INTRODUCTION TO PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

Leadership Challenge: Maintaining a healthy and safe college campus amidst complex wellness issues. Who takes the reins? Some campuses are centralizing wellness strategic planning and leadership in a new position titled Chief Wellness Officer (CWO).

Study will fill a gap in literature by examining CWO role emergence: purpose, leadership characteristics, organizational capabilities, and scope of authority.

Given the crisis-level state of wellness on campuses, the stakes are high to do this work well, apply evidence based research to the problem, and to innovate in response to national health trends.

Based on what we know of Chief Diversity Officer emergence, if niche executive roles are not thoughtfully envisioned, structured, implemented and resourced they can fail to deliver on their intended charge. Higher education leaders can consider lessons learned from past successes and failures of roles tasked with significant authority over a change initiative (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2007).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Intrinsic (single) case study (Stake, 1995). A pioneering institution to implement a comprehensive CWO model agreed to support the study
- Artifact analysis: CWO position profile, CWO resume, strategic plans, public announcements, special reports related to emergence, budget, and organizational charts
- Interviews with participants (CWO, 4 senior administrators, 4 faculty/staff connected to work of CWO)
- Demographic questionnaire for CWO and interview protocols to be revised and replicated in future studies

SELECT REFERENCES


POSTER DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What are your observations about the emergence of the CWO role?
- Are CWOs a passing fad, “window dressing”, or a much needed innovation here to stay?
- Which institutions are establishing such positions?
- What impact do such roles have on our work (in student affairs)?
- What is working well in organizations with CWO models? What is not? Why?
- In your opinion, what makes these roles effective? What (vertical) organization structure is ideal?
- What can organizations learn from successes or failures of other niche executive roles when implementing a Chief Wellness Officer position?
- What further research do you think is needed to better understand leadership roles such as the Chief Wellness Officer?

"A CWO should serve as a strategist, leader, and change agent in driving system-level transformation to a culture of well-being."

Kishore et al. (2018) - Health Affairs. CWO requirements & responsibilities:

- Facilitate system-level health promotion initiatives and critical care health and wellness initiatives, including the development and implementation of strategies to encourage and support student and staff engagement in practices and policies that promote health and well-being
- Develop and implement strategic plans and performance measures to monitor progress towards stated health promotion goals and objectives
- Ensure that the health promotion program is aligned with the university’s mission and values and consistent with the needs and preferences of the campus community
- Provide leadership and support for the development and expansion of health promotion programs and resources
- Collaborate with other campus leaders to ensure that the health promotion program is integrated into the overall institutional culture and operations
- Act as a change agent in promoting a culture of health and wellness across the campus community

THE CWO ROLE

Dean of Students/Denison University & Doctoral Candidate/University of Pittsburgh; Ed.D. - Higher Education Management

The Emergence of the Chief Wellness Officer in U.S. Higher Education

William (Bill) Fox

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