Student mental health must be stitched into the fabric of Western, according to a new draft strategic plan that recommends both expanding academic and social supports and consolidating health-and-wellness care.

In the works for 18 months, the Student Mental Health & Wellness Strategic Plan is now open for further comment until Feb. 9, looking for final approvals in April.

The document notes a healthy campus is one that promotes a better balance between prevention and treatment. It outlines a broad framework of strategic objectives, with dozens of goals and recommended strategies.

Among the goals of providing more accessible services, it recommends “unification of all services designed to support student mental health and wellness” as a way of reducing the fragmentation and siloing of supports.

“Clearly, there would be one point of access,” said John Doerksen, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs) and co-chair of the Student Health and Wellness Advisory Committee. “There certainly will be an effort to reorganize ourselves in the context of a health-and-wellness centre.”

Some of that movement towards a single point of entry is already taking place, said Rick Ezekiel, co-chair of the committee and interim Senior Director (Student Experience). For example, electronic health records are shared, as needed, among health professionals so the process is more streamlined.

“It takes time to work out the right model,” Ezekiel said. Space and organizational realities mean there is no quick way to “flip a switch” that would provide a single point of access overnight.

The draft plan emphasizes the link between mental health and academic performance.

“Health, including mental health, is central to educational success. Moreover, while stress and adversity can have negative effects on long-term mental health and functioning … certain types of stressors have the potential to enhance the capacity for resilience, with downstream benefits to student mental health and wellness,” the report states.

The draft plan’s four strategic objectives call for the university to:

1. Develop a more resilient campus community;
2. Develop and deliver health communication and promotion;
3. Build inclusive curriculum and pedagogy; and
4. Provide accessible and effective mental-health-and-wellness services.

The plan includes everything from supporting students as they leave high school to training more people in mental-health first aid; from recognizing unique needs of international, Indigenous and marginalized students to building stronger partnerships with families and community agencies; from developing a centralized mental-health-and-wellness website to reviewing best practices for medical accommodations.

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Overdue, he added, is hope those who review the draft plan make note of how wide-reaching it is.

“First, there’s an increased recognition that mental health is related to everyone across Western’s campus, across a number of years, while starting to think more holistically about mental health on campus,” he said.

Second, the report recognizes we all have a role to play in mental health on campus, each in our own way,” he said. “It’s a classroom, a lab setting, for example, that can translate into more consideration among faculty on profound implications of the design of teaching that embeds flexibility into teaching and evaluations.

“We can achieve the overall academic outcomes we’re looking to achieve, but perhaps in a different way,” Dowhain said.

While the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy is a broad plan, the incident of mental health concerns at Western is growing. Data from the 2013 National College Health Assessment survey shows 22 per cent of Western students reported having a psychiatric diagnosis in their lifetime, which was higher than the 2011 Canadian national survey of 17 per cent. Also in 2014, 45 per cent of Western students reported having a negative impact on their academic performance; an increase from the 43 per cent reported by the 2013 National College Health Assessment.

That means we need to talk about the importance of working with partners here, and in the broader community for prevention and support,” Eskenazi said.

Mental-health planning and care is no quick fix on campus, or anywhere for that matter.

“It’s recognizing the demand for mental-health services continues to rise and a reactive approach that simply upward of services and makes it possible such effectively and sustainably. A host of factors students and staff would want to consider and evaluate our community effort. It’s not just the folks who provide mental-health services who should focus on improving mental health on campus.”

TIMELINE
2015: Advisory Committee on Student Mental Health and Wellbeing.
Spring 2016: Mental-health strategy comes to focus on internal and external processes, policies and services for mental health on campus.
August 2016–February 2017: Consultations with more than 300 staff, senior leaders and students; also learns from 1,300 people across email survey.
2017: Consultation team researches rapid implementation.
January 2018: Draft mental-health strategic plan released for comment.

WHAT’S NEXT?
Public comment period open until Apr. 26. If Board of Governors votes on plan Apr. 26. If approved, implementation begins.

