

STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE

ADDRESSING STUDENT
MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS
AT MCMASTER UNIVERSITY



EVIDENCE >> INSIGHT >> ACTION

Student-led stakeholder dialogue
Addressing Student Mental Health Needs at McMaster University
Report to Forward with Integrity

(Last updated 31 October 2013)

Funding Statement:

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Faculty/Area: McMaster Health Forum, Faculty of Health Sciences
Project Title: Addressing Student Mental Health Needs at McMaster University

Summary of how Forward with Integrity funds have been spent:

Event Costs: \$2,500 Travel expenses for dialogue participants
Research: \$2,500 Resources for preparation of the issue brief, and dissemination activities

Balance remaining:

All funds have been exhausted to support the project, and so there is no balance remaining.

Summary of Results:

We prepared an issue brief and conducted a stakeholder dialogue on the topic of *Addressing Student Mental Health Needs at McMaster University*. In line with the Forward with Integrity research-focused, student-centered approach, the initiative ensured that relevant evidence on the topic of student mental health was used to fuel action for improving health outcomes through collective problem solving. We provided a briefing to the Deans and Provost meeting in June 2013, presented the findings at the Forward with Integrity event on 10 October 2013, made the outputs of the initiative available in the public domain, and disseminated them to all stakeholders identified through the duration of the project:

- [Topic Overview](#)
- [Issue Brief](#)
- [Dialogue Summary](#)
- Interviews with dialogue participants (available on our [YouTube](#) channel, and as downloadable [audio](#) and [video](#) podcasts on [iTunes U](#)).

The Topic Overview attached to this report provides a high-level summary of the findings. The following pages provide further details about the project.

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Work plan element	Date of delivery
Pre-event consultations with a dialogue steering committee (to frame the terms of reference for the issue brief and to develop the list of key stakeholders)	<u>Completed:</u> 8 consultations were conducted by teleconference between November 2012 and May 2013
Key informant interviews to refine the terms of reference for the issue brief and to identify the different types of individuals who will be involved in or affected by the topic).	<u>Completed:</u> Eighteen key informants interviews were successfully completed prior to completion of the final pre-dialogue version of the issue brief
Pre-event preparation and circulation of an issue brief that mobilizes both global and local research evidence about the problem, three options for addressing the problem, and relevant implementation considerations;	<u>Completed:</u> The issue brief was finalized and disseminated to dialogue participants one week prior to the dialogue date. It has been posted in the public domain on the Forum website.
Hold an event on 10 April 2013 which convenes 18-22 participants for a stakeholder dialogue to address the need for cohesive and collaborative mental health programming strategies on campus.	<u>Completed:</u> The stakeholder dialogue took place on 10 April 2013 and brought together 21 participants.
Post-event video interviews with willing dialogue participants (1.5 minutes on average), talking about the insights that they derived from the dialogue and any actions that they think need to be taken to address the challenge	<u>Completed:</u> Sixteen video interviews we conducted and are be posted on the Forum’s YouTube channel and iTunesU page in the next few weeks.
Post-event preparation and dissemination of a high-level dialogue summary ;	<u>Completed:</u> The dialogue summary has been prepared and is posted in the public domain, on the Forum website.
Post-event preparation and delivery of a personalized briefing to a group selected by the dialogue steering committee; the briefing will include the findings the evidence brief and the dialogue, and a discussion about implications and action considerations for key stakeholders	<u>Completed:</u> The personalized briefing is planned for 5 June at the Deans’ and Provost meeting.
Post-event preparation and dissemination (in hard copy and electronically) of a topic overview document, that will provide a high-level summary (two pages) of the stakeholder dialogue, with hyperlinks to the brief that informed the dialogue, the dialogue summary and the post-dialogue video interviews, and with acknowledgement of partners and funders.	<u>Completed:</u> The draft topic overview has been prepared and is posted in the public domain, on the Forum website.

There has been a recent movement towards addressing mental health needs of students and the challenges they face in post-secondary institutions across Canada, and there is growing focus on improving mental health services on McMaster campus to address the varied needs of the student population. Student and university leaders have been taking steps to proactively approach this topic and ensure the mental health system is adequately prepared to meet the needs of the students. In order to address the need for cohesive and collaborative mental health programming strategies on campus, the McMaster Health Forum Student Subcommittee led the coordination of a stakeholder dialogue project on the topic of ‘**Addressing student mental health needs at McMaster University**’. This stakeholder dialogue, convened on April 10, 2013, aimed to address the key issue of mental health needs of undergraduate and graduate students at McMaster University, and was centred on how access, coordination, promotion, and continuity of mental health support services could be improved to enhance the student experience.

