# UHS Health Promotion Office Annual Report

# 2023 - 2024

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# Welcome

At the UHS Health Promotion Office, we know that promoting positive well-being is fundamental to students’ academic success and can create deeper learning experiences and meaningful engagement.

While students ultimately have an individual responsibility for their own health, they will be significantly more successful if the environments which they live and learn in are centered around well-being. Rather than self-care, I believe we need to emphasize community oriented and compassion centered care. This approach will begin to create a culture where our living environments, classrooms, programs, services, policies, and people all work together to support student well-being.

We have a responsibility to cultivate student flourishing, connectedness, mindfulness, resilience, grit, purpose, belonging, and self-compassion so that our students can become ever better.

Be well,

Amy McDonald  
Director, UHS Health Promotion Office

# Mission and Guiding Principles

## HPO Mission Statement

The UHS Health Promotion Office leads campus-wide health promotion action to advance a culture of well-being, cultivate student flourishing, and positively influence student health.

## Guiding Principles

**Always be Student Centered** - Put students at the center of our work, using participatory approaches to engage and amplify their voices.

**Pursue Ever Better Well-being -** Help students develop the skills of resilience, acceptance, self-compassion, and experience a sense of belonging and connection.

**Use Collective Engagement** - Focus on intentional collaboration, with the understanding that our work is far greater than our individual reach.

**Prioritize Learning and Growth-** Our expertise has limitations; therefore, we commit to a continual cycle of learning and action.

**Think Wholistically -** Use settings and whole-system approaches, rather than solely individual interventions, to embed well-being into campus culture.

# Our Team

We are not a team because we work together. We are a team because we respect, trust, and care for each other.

## Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of the Health Promotion Offices includes the following positions:

* Director, who reports to the Vice Provost and Director of University Health Service
* Two Health Promotion Specialists (one for Health Equity and one for Student Well-being), reporting to the Director of the Health Promotion Office
* A Graduate Assistant for Eastman Well-being (reporting to the Director of HPO), as well as a Graduate Assistant for the Mindful University Project and a Graduate Assistant for Graduate Student Well-being (reporting to the Health Promotion Specialist for Well-being)
* An undergraduate coordinator for the Mindful University Project (reporting to the Health Promotion Specialist for Well-being)
* A team of Senior Peer Health Advocates and Peer Health Advocates, reporting to the Health Promotion Specialist for Health Equity
* The Health Promotion Specialist for Student Well-being also oversees 8 yoga instructors, 8 mindfulness instructors, and one Mindful Professor consultant.

# Our Commitment to DEI

The UHS Health Promotion Office is committed to fostering a culture which values diversity, equity, and inclusion. We strive to cultivate sustainable and impactful health promotion and well-being action that can be embedded into our campus community. Our work values the uniqueness of each student’s ethnic/indigenous/racial identity, nationality and citizenship, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender and gender expression, age, ability, body shape / size, and socio-economic status, veteran status, as well as the intersectionality of these social identities.

**Sixty-seven hours of DEI trainings were completed by HPO staff in 2022-2023. Here is a sampling of the trainings we attended:**

* Transgender Health
* Exploring Women’s Narratives
* Bringing Family Therapy to Trans Youth
* Why Mental Health Equity is Critical for Student Success
* Chinese Name Pronunciations
* Emerging NCHA Data on Queer and Trans Student Well-Being
* Reproductive Injustices
* Inclusive Leadership
* Development of Asexual Stigma Inventory
* Understanding Queer Families
* Religious Diversity in the Classroom and on Campus
* Understanding Intergenerational Cultural Scripts to Unlock Our Power
* Addressing Weight Bias and Stigma for a More Inclusive Future
* Creating Accessible Documents
* Safe Space Lab
* Enhancing Knowledge & Skills in Working with First-Gen Students
* Creating Accessible Public Health Communications
* Navigating the PWI as an Underrepresented Minority Student
* Mental Health Care for Transgender and Gender Diverse College Students
* Where I Feel Safe: What Makes and Environment Affirming
* Improving Healthcare for Autistic Patients
* Practical Strategies to Cultivate First-Gen Student Success
* Teaching Yoga for Disabled Folks
* Intro to Digital Accessibility
* Creating Accessible Public Health Communications
* A University’s Journey to a Size-Inclusive Campus

# Financial Summary

The total budget for the Health Promotion Office was comprised of 79.1% salary and benefits costs ($289,558), 11.6% non-salary expenses ($42,598), and 9.2% student salaries ($33,716).

