

A Vancouver Community College collaboration with HM|HC's Support Team

In 2021 VCC allocated special funding toward a mental health & well-being framework. HM|HC's Support Team was contracted to assist, providing conceptual expertise and experience in engaging a campus community around envisioning a mental health-conducive environment and identifying priorities for bringing it about at VCC. Besides facilitating the consultation process, the Support Team was charged to draft the framework, to support presentation of it to the campus community, and to contribute to initial efforts in building capacity to promote and implement it.

VCC designated personnel to serve in a Project Team along with HM|HC Support Team members and lead a Mental Health & Well-being Steering Committee formed to advise on and oversee development of the framework and its activation. The Steering Committee was composed of employees and students recruited from various roles and locations in its campus operations. The Project Team typically met (virtually) every two weeks and the Steering Committee monthly, with the HM|HC Support Team members regularly present for and contributing to these meetings from March through December 2021.

Partnership Activities

Following joint planning with the Project Team and Steering Committee, the Support Team proposed a strategy to consult VCC's membership concerning the current and desired landscape for mental health in the institution. This took the threefold form of a survey, a series of focus groups and a set of community dialogues, supplemented by a modest audit of the profile of mental health on website platforms for VCC employees and students. Project Team personnel and Internal Research helped refine the survey and Internal Research administered it. With Project Team personnel identifying representative focus groups from across the institution, providing contacts to encourage participation and helping to arrange schedules, the Support Team prepared questions for and facilitated 25 sessions, then captured and summarized content. The Support Team likewise developed complementary topics for the dialogues, helped with promoting them and orienting potential participants to them and then facilitated 4 collective conversations. Out of all this the Support Team produced a substantive environmental scan report the structure of which significantly benefitted from Project Team input.

The findings underpinned the progressive formulation of the desired framework which the Support Team refined through further feedback from the Project Team, the Steering Committee and other VCC bodies. Communications & Marketing helped make the document more concise and accessible to a campus-wide audience. The Support and Project Team further honed the framework through circulation to and discussion with various levels of very supportive senior leadership at VCC. Support Team facilitation of two fruitful workshop sessions at VCC Day 2021 confirmed a broad welcome and enthusiastic anticipation of the framework and its impending launch and implementation. This was supplemented by the Project Team and Steering Committee's own efforts to extend response to the framework through a mobile Pop-up display inviting response to key priority commitments highlighted.

Since the framework took a robust health promotion approach, the Support Team also encouraged VCC to explore adopting and activating the Okanagan Charter through sessions with a proven practitioner. The ensuing commitment to the Charter bodes well for consistent implementation of the framework.

The HM|HC Support Team supplied VCC with recommendations around appropriate responsive evaluation of the framework initiative and also with congruent marketing considerations.