BY ADELA TALBOT

“What while we always hope for people to move to recovery, while they find their way to that path, we need to do everything we can to keep them as safe and healthy as possible.”

- Abe Oudshoorn

Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing professor Abe Oudshoorn said plans for a permanent supervised injection site in London – also dubbed an overdose prevention site – is essential for the city in fostering health and preventing overdose deaths.

“While you still hear some concerns, I think there’s a good time to have that conversation when someone can say, ‘We’ve begun to do something,’ Oudshoorn said.

“Very effective, they’ve seen folks moving into some programs, outpatient treatment, methadone or setting up sort of long-term supports – and will be an important part of the model here,” he added.

What makes London site and plans for a future facility promising is the collaboration and interprofessional community services, support agencies and Healthcare providers, he continued. The health unit, the London Homelessness Coalition, the import provost, research centres, healthcare and addiction service providers are working together to promote health and reduce overdose deaths in the community.

Oudshoorn said this collaborative approach helped lead the province to a rapid approval of the pilot site’s proposal.

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Wesley will be teaming with the provincial top-tier athletic facilities at several sites on campus to host the 2018 Ontario Summer Games. The Games committee has newly announced venues for the event, which takes place Aug. 2 – 5 and is the premier showcase for young, high-performing athletes in Ontario.

Campus and Community

Western sports venues chosen for Ontario Games

BY ODEBA VAN BREIN

Western will be teaming with the provincial top-tier athletic facilities at several sites on campus to host the 2018 Ontario Summer Games. The Games committee has newly announced venues for the event, which takes place Aug. 2 – 5 and is the premier showcase for young, high-performing athletes in Ontario.

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For Constanza Burucúa, capturing the spirit of the 1967 World Exhibition in Montreal—known simply as Expo 67 for the last half century—required something special. “I wanted to do something different from a mere academic study,” the Modern Languages and Literatures professor explained. “I wanted to capture personal memories, inspire optimism and shake something visceral and immediate with the general public. You cannot do this with a formal academic paper.”

“I chose film because it is a great format for the old generation to return to and relive, a historical moment in their lives in a completely new way; you can see the world moving and be in that world.”

Burucúa’s documentary project, 1967: Canada Welcomes the World, is a visual ode to Expo 67 through a series of archival images and short documentaries focused on the national pavilions of the 60 participating countries. The project debuted last year at the Oakville and Elgin County museums as part of their sesquicentennial efforts.

Expo 67, according to Burucúa, was a perfect opportunity for many countries—some with their newfound sense of identity and confidence—to present themselves to the world. Each country did so by exhibiting its arts and crafts and advances in science and technology.

“Everyone who grew up in that era, from 5-year-olds to teenagers, has a memory of Expo 67. People who attended the exhibition or found the project’s Instagram page have since provided memorabilia from when they (or their relatives) attended. I love how generous people are with sharing these materials,” she continued.

The work also produced a spin-off piece. Rebecca Bugg, an undergraduate student volunteering with the project, also made her own short documentary, Hello, Canada, based on archival images Burucúa unearthed. Funded by Western’s Canada 150 Student Fund, the project recently received the Award of Commendation at the Canada Shorts Film Festival and the Award of Merit at the Headline International Film Festival.

“Young people nowadays relate to short audio-visual formats. This project is presenting the age-old question of national identity to the current generation in a new way—if, among them, there are future academics who want to study it further, even better,” Burucúa said.
I'vey grad turns wanderlust into career

Chris Clark, HBA’96, bottom right, took his love for travelling and founded Terraficionados Travel Society and Journeymakers, a luxury adventure travel business which tailors trips for like-minded travelers.

BY DAVID MCHENRY

Chris Clark, HBA’96, has an incredible wanderlust—discovering the world at one time, one city and one neighborhood at a time is a passion that has shaped his life. He met his wife, Andrea Gill, at Clark’s alma mater, Western University; they married and had two children before she returned to academia. After more than a dozen years working for Bain Consulting, Clark said the idea of making a change was always present, but he realized he was in his career position—and how he loved it. He decided to leave the consulting business to launch Terraficionados, a luxury adventure travel business that tailors trips for other like-minded travelers.