Looking more closely at the non-salary expenses, 31.4% went to programming costs ($13,397), 28.8% went to office management costs ($12,254), and 39.8% went to staff development costs ($16,947).

# A Year in Review: Programs and Services

13,288 students engaged in health promotion programs and services this year.

266 total programs were held.

There were 12 resource fairs, 44 student workshops, and 47 staff trainings.

491 Safe Sex Express orders were placed.

1,525 students benefited from RA condom kits.

71students made STI testing appointments.

2,272 participants engaged in contemplative practices such as yoga, meditation, and mindfulness.

16 students became mindfulness facilitators.

# Pillar #1: Create Supportive Campus Environments

The well-being of a student does not exist in isolation. There is an undeniable link between campus environments and the students who live in them. The spaces where a student sleeps, eats, learns, and connects all influence their capacity to flourish. Therefore, we must consider how we can create campus environments that support students, rather than ones which create barriers to and hinder their well-being.

An ongoing and systematic assessment of the campus viewed through the lens of health promotion is an important component in the creation of supportive environments. The Health Promotion Office will focus on six primary environments, assessing ways in which we have the capacity to infuse well-being into them via our programs, services, or other interventions.

**Built Environment** – residential buildings, dining halls, athletic centers  
**Natural Environment** – outdoor spaces, connection to nature  
**Learning Environment** – classrooms and other academic spaces   
**Economic Environment** – connections to support for basic needs  
**Cultural Environment** – welcoming diversity in all UHS spaces  
**Social Environment** – spaces where students can connect

## Pillar #1 Accomplishments:

Well-Being for Life & Learning Training Program: Launched this year with 245 staff & faculty program registrants. 50 training workshops were provided by our team of collaborators. A total of 51 participants graduated from the program this year.

Hosted over 325+ students in the Wells Brown Oasis for Destress Fests, meditation sessions, and other events.

Worked with community yoga studios to bring daily yoga classes to campus with 2,225 participants this year.

8 UR Student Health Advisory Committee (URSHAC) Meetings.

Met with all schools to begin creating contemplative spaces across campus.

Conducted the National College Health Assessment in February. Achieved an 18.4% response rate with 923 student responses. Obtained disaggregated reports for LGBTQ+, international, and first-generation students.

# Pillar #2: Create Student Flourishing

Like college students from across the country, many at the University of Rochester have been struggling with their mental health, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic. According to the National College Health Assessment (2022), a substantial number of UR student respondents (81% undergraduate / 70% graduate) report experiencing moderate to severe psychological distress in the last 12 months. Mental health struggles have also negatively impacted their academic performance, including depression (31% UG / 56% G), anxiety (35% UG / 46% G), and stress (51% UG / 47% G).

We aim to take a whole student approach when addressing student mental health, identifying ways in which we can cultivate student flourishing, rather than solely focusing on the absence of depression, anxiety, or stress. Flourishing can be defined as “a state in which all aspects of a person’s life are good” and includes features such as happiness and life satisfaction, mental and physical health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, and close social relationships (Vanderweele, 2017).

We will utilize the evidence-based practice of social-emotional learning as a foundation to create supportive programming for students. Building on that, our initiatives to cultivate flourishing will also teach students how to achieve psychological flexibility, incorporating mindfulness, acceptance, equanimity, gratitude, and valued engagement.

## Pillar #2 Accomplishments:

Created Calming U, a 4-week class teaching the skills of mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and self-compassion. Twenty-eight sessions were held throughout the year with 162 attendees and 57 completing all four workshops.

