survey**

- **Developed by WFU Psychology faculty Eranda Jayawickreme, PhD**
 - With Martin Seligman, PhD, head of U Penn’s Positive Psychology Center
- **The “Engine Model of Wellbeing” is a framework for wellbeing**



Precursors

Values, beliefs, personal traits, and demographics

Skills, resources, knowledge bases, willingness



Outcomes

Precursors are the requirements for achieving well-being. They can vary depending across the dimensions of wellbeing.

Outcomes are voluntary behaviors, attitudes, and emotional states characteristic of wellbeing

Dimensions (inputs, processes, outputs)

- Meaning
- Purpose
- Engagement
- Belonging
- Friendships
- Romantic rel.
- Positivity
- Conscientiousness
- Intellectual curiosity
- IWAH
- Lifelong service
- Volunteerism
- Standing up to discrimination

Global life evaluation

- Life satisfaction
- Affective wellbeing

Living well

- Employment
- Retention
- GPA
- Services use
- Academic engagement

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- Having activities that are meaningful, important, and value-adding
- Activities gently tax skills while still being interesting and absorbing

Precursors include:

Self-awareness of interests

Availability of activities

Willingness to participate



- Feeling like you are welcomed part of a community
- Requires having a sub-community that provides a sense of support, respect & identification, as well as freedom from discrimination.

Precursors include:

Supportive faculty & staff

Feeling like treated well

Engagement in activities



Does your school use any assessments that measure Belonging and Engage

Belonging

Engagement

Both

Neither

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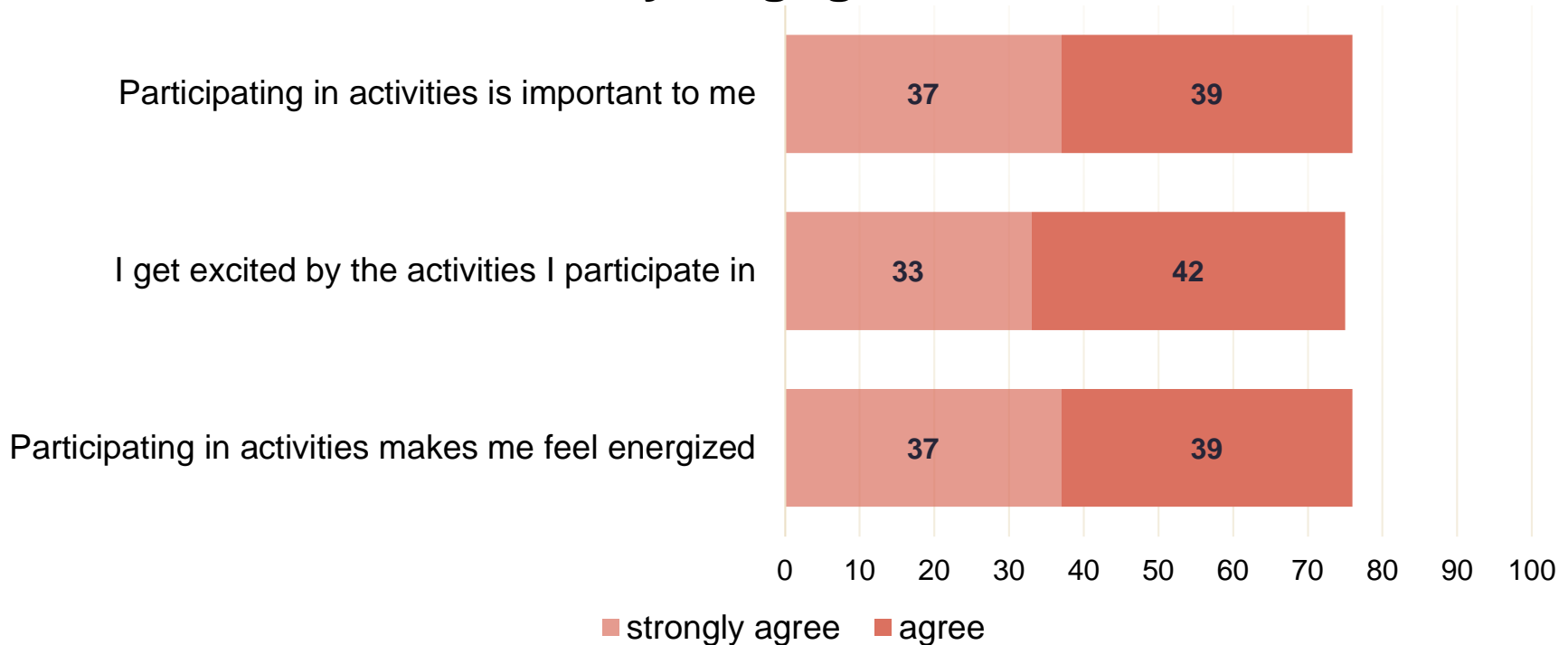
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661 participants from WFU