After more than a decade of running a luxury adventure travel business, Clark and his wife, Andrea, made the decision to sell the company. It was a difficult decision to make, especially when you are trying to live your life by experiencing the world, by exploring the trip-of-a-lifetime moments, and meeting all kinds of wonderful people. “It was a difficult decision to make, especially when you are trying to live your life by experiencing the world, by exploring the trip-of-a-lifetime moments, and meeting all kinds of wonderful people. It was a difficult decision to make, especially when you are trying to live your life by experiencing the world, by exploring the trip-of-a-lifetime moments, and meeting all kinds of wonderful people. It was a difficult decision to make, especially when you are trying to live your life by experiencing the world, by exploring the trip-of-a-lifetime moments, and meeting all kinds of wonderful people. It was a difficult decision to make, especially when you are trying to live your life by experiencing the world, by exploring the trip-of-a-lifetime moments, and meeting all kinds of wonderful people.

What do you think of when you think of graduate students on campus? Not All the Same, a new campaign run by the Society of Graduate Students (SOGS) to dispel common conceptions of the graduate student experience and show how you experience a diverse range of lifestyles and issues and may require more personal support to succeed. The campaign came out of a focus group run by SOGS over the past two years in an effort to learn more about the university’s graduate student community, explained Taniya Nagpal, a PhD candidate in sociology and the chair of the SOGS equity committee.

“We wanted to create a campus campaign that high-lighted the various experiences and backgrounds graduate students come from. We wanted to break the stereotype that most people just assume that all graduate students are young, that all graduate students are only doing research, that all graduate students are just doing research, that all graduate students are just doing research, that all graduate students are just doing research. This does not mean one student is better than the other. We wanted to create a campus campaign that high-lighted the various experiences and backgrounds graduate students come from. We wanted to break the stereotype that most people just assume that all graduate students are young, that all graduate students are only doing research, that all graduate students are just doing research, that all graduate students are just doing research, that all graduate students are just doing research. This does not mean one student is better than the other.

To highlight these diverse experiences, SOGS is interviewing students who might not fit that stereotypical graduate student bill, then sharing their experiences on the campaign website, SOGS.org, by way of student profiles. The goal is to offer students a more realistic representation of graduate school, that some of them are older, and that we have a variety of work experience and only research as a small minority. We wanted to create a campus campaign that high-lighted the various experiences and backgrounds graduate students come from. We wanted to break the stereotype that most people just assume that all graduate students are young, that all graduate students are only doing research, that all graduate students are just doing research, that all graduate students are just doing research, that all graduate students are just doing research. This does not mean one student is better than the other. We wanted to create a campus campaign that high-lighted the various experiences and backgrounds graduate students come from. We wanted to break the stereotype that most people just assume that all graduate students are young, that all graduate students are only doing research, that all graduate students are just doing research, that all graduate students are just doing research, that all graduate students are just doing research. This does not mean one student is better than the other.

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The campaign is also being featured in a variety of different media, from campus radio to social media and campus websites. It is being featured in a variety of different media, from campus radio to social media and campus websites.

The deadline for nominations for 2018 is March 30. SOGS equity committee.

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Probiotics for respiratory illness could save millions

A recent study suggests the use of probiotics to prevent respiratory tract infections (RTIs) could result in significant cost savings for Canada. Researchers from Western University, Hamilton Health Sciences and Laval University examined data from firefighters, police officers and nurses. The study concluded that probiotics could be an effective and cost-effective method to prevent respiratory tract infections.

**Research**

**Study shows massive scope of persistent pain experienced by firefighters**

Firefighters suffer musculoskeletal ailments at a far higher rate than the general population says a new study by Hamilton, Ont., firefighters. "Working wounded" is the term used to describe firefighters who have retired early due to injuries, or who are still on the job but have physical ailments that limit their ability to perform their duties.

