Adopting the Okanagan Charter: Exploring the Impact on Canadian Campuses

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• Overview of the presentation
• Background context
• Development of the Okanagan Charter
• Research Question
• Methodology
• Preliminary Findings
• Implications for Phase 2
Where is the University of Saskatchewan?
Saskatchewan this week

Wind Chill

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Mon 3:30 AM
Also in Saskatchewan this week
Background literature

• National College Health Assessment - Canadian Consortium (ACHA, 2016)
• Approximately 42% of the students expressed that stress had negatively impacted their academics within the last 12 months
• 21% stated depression had had a negative impact on their academics within the same time frame
• 33% noted the negative impact that anxiety had on their academics
• Moreover, 13% had seriously considered suicide and 2.1% had attempted suicide in the last 12 months (ACHA, 2016).
Background Literature

• There has been increasing awareness of the impact of mental health issues on campus (CACUSS & CMHA, 2013; Mackean, 2011).

• At the 2015, International Conference on Health Promoting Universities and Colleges (VII International Congress) held in Kelowna, BC, participants developed a series of commitments and Calls to Action for PSE institutions interested in promoting well-being on their campuses (Okanagan Charter, 2015).

Development of the Okanagan Charter

• The charter development process engaged researchers, practitioners, administrators, students and policy makers from 45 countries.

• The first draft was based on input from 225 people through a pre-conference survey, expert interviews and reviews of existing Charters.

• At the conference, 380 delegates provided input through design lab and development sessions and throughout the conference.

• Network, organizational leaders and representatives from the WHO, Pan Am Health Organization and UN joined in a pledge of commitment to the Charter at the conclusion of the conference.
Purposes (commitments) of the Okanagan Charter

• 1) guiding and inspiring action using a framework aligned with principles of Health Promoting Universities and Colleges;
• 2) generating dialogue and research that connects networks at all levels and that accelerates action; and,
• 3) mobilizing action across sectors so that health is integrated in the policies and practices across organizations (Okanagan Charter, 2015, p. 3).
Calls to Action

• 1) Embed health [defined holistically] into all aspects of campus culture, across the administration, operations and academic mandates, and

• 2) Lead health promotion action and collaboration locally and globally (Okanagan Charter, 2015, p. 3).
Canadian Health Promoting Campuses Network (CHPCN)

• Through dissemination, networking and use of the Charter in higher education, health promotion will be advanced internationally.
• Developed in June 2016 with reps from across Canada including practitioners, academics, decision makers, etc.
• Purposes: Engage higher ed institutions to advance the health-promoting campuses movement within Canada. To facilitate Charter activation and mobilization. To connect with similar networks internationally including in the UK, New Zealand and Germany. Adoption of the Charter in the U.S. is being pursued.
Signatory Campuses and Organizations

Campuses
Canadian Memorial Chiropractic Coll.
Capilano University
Concordia University
Concordia University of Edmonton
Humber College
Kings Western University
Langara College
McMaster University
Memorial University
Mount Royal University
Queen’s University
Saskatchewan Polytechnic
Simon Fraser University
University of British Columbia
University of Calgary
University of Guelph
University of Lethbridge
University of Saskatchewan
University of Waterloo

Organizations
CACUSS
Canadian Mental Health Association – BC Division
Healthy Campus Alberta
Healthy Minds | Healthy Campuses
NIRSA
Table 1: Two Stages of Signatory Campuses

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Research Purpose

• The purpose of this study is to examine the potential of the Okanagan Charter as a foundational building block for developing a systemic approach to well-being on Canadian campuses.
Specific Study Objectives

• To identify institution-specific applications of the Okanagan Charter commitments (focus of Phase 1)
• To examine how campuses intend to evaluate impact of the particular well-being initiatives and how they will use the data to inform further action
• To construct an analysis of similarities and differences in implementation and proposed evaluation strategies across the signatory campuses
Significance

• This study, addresses the prominent and increasing issue of student mental health and well-being concerns.
• PSE organizations globally will be interested in the pan-national framework.
• The intent is to: highlight promising practices, engage in knowledge mobilization across Canada, and connect the work of researchers and practitioners across the country and across the globe
• Building a foundation for Circles of Conversation and future action on well-being
Policy Framework

• Charter is not the same as policy but Howlett, Ramesh and Perl’s (2009) policy cycle framework serves as a structure for examining the Charter

• 1) Policy Adoption

• 2) Policy Formulation

• 3) Policy Implementation

• 4) Policy Evaluation
Methodology

• Study employs a qualitative case study methodology suited for sociological and political studies (Yin, 2014)
• Bounded case (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014)
• Multiple sources of data (documents, websites, semi-structured interviews)
Interviews

• A key question: how do you determine progress on the purposes and calls to action of the Okanagan Charter on your campus?
• Short term and long term impacts?
Preliminary Findings

• Many more colleges and universities are reaching out to the initial signatory campuses to ask about experiences

• Currently, there are over 20 signatory campuses and 4 organizations as well as conversations happening with several additional campuses and organizations
Identification

• Well-being initiatives are not “labelled” or identified as connected to the Okanagan Charter
• Most websites do not identify the campus champion or the person responsible for implementation of the Charter
• Many, but not all, campuses celebrate or announce the signing of the Charter
• Varied visibility of the importance of well-being
Networking

• It appears that dialogue regarding individual campus plans are not widely shared
• CHPCN as a group discusses these topics, shares knowledge with regard to emergent research
• Webinars offered to diverse stakeholder groups (A Health Promoting Campus: What is your role? – Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health)
Networking

• Questions arising:
• How do we move the conversation?
• Advocacy coalitions – what are they and what is their role to support whole campus well-being?
To this point:

Non-internal documents, website analysis, interview analysis:

• Appears to be more of a listing of services available that are more focused on prevention (vaccines, programs) and interventions (health and counselling programs, supports)

• Beginning to see an increase in “healthy campus plans” being developed and disseminated (UBC, KingsU, Guelph)
Holistic approaches: More questions

• Campuses appear to be working towards more holistic supports
• Coordination of efforts are not outwardly evident – does this have an impact at all?
• Leadership - Who owns it?
• How do all stakeholders become aware of these efforts, and promote these efforts?
• Where is sustainability?
Who ensures progress?

- What is the reporting mechanism?
- Who gathers information on initiatives and progress?
- Development of a Canadian assessment tool
Obvious leaders

• Some campuses are leaders; this leadership is evident in the order of signing
• It is apparent that some governments are more focused on this cause
• Some provinces such as British Columbia and Alberta have been investing in research, programs and initiatives such as Healthy Campuses for 5–10 years
• Crucial role of collaborative leadership and well-being champions on campuses.
Next Steps

• “Collaborative Leadership Towards Health Promoting Campuses: Convening around the Okanagan Charter @ NASPA Strategies”
• Symposium planned for March 2020
• International study is pending...Montreal 2022
References


Questions?

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