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

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Wellbeing & Campus Recreation

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

• Physical health
• Mental health
• Sense of engagement and belonging
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- Sense of engagement and belonging
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)
Why care about holistic wellbeing anyway?

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

Source: 2015 National College Health Assessment
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

Source: 2015 National College Health Assessment
Students say academic performance was impacted negatively by (past twelve months):

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

Source: 2015 National College Health Assessment
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.
Unfortunately…

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.
All schools use measures to assess student wellbeing.
What do those measures mean? (If you don't know the names, you can say what they measure, like "depression", "physical activity", etc.)
What’s the big deal about assessing student wellbeing?
Important for Programming

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
Multiple Levels of Programming

Socio-ecological Framework

Community
- Campus climate, policies, social and cultural norms

Relationship
- Peer circles, faculty/staff to student relationships

Individual
- Personal histories, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors
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
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
Based on the “Engine Model” of Wellbeing

- 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
The “Engine Model” of 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 & Other Important Variables

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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**Global life evaluation**
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**Living well**
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- GPA
- Services use
- Academic engagement
• Having activities that are meaningful, important, and value-adding
• Activities gently tax skills while still being interesting and absorbing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precursors include:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-awareness of interests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Availability of activities</td>
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<td>Willingness to participate</td>
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Belonging

• 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:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Supportive faculty &amp; staff</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling like treated well</td>
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<td>Engagement in activities</td>
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</table>
Our school uses any assessments that measure Belonging and Engagement.

Belonging

Engagement

Both

Neither
661 participants from WFU

- 70% female
- 18% juniors
- weighted the analyses
Participating in activities makes me feel energized

I get excited by the activities I participate in

Participating in activities is important to me
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
Results: Engagement

Precursors
- Self-awareness of interests
- School offers lots of interesting activities
- Willing to try new activities

Engagement
- Involved in activities that are interesting, enjoyable, and valuable

Important Stuff
- Strongly associated with increased belonging & academic engagement
- Moderately associated with decreased anxiety, depression, loneliness
- Slightly associated with decreased intent to transfer

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
I feel like I fit in at this school
There is a group of students on this campus with whom I feel like I belong
I have friends at this school who help me feel like I belong here

Belonging Outcome Items

Results: Belonging
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
### Results: Belonging

**Precursors**
- Faculty and staff support
- Willing to try to make it work
- Feel like treated well
- Activity engagement

**Belonging**
- Feel like fit in
- Friends or social group

**Important Stuff**
- Strongly related to decreased loneliness and intent to transfer
- Moderately related to decreased depression and increased academic engagement
- Slightly related to decreased anxiety & increased job confidence

#### 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.
One Campus Rec program or offering at your school that supports belonging or engagement?
Do you know HOW that program will improve engagement or belong?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Start the presentation to activate live content
If you see this message in presentation mode, install the add-in or get help at PollEverywhere.com/app
You answered that question, were you thinking of specific precursor program would target?

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

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
Interested in learning more?

Contact us at:

wellbeingsurvey@wfu.edu

Or you can reach me directly at:

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Project leadership

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