- 70% female
- 18% juniors
- weighted the analyses



Activity Engagement Outcome Items

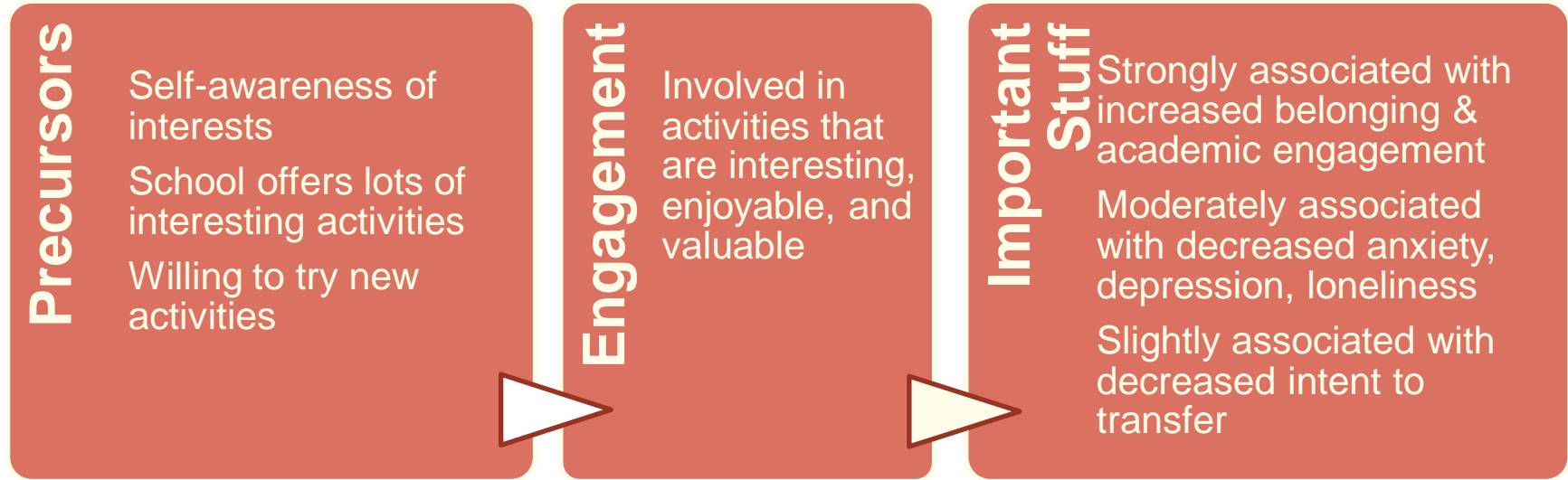


Of the students reporting high activity engagement:

- 78% reported high levels of belonging, 0% low belonging
- 77% low intent to transfer
- 73% low anxiety, 93% low depression, 90% low loneliness