**Problems:**

- Upper limbs (often, injuries to the rotator cuff)
- Lower limbs (often, injuries to the knees, back and/or neck)

**Problems by matrix:**

- Firefighters, older than the median age of 42, and with more than 15 years of service, experienced the greatest incidence of pain and more serious pain. Compared with their younger counterparts, the older firefighters were twice as likely to report back pain; four times more likely to report limb pain; and twice as likely to have pain in their upper and lower back.

**Problems by age:**

- Among younger firefighters, upper limb pain (injuries to the rotator cuff in their shoulders) was the most common.

**Problems by sex:**

- Male firefighters were more likely to report musculoskeletal problems, particularly upper back pain and rotator cuff injuries.

**Problems by service:**

- Firefighters with 15 or more years of service were more likely to report musculoskeletal problems, particularly upper back pain and rotator cuff injuries.

**Problems by rank:**

- Firefighters at the rank of captain or fire officer were more likely to report musculoskeletal problems, particularly upper back pain and rotator cuff injuries.

**Problems by gender:**

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Aproaching his latest study, Matthew Heath already knew aerobic exercise can be as good for the mind as for the body. What he wanted to find out was how long you need to exercise in order to reap those cognitive benefits.

There's a well-documented link between exercise and improved executive functions such as working memory and impulse control. But, until now, the brain boost following exercise has been correlated with bursts of activity lasting 20 minutes or more, said Heath, a Kinesiology professor at Western.

He teamed up with Ashna Samani, a former graduate student, to see if 10 minutes of exercise – half the duration previously documented – would provide the same cognitive improvement. The pair recently published a study, Executive-related oculomotor control is improved following a 10-min single-bout of aerobic exercise: Evidence from the antisaccade task, showing that 10 minutes of exercise was, in fact, sufficient to generate a cognitive boost.

"Exercise is beneficial to this thing called executive control – your ability to remember what I just said, your ability to inhibit what you don't want to do. It's very much high-level cognitive processing and it involves a whole bunch of networks in the brain," Heath said.

"Meta-analyses, or systematic reviews, previously said 20 minutes of exercise was required to elicit any sort of benefit, but the previous studies that looked at that issue used very crude measures of cognitive performance. We had a more sensitive measure to detect more subtle improvements in executive function following exercise," he added.

In Heath and Samani's study, participants cycled for 10 minutes at a moderate to vigorous intensity of aerobic output; the pair measured executive performance before and immediately after the exercise session by examining eye movements, Heath explained.

They instructed study participants to look directly at a target in front of them, a function called a prosaccade task. We all do this about 150,000 times a day, Heath said, and it is the most well-learned task one can perform. The challenge came from asking people to do the opposite, he said. "A target flashes on a screen and instead of looking at it, people have to look away from it. It seems really simple to do – but because we prosaccade so often and so many times a day, it's actually cognitively very complex and involves activation of the same networks in the brain that have shown long-term benefits from long-term exercise."

Heath and Samani used this antisaccade task to measure an individual's eye movements and, by extension, measure the speed of cognitive function. The pair found 10 minutes of exercise significantly improved volunteers' antisaccade performance.

The work is particularly relevant to people with early signs of Alzheimer disease, who haven't yet been diagnosed but who have a high transition rate towards the disease.

"We've shown when these people participate in a 24-week exercise program, they actually have improvement to their executive control," Heath said.

But not all of them are physically or cognitively capable of exercising for the recommended 30-60 minutes of the exercise program he added. This study shows even short exercise periods can benefit participants' brains.

"It's not to say we advocate people should exercise for only 10 minutes; it's just in the cases where people can't go for more than 10 minutes. Next, we want to be able to find out what the intensity should be, how vigorously they should be exercising and if there is an age associated with that," he continued.

"It's probably the case that all people need to do is go for a brisk walk and that will probably provide sufficient threshold for the benefit and we are determining whether there is an age specificity with the (exercise) intensity," he added.