Theme 2: Embedding Well-being in Graduate & Professional Programs

Moderator: Yuna Chen

December 3, 2020
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Improving Graduate Student Well-Being through Constructive Management of Expectations

Clare McGovern, Lecturer, Political Science, SFU

Graduate Supervisory Relationships and Wellbeing: Using Research-Based Theatre to Elicit Deep Dialogue

Susan Cox, Associate Professor and Director of PhD and MSc Programs in SPPH, UBC Vancouver
Michael Lee, Associate Professor of Teaching, School of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, UBC Vancouver

Building a Well-being Community through Embedded Counselling

Anna Kline, Manager and Counsellor, Student Wellbeing, Counselling Services in Allard School of Law, UBC Vancouver
Improving Graduate Student Well-being: Management of Expectations

Clare McGovern and Mark Pickup
SFU Department of Political Science
The issue:
Graduate Student Survey, May 2020

What is your level of familiarity with your supervisors’ expectations for grad students?

- Don’t know
- Know of; don’t understand
- Knew; did not discuss
- Knew and discussed

“My Department provides a supportive environment reducing stress”

Caveats: Small N (21); conducted during the pandemic
The project: The Supervisor-Grad Student relationship

Aims:
- identify and manage inaccurate expectations
- reduce stress for grad students; increase completion rates; reduce completion time

Activities:
- Workshop for grads as they begin to work on their theses/research projects (Summer)
- Info in Orientation session for new grad students (Fall)
- Develop a checklist students and faculty can use to:
  a) find a supervisor/agree to supervise a student: find someone with similar expectations
  b) to plan the research project, agree what is expected from each other
Issues to include in the checklist & training: other suggestions?

- Frequency of meetings; preparation required for meetings
- Contents of research proposal
- Turnaround of comments on drafts
- Career planning for the graduate student (training, networking, reference letters)
- Graduate student’s financial support
- Structuring student’s workload; competing demands
- Mental health / Wellbeing resources at SFU
- Research and program planning resources at SFU
Next steps

▪ Spring 2021: Interviews with grad students: experiences w/ supervisors, impact on stress & completion

▪ Spring 2021: Interviews with supervisors: what works; what does not work

▪ Summer 2021: Develop workshops: Working with your Supervisor

▪ Fall 2021: Integrate checklist into grad seminars on research design & methods
Supervisory relationships are crucial in shaping the wellbeing of graduate students. These relationships are also fraught with challenges.

This project builds upon the methods of research-based theatre to create dialogue and identify strategies to support and enhance wellbeing in graduate supervisory relationships.

See: UBC Research-based Theatre
https://rbtcollaborative.ubc.ca/home
Actors:
Ingrid Boussillon
Tetsuro Shigematsu
Bahareh Shigematsu

Playwright:
Scott Button
Impact of the method

“I have never attended or participated in this type of format before. I enjoyed each performance and getting a chance to chat about each scene” – Staff

“[I was surprised by] **my own emotion, vulnerability, humility** – how much I have yet to learn, how I want to be better, do better by my students” – Faculty

“The performance **showed me the power of theatre in exploring difficult topics** with nuances and poetic language” – Student

“This was a truly awesome experience – the discussion was invaluable” – Faculty
Conclusion & Next Steps

- Phase II filmed version (new title: Rock the Boat) now in progress
- 4 new vignettes focus on specifically on inclusivity and diversity as well as wellbeing
- Pilot scene ready to go live in new online discussion format
- Development of facilitator guide and resources underway
- Educational resource will be available in 2021 for use in range of relevant settings (e.g., graduate student orientation sessions, faculty retreats, staff training)
Project Leads
Susan Cox & Michael Lee

Research Collaborators
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Artistic Collaborators
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Bahareh Shigematsu

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In class workshops particular to course content
• “Coping with traumatic material: A law students guide”
• “Resiliency and the future of law”
• “Respectful dialogue with sensitive material”

Student groups:
• Environmental Law:
  “Creating ripples: How to action change in global issues” (Climate change)
  “Using the natural environment to enhance wellbeing during COVID”
• Asia Pacific Law: “Mental health resilience for anti-Asian racism during COVID”
• Pro Bono Students Canada: “Vicarious trauma”

Student Services:
• Career Services Office: “Wellbeing while networking”
• JD Student Services: “Regulating distress in moots”
• Graduate Student Services: “Exam strategies”
• Indigenous Legal Service: “Harnessing the power of the wise mind”
Wellbeing Promotion

- Wellbeing board
- Tip sheets
- Website
- Instagram
- fb
Outreach

Wellbeing Wednesdays
• UBC Wellness Peers
• Yoga stretches
• UBC Wellbeing – nutrition
• UBS Athletics & Rec – Exercise
• Nurse on Campus

Exam de-stress
Orientations
• Grads, JD’s, Indigenous Students, In class, student volunteer training

We ♥ law students week
• Quick exam stress busters: Progressive muscle relaxation, cognitive reframing and mindfulness
• CBT for exam stress

OCI’s
Embedded Wellbeing: Positive Impact

• Counselling: 7-23% UR (Jan 2019- Apr 2020)
• Incredibly positive reception by students, faculty and staff.
• Easy referrals and instant impact
• Suggestions from student body (review survey) for program planning
  • Check in emails
Thank-you!

#thrivingbeyondcampuses

Stay tuned for our 2021 events in late January and early February! More details soon.

https://covid19.bccampus.ca/thriving-beyond-campuses/