Of the students reporting low activity engagement:

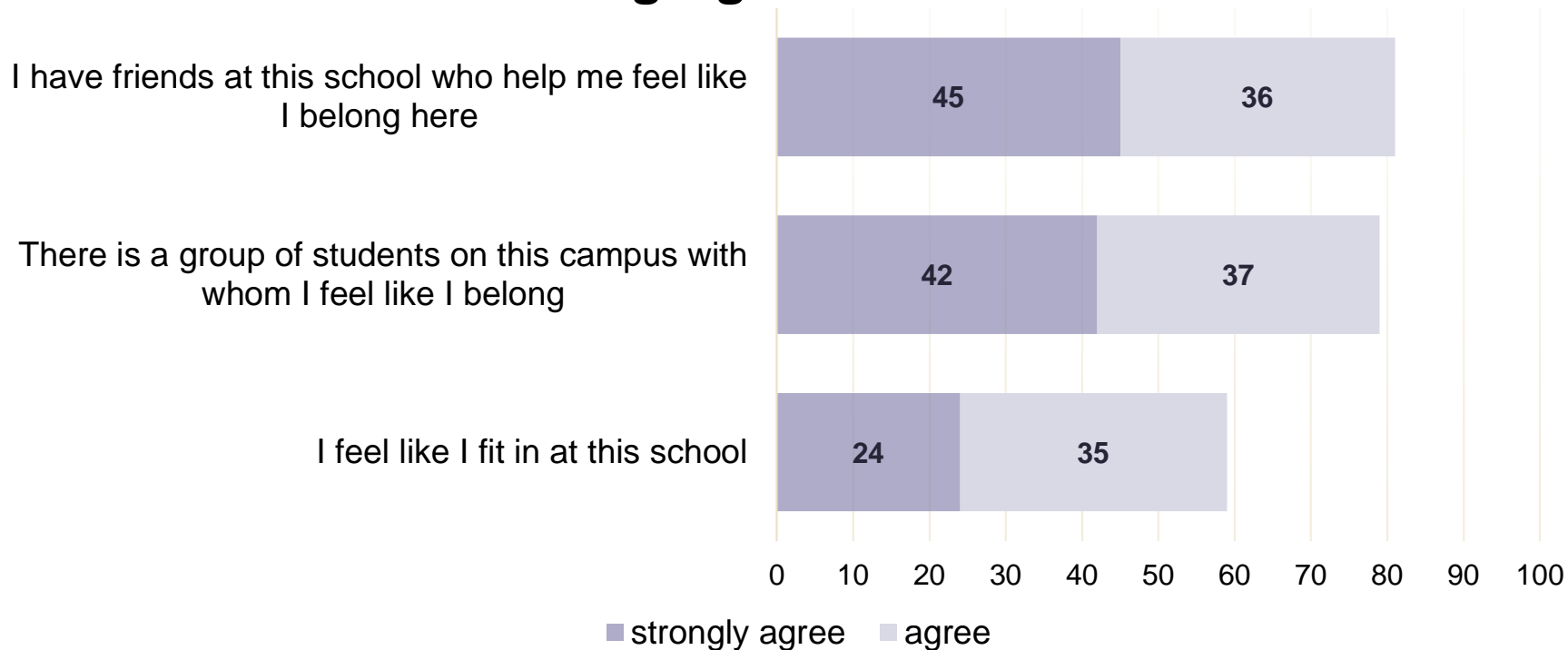
- 20% high belonging, 60% low belonging
- 60% low intent to transfer
- 20% low anxiety, 60% low depression, 40% low loneliness



Applying the findings

1. Increasing activity engagement may lead to higher levels of belonging, academic engagement, and mental health
2. Intervene around precursors to increase engagement: provide meaningful activities for students, assess obstacles to trying new activities