Preparations for this dialogue began in November 2012 when the steering committee was set up to help inform and oversee the project. The steering committee comprised of representatives from the Student Wellness Centre, School of Graduate Studies, DeGroot School of Business, Faculty of Humanities, and McMaster Health Forum, and pre-event consultations with the dialogue steering committee were made through seven hour-long meetings between November 2012 to April 2013. An issue brief, prepared prior to the dialogue, mobilized both global and local research evidence about the problem, three options for addressing the problem, and relevant implementation considerations. The steering committee helped frame the terms of reference for the issue brief, identify key informants and dialogue participants, identify potential funding avenues for the dialogue, and review the draft student-led issue brief. Additionally, the steering committee will also convene for two post-dialogue consultations to review the draft dialogue summary and the dialogue evaluation report.

The content of the issue brief was also developed based on the input received from 18 key informants identified by the steering committee. Key informants (from all over Canada) were selected based on their ability to provide input on the issues that were covered in the draft terms of reference for the issue brief about the health challenge, ability to suggest sources of data and/or research evidence about the issues covered in the terms of reference for the issue brief, and the ability to suggest potential invitees to the dialogue given the issues covered in the terms of reference for the issue brief. We conducted 20-30 minute key informant interviews over the phone or Skype, or in person.

The steering committee also helped identify the participants for the dialogue. Participants were selected based on their ability to bring unique views and experiences to bear on the challenge and learn from the research evidence and from others' views and experiences and ability to champion within their respective constituencies the actions that will address the challenge creatively. The dialogue participants represented one or more of the following categories: policymaker in the McMaster community, manager in a university-run student support service, manager in a student-run mental health service delivery organization/clinic, manager/clinical leader in a healthcare institution, manager in a community-based organization (e.g., community mental health programs, etc), staff/member of a mental health provider association or group, student/family with lived experience in University life, researcher at McMaster University, and researcher/manager in another university/jurisdiction.

The dialogue, held on 10 April 2013, convened 21 participants for an off-the-record deliberative dialogue, which included all planning and management of event coordination, participants' travel, food and drinks at the event, and equipment. The event took place from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm in the DialogueSpace, a purpose-build facility located centrally on campus, at McMaster Health Forum office in Mills Memorial Library. Key deliberations and overarching themes at the dialogue were captured by two student secretariat members, Emily Milko and Lebei Pi, who drafted the dialogue summary with support from the dialogue facilitator, Dr. John Lavis. In addition to the dialogue summary, the student secretariat members prepared a topic overview document that provides a high-level summary (two pages) of the dialogue, with hyperlinks to the brief that informed the dialogue, dialogue summary and post-dialogue video interviews, and with acknowledgement of partners and funders.

Both the dialogue summary and the topic overviews have been disseminated to the key stakeholders, partners, and funders following the steering committee's review and approval. Dissemination activities included making the dialogue outputs available in the public domain through the McMaster Health Forum website and iTunes U account, and through all the organizations represented in the Student Subcommittee and its Advisory Council, as well as through electronic dissemination to stakeholders identified during the project, submissions of articles to a variety of publications, postings through our social media channels (the Forum's [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) account, the Student Subcommittee's Twitter account and [blog](#)).

Post-event video interviews were conducted with 16 willing dialogue participants (1.5 minutes on average), talking about the insights that they derived from the dialogue and any actions that they thought needed to be taken to address the challenge. Additionally, the McMaster Health Forum and the student organizers prepared and delivered a personalized briefing to leaders at McMaster. The briefing included the findings and the evaluation of both the issue brief and the dialogue, as well as a discussion about implications and action considerations for key stakeholders at McMaster.

The initiative has provided students with an opportunity to conduct hands-on work and participate directly in all aspects of the project. We have integrated research into educational activities: during the project, students involved were mentored and coached and had the opportunity to work under the supervision of faculty and staff to learn specific skills such as finding and using research evidence, writing issue briefs, interviewing, presentation, networking, and project management. Our work involved interdisciplinary collaboration among the programs represented in the Student Subcommittee (Bachelor of Health Sciences, Arts and Science, Life Sciences) and its Advisory Committee (nursing, engineering, and health, aging and society), as well as between the student organizers and the dialogue steering committee (comprised of representatives from the Student Wellness Centre, School of Graduate Studies, DeGroot School of Business, Faculty of Humanities, and McMaster Health Forum).

Further Criteria to be addressed:

How has the project challenged the confines of existing programming and advanced new paradigms of research or education?

We hope that this initiative will help generate action both by those who participated in the dialogue and by those who review the dialogue outputs (topic overview, issue brief, dialogue summary and the video interviews with dialogue participants), towards a campus-wide strategy that would have a profound impact on the student body and would have a long-lasting effect on how mental health needs are addressed at McMaster. We believe that the entire student body of McMaster University will eventually benefit directly or indirectly from the adoption of a strategy to address student mental health needs, including better services, more cohesion, greater access, and removal of stigma. This includes the 3000+ graduate full-time students, along with an additional 4000+ part-time students enrolled at McMaster University.

Please outline any barriers or challenges that may have prevented you from achieving some of your project goals.

We successfully reached all our project goals, and want to thank Forward with Integrity again for the support provided to this important initiative.