

HEALTHY  
MINDS

HEALTHY  
CAMPUSES

creating connections. inspiring change.



## Activating the Okanagan Charter in different areas of campus community

A powerful dyad: Universal Design for Learning  
and mental health promotion

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SSHRC  CRSH

# Resourcing student mental health and wellness in the online learning environment

Natalie Frandsen, PHSP



Introduction to the study



Methodology



Main findings



Discussion



Questions

# Introduction to the study

- 25% of first-year, post-secondary students have a disability (Canadian University Survey Consortium, 2019)
- More students are taking online courses (Johnson, 2020; Ostrowski et al., 2017)
- Mental health affects learning and academic performance (Andrews & Wilding, 2004; Eisenberg et al., 2009; St-Onge & Lemyre, 2018)
- Instructional design and institutional accessibility policies influence learning and mental health (St-Onge & Lemyre, 2018)

**GAP:** limited Canadian research examining the factors affecting learning for students with mental health related disabilities (MHRD) in online courses and programs (McManus et al., 2017)

## Central research question

What are the influences on, and experiences of, learning and academic performance for students with mental-health-related disabilities in online courses?

## Significance of the research

Examining equity in education helps facilitate success *for all post-secondary students.*

Context:  
Accommodations  
and accessibility

Duty to accommodate

*(BC Human Rights Code, 1996)*

Registration with DSU to access  
accommodations

Focus on retrofits versus universal access

*(Dolmage, 2017)*

# Inclusion criteria

## Students

DSU registered  
Taken online  
class  
Anxiety and/or  
mood disorder

## Instructors

Taught online in  
past 3 years  
Employed by  
host-university

## Student support

Student support  
role  
Min 20  
hours/week  
Min six months  
in role

## Phase 1: Surveys

[convenience sampling]

Students (n = 116)

Instructors (n = 40)

Student support staff (n = 28)

## Phase 2: Interviews

[purposeful sampling]

Students (n = 14)



Instructors (n = 15)

Student support staff (n = 7)

Data  
collection  
process

# Main findings

## SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL LEVEL

## INFLUENCE ON LEARNING

### Individual level

Mental health status

Disability-related issues

Skills and strategies

Socio-demographic characteristics

### Interpersonal level

Relationships and social connections

Mental health literacy and knowledge of MHRD

### Institutional level

University programs, services and resources

Institutional priorities

Accommodation model

Online learning environment

Inclusive teaching practices



## Individual level: Mental health status

I don't know how I'm going to be feeling and when, so it's not like I can be like, "Oh, I'm going to be unavailable [at a particular time] because I'm having extreme anxiety and panic attacks in *this* week."

[Luis, student]

## Individual level: Disability-related issues

STIGMA

INVISIBLE DISABILITIES

...the instructor said, “Oh, I got this notice that the student needs a note taker. But I saw them [the student], and they write fine, so they’re good.” ... [providing accommodations] is not an option...no, this is your *duty*. You *have to* accommodate to a certain point.

[Sarah, student support staff]

Individual level:  
Personal and academic  
skills and strategies

I have a little timer and I'll set it to 30 minutes...I'll watch a recorded lecture for 30 minutes and then I'll go for a walk with my girlfriend, or I'll pet my cat for 10 minutes. Then I'll come back to the lecture...It's a really good reset.

[Ivan, student]

## Individual level: Sociodemographic influences

I was eligible to get money from student aid but when I was considering it, my mom was adamant that I didn't do it. She said, "You'll have to declare you have a condition with no hope of it improving for the rest of your life, so you're going to be permanently viewed as having a deficit."

[Evelyn, student]

There's a double-edged sword. If you *like* the professor, and you feel like you're failing, it actually causes *more* anxiety to tell them you need help. If you want approval from the prof, you won't want to ask them for support. But if you just want a practical thing, you don't care as much.

[Lena, student]

Interpersonal level: Relationships and social connections

With accommodations, I heard, “You have a seven point something GPA, you don’t need these accommodations. You’re clearly fine.”

[Jacob, student]

I think that maybe some teachers need to get some kind of training about mental health, because I definitely see this attitude by some professors that students just don’t care, or they’re just entitled. And I feel like it affects the way they treat the students, even if they don’t realize it. [Alex, student]

Interpersonal level: Mental health literacy and knowledge of MHRD

Institutional level:  
University resources  
and priorities

...it's like we want to *look like*  
we're going through the  
motions, but we don't *actually*  
*care* about the wellness impact  
because if we did, things would  
look very different.