Belonging Outcome Items

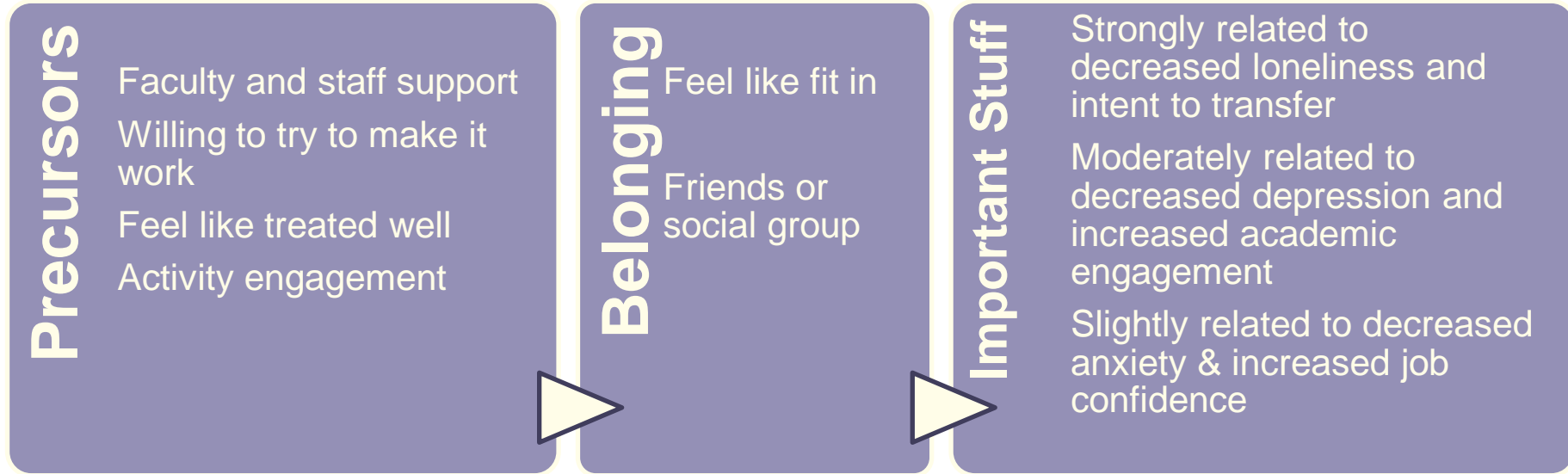


Of the students who reported high levels of belonging:

- 82% reported low intent to transfer
- 83% high academic engagement
- 71% low anxiety, 94% low depression, 92% low loneliness

Of the students who reported low levels of belonging:

- 50% low intent to transfer, 0% high
- 75% high academic engagement
- 20% low anxiety, 60% low depression, 40% low loneliness



Applying the findings

1. Increasing belonging may improve mental health and improve retention
2. Intervene around precursors to increase belonging: increase activity engagement, address campus climate, encourage faculty/staff to engage with students

In each wellbeing dimension, the survey provides a set of points for investigation and intervention, which can be used to inform Campus Recreation programming.



Do you have a Campus Rec program or offering at your school that supports biking or engagement?

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you know HOW that program will improve engagement or belonging

Yes

No

Not
sure

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When you answered that question, were you thinking of specific precursor programs that your program would target?

Yes

No, but now that you mention it, that would probably be a smart thing to do...

100%

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Spring 2018 Pilot administration

Looking for schools interested in having WFU administer the online survey to either a census or a sample of undergraduates.

- Participating schools will receive a report containing their and aggregated results
- No public results by school will be released
- Offering a summer institute to discuss interpretation and application of results

Summer 2018 Summer Institute on Wellbeing

Bring teams of people from your campus to Wake Forest

- Learn in-depth about the Engine Model of Wellbeing
- Learn how to apply the Wellbeing Assessment results in enhancing your program and policies
- Create an action plan to use the Wellbeing Assessment and create change on campus

Contact us at:

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