Calming U Participant Outcomes:

* 95% better understand mindfulness
* 97% motivated to practice meditation
* 98% intend to continue their meditation practice
* 72% better able to manage life demands

Continued the Mindful Professor Training Program with 15 graduates from 5 UR schools this spring. This program equips faculty with tools to be present, utilize mindful leadership skills, enhance teaching effectiveness, and learn how to best support students’ well-being.

Held the 2nd annual Flourish Festival, a full day event centered on providing students with a variety of wellness and mindfulness activities to engage in. Over 400 students attended.

# Pillar #3: Advocate for Health Equity

According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, health equity occurs when “everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.” Creating conditions that improve health and addressing the social determinants of health are fundamental to health equity.

To successfully advocate for health equity, we must first identify important health disparities within our student population. Starting with a robust data set and then disaggregating the data will allow us to better understand the needs of students with marginalized identities. Then we will be able to explore ways to change and implement policies, programs, services, and practices to reduce inequities in the opportunities and resources needed to achieve optimal well-being (Braveman et al., 2017).

We recognize that future initiatives must be designed and delivered to encourage uptake and overcome barriers to access, eliminating unfair and institutional social conditions that give rise to these inequities. We also recognize that equity is not the same as equality. To achieve equity, those students with worse health and fewer resources need more efforts expended to improve their health (Braveman et al., 2017). And finally, we recognize that in this work we need to be mindful of our own privileges and biases and commit to doing our part to create an ethic of care at UHS through continual learning and growth.

## Pillar #3 Accomplishments:

5 UHS staff became well-being ambassadors for First Generation students. 273 students were reached out to by our ambassadors.

Began a two-year cultural study to better understand how cultural filters shape the way our students pursue health and well-being. Conducted a literature search, launched a parent survey, started the creation of an orientation program, and planned for fall focus groups.

Hosted mindfulness offerings such as OUTbreath for LGBTQ+ folks and a Meditative Guide for Us for the UR Black community.

Thirty students attended the annual LGBTQ+ Resource Fair.

Kicked off new programs which focus on students basic needs: SNAP Benefits Webinar (16 participants), Wellness on Wheels (engaged 914 students), Wellness on Demand Vending (16,812 items dispensed

# Pillar #4: Support Personal Development

Health education and disease prevention programming has been the primary focus of the Health Promotion Office for decades, and it will continue to be an integral part of our work moving forward. We aim to develop and create opportunities to build competence and personal capacity so students can reach their full potential.

Data from our bi-annual Consumer Attitudes Survey helps to focus our programming on areas that are most salient to our students. Topics such as sleep, managing stress, intuitive eating, self-care, and sexual health were among the top areas of interest identified in the fall 2021 survey. Students also indicated pet therapy, fitness classes, study breaks, sexual health screenings, and wellness fairs as programs they would find most beneficial and supportive.

Through our health education initiatives, we increase knowledge, build skills, and influence students' motivation to adopt healthy habits, as evidenced on our program evaluation surveys. Through our prevention programming, we offer opportunities for students to engage in practices which reduce their health risks. The foundation of our work is centered around a community development approach, recognizing the robust strengths and competencies of our students. We must look to our students to identify and define their struggles and understand that we as professionals are resources rather than problem solvers, as each student is ultimately responsible for their own health and well-being.

## Pillar #4 Accomplishments:

255 attendees at the Sex and Chocolate Carnival, with an overall satisfaction rating of 9.2/10.

300 students attended the Sex in the Dark orientation program.

Peer Health Advocate team accomplishments:

* Held 4 Destress Fests with over 326 students participating
* 100+ Hours of Outreach
* 13 tabling events where 388 students were engaged with

Launched the Graduate Student Wellness needs assessment and received 390 responses.

Nine programs for graduate students were held with a total of 116 participants.

Expanded programming for Eastman students. Participation highlights include:

* 117 attended pet therapy
* 207 joined us during orientation
* 65 attended the wellness resource fair

# Contact Us

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