

CASL Meeting #9 Minutes

March 25, 2024

3:00PM – 4:00PM

Zoom Meeting

Attendees: Chaz Aguilar, Francesca Bernardi, Daniel DiMassa (chair), Jim Doyle (secretary), Paula Fitzpatrick (guest), Rudra Kafle, Charles Morse (guest), Emily Perlow, Adam Powell, Stephen Price, Sarah Stanlick

Call to Order: 3:03PM

Charles Morse (Dean of Student Wellness) and Paula Fitzpatrick (Director of the Center for Well-being) joined the committee to provide an update on the work of the Center for Well-Being and the Wellness Coalition.

The Coalition is a working group that meets twice per term to review internal and external data on college mental health, discuss faculty/staff initiatives and perspectives related to well-being, and provide peer support on mental health topics. It takes a population-level preventative approach to wellness. Its membership includes a cross-section of campus: students, staff, faculty, and administration from across multiple units and departments.

WPI is engaged in a year-long process to adopt the Okanagan Charter, an international effort to bring evidence-based approaches to wellness to colleges and universities and to promote the holistic integration of health into all aspects of campus culture and operations, including faculty and staff as well as students. See <https://www.healthpromotingcampuses.org/okanagan-charter> A Coalition working group will present its plan to adopt this charter to senior administration this Spring. If approved, plans will be formalized over the Summer with the goal of seeking formal adoption in the Fall.

It is hoped that joining the Okanagan Charter will allow WPI to join a larger community and help the university sustain its wellness efforts. It will also help ensure that wellness is considered a shared responsibility across campus and facilitate coordination between different groups and initiatives.

The Center for Well-being is currently focused on health and well-being education and promotion, integrating well-being into academics, and promoting and supporting well-being research at WPI. The CWB recently established a new Peer Well-being Ambassadors program in which students will provide peer coaching and advice on foundational skills such as time management and study habits. The CWB is also working on integrating well-being into the academic curriculum. For example, a new series of WPE courses focused on wellness has been established, and a new psychology course on the science and practice of well-being will be offered next academic year. Finally, the CWB joined the Action Network for Equitable Well-being (ANEW) and launched the WISHES survey (Well-Being Improvement Survey for Higher Education Settings).

A question arose about how many students are accessing CWB services. Initial data indicates that more students are engaging with the CWB space and programs this year compared to last year. Efforts are underway to fine-tune collecting data on student engagement with the CWB that don't impact students' willingness to engage.

It was noted that Faculty, while focused on the students, also need to take care of themselves and model good work/life balance. The CWB is interested in working more closely with Faculty. The current state of the mental health crisis that coincided with the COVID pandemic on campus was discussed. It was noted that WPI has implemented many specific changes, including Wellness days, which students report finding valuable, and a revamped medical leave and return policy. In a general sense it was felt that the pandemic disconnected members of the WPI community and made obvious the importance of the systems of support and connection that sustain us.

Adjournment: 3:50 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Doyle (Secretary)