[Vanessa, student support staff]

## Institutional level: Navigating the accommodation model

Every time you go through your mental health or medical condition narrative, there's a hurt every time. It's not painful, it's not traumatizing, but it's still one more person who knows that there's something wrong with me.

[Libby, student]



Institutional level:  
Online learning  
environment and  
inclusive teaching  
practices

I center circle work in my teaching. So, it's not that I'm *not* aware of universal design, I'm just coming at my teaching from a foundation of using Indigenous pedagogy and circle work.

[Julia, Instructor]

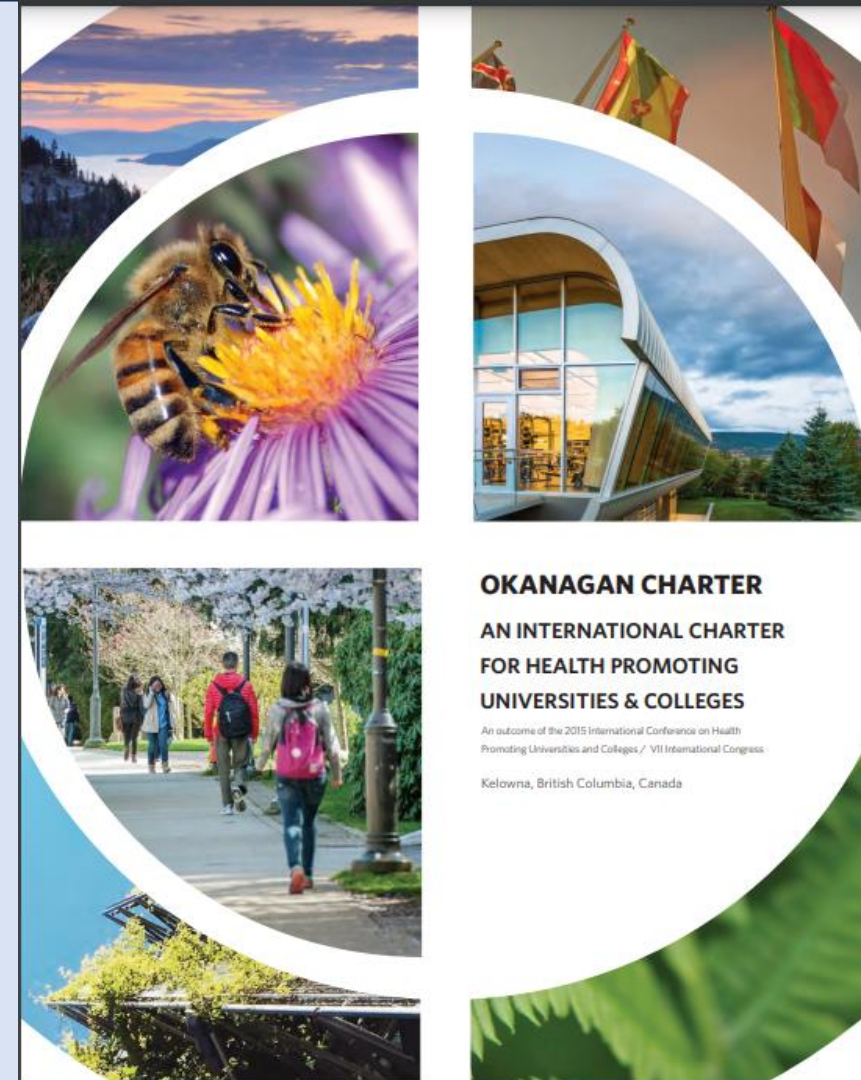
Intended impact of this Summit is to encouraging activation of the Okanagan Charter through:

- building capacity in our learning community to promote collective and personal mental well-being
- support knowledge & skill development for health promotion pursuits

*Through increased intra- and inter-campus collaborations and connections*

# The Okanagan Charter

...calls on post-secondary schools to embed health into all aspects of campus culture and to lead health promotion action and collaboration locally and globally.



# The Okanagan Charter as a tool for change



## CHALLENGES

Stigma

Accommodation model

Resources



## SOLUTIONS

Education

Accessibility and UDL standards

Resource reallocation and community partnerships



## OUTCOME

Inclusive, accessible and mental health promoting online learning environments



Questions?

