The Future of Wellbeing at Tertiary Institutions

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What is wellbeing?

- Human wellbeing is the life going well for the person living it
- Intrinsic vs instrumental goods
- Health and wellbeing
Why should student wellbeing be important to us?

- We have a duty of pastoral care to this young and vulnerable group
- Youth health and wellbeing in NZ isn’t great"
Figure 2.2: Comparison of adolescent all-cause mortality rate per 100,000 adolescents, 10–19 year old population, 2015

- Denmark
- The Netherlands
- Spain
- Japan
- Germany
- UK
- Italy
- France
- Sweden
- Portugal
- Ireland
- Greece
- Belgium
- Australia
- Austria
- Finland
- Canada
- US
- New Zealand

Nuffield Trust 2019
Why should student wellbeing be important to us?

- We have a duty of pastoral care to this young and vulnerable group
- Youth health and wellbeing\(^1\)
- Youth suicide\(^1\)
Figure 5.9: Comparison of suicide rates per 100,000 age-specific population among young people 15- to 19 years old in 2016.
Why should student wellbeing be important to us?

- We have a duty of pastoral care to this young and vulnerable group
- Youth health and wellbeing\(^1\)
- Youth suicide\(^1\)
- 79,000 young NZers with anxiety or depression (2017)\(^2\)
- Almost 1/3 of young NZers self-harmed over 2012-2016\(^2\)
- Academic pressure was the greatest cause of stress, depression, and anxiety amongst students\(^3\)
- What would you want for your children?
Are our students flourishing? 1

- Happy yesterday? (0-10)… 6
- Worried or anxious yesterday? (0-10)… 5
- In general, how happy do you usually feel? … “Slightly happy (just a bit above normal)”

- Overall, how satisfied are you with life as a whole these days? (0-10)… 6
- Best vs worst possible life (0-10)… 6
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Average Satisfaction (0-10)</th>
<th>Average importance (0-10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship &amp; social life</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>Physical health</td>
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<td>Fun &amp; leisure</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intimate relationships</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Spirituality</td>
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<td>Community life</td>
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<td>Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial matters</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Is wellbeing valued highly enough at your tertiary institution? 1

- Think about student and staff wellbeing
- Discuss with the others on your table
Is wellbeing valued highly enough at tertiary institutions? 2

- Deaths in halls (new law could mean $100,000 fine)\(^4\)
- 2 week+ waiting lists for counselling, especially at peak times\(^3\)
- Demand for counselling services increased by over 10% per year (2015-2017)\(^3\)

- Some actions taken, but improvement of services seems to have revealed more problems
  - Waiting 2 hours to see the emergency mental health nurse
Imagine an institution that really valued wellbeing

- What would it look like?
- What would the students’ lives be like?
- What facilities and policies would be in place?
- Discuss with the others on your table
A positive tertiary institution

- Fully distributed, comprehensive, personalisable wellbeing programme with institution-wide buy-in and appropriate funding

- Requires:
  - Science
  - Technology
  - Institution-wide integration and advertising of the programme
  - Much more funding
  - Being careful about ethical issues
The Science of wellbeing

- The science is not settled, but it is getting more useful all the time. 2016 stats from Google Scholar
  - 101,000 works mention happiness or wellbeing
  - 122,000 works mention depression
- E.g. positive psychological interventions help all age groups and clinical and non-clinical populations\(^5\)
- Subjective wellbeing provides benefits\(^6\)
  - Health and longevity, reduced risk of disease, faster recovery
  - Productivity, showing up, working hard, earning more
  - Pro-social behaviours, less risk-taking
Technology matches needs to services

- Biannual comprehensive wellbeing surveys
- Weekly short wellbeing pulse surveys behaviour and wellbeing status
- Consider gamification of the programme
- Specific targeted interventions suggested and personal preferences balanced with scientific evidence
- Lots of players in this market, but none seem to have nailed it just yet
Removing barriers 1

- Technology helps with convenience (auto compares timetable, one-click booking)
- Motivation and reminders
- Some services should be free, others very cheap
- Specific intervention suggestions may make the suggested service free

- What other barriers can you think of?
This will require a huge amount of funding

 Universities should tap into the government’s increased mental health funding

 Universities should reconsider some of the strategic goals and the strategic activities that cost a lot of money

 E.g. growth and efficiencies

 Who are strategic goals for, anyway?
Is wellbeing a strategic goal? 1

- **Goal 1** An organisational culture focussed on high performance
- **Goal 2** Teaching and research programmes distinguished by academic excellence and relevance
- **Goal 3** A comprehensive programme of community engagement
- **Goal 4** Improved operational efficiency and facilities
- **Goal 5** A distinctive UoW student experience
- **Goal 6** Investment in growth

- Are these the goals you would come up with if you cared about current and future students and staff?
Is wellbeing a strategic goal? 2

- Out of 2408 words in the University Strategy 2017-2021, wellbeing occurs once:

- **Goal 3: A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMME OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**
  - Make a substantial contribution to improving health outcomes, wellbeing and equity in the communities of the central North Island and of Māori.

- A worthy goal, but unfortunately no mention of staff or student wellbeing
Ethical issues

- Privacy: Who should be notified when pulse survey scores drop?
- Fairness: Is it fair to give benefits (cheaper services) to students who agree to join the initiative?
- Misuse of data: Kicking out students with mental illnesses!
- Cultural appropriateness: Will the initiative be flexible enough to properly accommodate Māori and other groups? (One size doesn’t usually fit all)
The role for rec centres

- Physical health, nutrition, and sleep (flow on effects)
- Social sport and other social positive/healthy activities
- Team up with student health, counselling, and other student services to push for a wellbeing focus
- Co-opt e-sports (don’t fight it!)
- Identify and use student recreation ambassadors to selectively invite other students with special offers
- Targeted “grit” interventions for new students
- Mixed “grit” interventions to combat racism etc.
- Wellbeing Adventure Race (start a WAR)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NyKvwZT3VtE&feature=youtu.be
Conclusion

- There are many barriers, but they are falling away
- Wellbeing is too important to leave to chance
- Wellbeing also enables better education and learning
- So, a wellbeing focus should be a “no-brainer”
- Rec centres should team up, tech up, and help push for better lives for students and staff
References

2. https://www.noted.co.nz/health/health-psychology/more-and-more-kids-are-returning-to-school-with-anxiety-disorders
3. https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/students/pages/295/attachments/original/1540925981/University_Counselling_Statistics.pdf?1540925981