



# NIRSA & NASPA HEALTH & WELLBEING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP FORUM

October 12-14, 2017



**T**hought leaders from NASPA, NIRSA and ACHA recently gathered at the University of Miami to discuss emerging strategies and best practices for fostering cultures of health and wellbeing on college campuses. One common thread was the deep desire to shift from individual efforts – including at an association level – to developing integrated strategies, with traditional lines blurred, to map and build a shared vision and future. The compelling issues and challenges facing higher education across North America need new leadership approaches.

Currently, all three associations have many efforts underway to serve their membership and develop new resources related to health and wellbeing. ACHA is in the process of developing Healthy Campus 2030, making changes to the NCHA Survey, and considering the collection of related data for faculty and staff. In January, NASPA is offering a new Strategies Conference for Well-being and Health Promotion Leadership concurrently with the other NASPA conferences. NIRSA is actively promoting the promising practices that build a culture of health at several member institutions and working to educate members about the need to embed wellbeing practices in all that we do. They recently by resolution of the Board of Directors endorsed the Okanagan Charter: An International Charter for Health Promoting Universities & Colleges. The Charter's goal is to "enhance the success of our institutions; create campus culture of compassion, well-being, equity and social justice; improve the health of the people who live, learn, work, play and love on our campuses; and strengthen the ecological, social and economic sustainability of our communities and wider society."

The Thought Leadership Forum was designed with two general outcomes in mind. First, as a time to learn from one another about promising and best practices from the diverse expertise and various institutional types assembled. Second, by scaffolding the dialogue, experiences, and learning from one another within the forum, to explore larger strategies for impact at the professional association level.

This was the very first inter-association dialogue about emerging issues and opportunities to improve the wellbeing of students across the country, North America and around the world.

There were several exciting campus highlights shared from those in attendance ranging from Duke's longitudinal study of resiliency; UCLA's Healthy Campus Network working to make the healthy choice the easy choice; Georgia Tech's pursuit of "smart and happy" people; Wake Forest's THRIVE program changing the environment through leadership commitments for offices to be a 'well space'; University of Miami's ShapeUp providing incentives for faculty/staff creating WellCaines; University of Wisconsin Oshkosh's outdoor adventure/nature retreats for student communities including first generation students and those working through grief and anxiety, and The College of New Jersey's mental health initiative bringing health providers to campus.

In the last decade there have been significant advances and examples of new models to address mental and physical health challenges. However, even the most progressive schools with widely supported healthy campus initiatives, have experienced fundamental challenges inherent in the higher education structure. Significant conversation was centered on moving past "who owns" wellness on campus to strategies for "de-siloing" and effectively working across boundaries.

Discussion about the need for a concerted effort within each profession included opportunities for leadership at the association level, potentially endorsing a common framework such as Bringing Theory to Practice Model and/or the Okanagan Charter. Potential next steps include a multiple association position statement; identifying key influencers within each association to represent this new integrated and reimagined healthy campus at various meetings/conferences/educational programs; and investigating new opportunities to share expertise and resources between associations (e.g. emerging, promising and best practices, research and assessment, publications) just to name a few.



# CREATING AN ENVISIONED HEALTHY CAMPUS

Preliminary Strategies and Principles

## PERSONAL/INTERPERSONAL

- Develop new approaches for incoming students to increase the likelihood of having students who are healthy to learn and ready to learn how to be healthy – examine opportunities for new K-12 interventions, including educating and engaging with parents, alumni and larger community
- Support the development and delivery of a multi-cultural and multi-lingual approach
- Model the ingredients of a healthy brain – move, nourish, discovery, relax, connect
- Embrace the diversity of thoughts and civil actions that encourage the disruption of negative patterns and organizational systems and supports readiness for change
- Serve as a champion for evidence based interventions, programs, services and strategies – be persistent in helping others find their space under a larger umbrella
- Recognize and address relational deficits in our students via mentoring and fostering meaningful connections
- Recognize the growing pressures on colleagues, especially in urgent care services
- Model and encourage advocacy for other colleagues and peer units and extend sphere of influence to break down boundaries



## INSTITUTIONAL/ORGANIZATIONAL

- Move from working with another department on campus as collaborative partners to a more sustainable integrated approach – reinforce opportunities to focus on the whole and not the separate parts
- Consider organizational alignments that support an integrated care approach and shift the focus from specific department or program elements to a larger harmony of multiple dimensions across all areas of an institution, including and especially the academy
- Develop a common language essential to a participatory and actionable shared vision with shared outcomes
- Utilize new theories, models and frameworks that weave a social-ecological approach with public health strategies and growing evidence rooted in positive psychology (e.g. broaden and build theory; appreciative inquiry; connectedness and social trust; PERMA; Okanagan Charter; etc.)
- Develop a strategic assessment strategy so we know what we are doing is working
- Support and encourage relevant interdisciplinary and inter-association research
- Build organizational capacity with an acknowledgment of needed expertise and those who can be effective in the white spaces – competencies of greater elasticity and resiliency
- Build community bridges by integrating health in a digitally connected university
- Build and share widely the value proposition including a brand and communication strategy



## ENVIRONMENTAL/CULTURAL

- Identify opportunities to reduce environmental stress within a culture of immediacy – let go of perfection to achieve excellence in the moment
- Adopt an approach that considers sense of place and social justice in recognizing the space and context in which we live and thrive
- Invest in physical design and spaces that move away from a clinical focus to a seamless continuum of services that nurture, re-generate, and encourages movement
- Adopt new building standards in all construction that still embrace environmental leadership (LEED) while focusing on the health and wellbeing of the occupant over time to maximize productivity, engagement, and retention (WELL Building & Community Standards, etc.)
- Rethink creating optimal conditions to enhance wellbeing – move beyond the traditional health education model of health promotions to a holistic-system-setting approach
- Change the paradigm from measuring return on investment to value of investment



## POLICY

- Shift the primary organizational focus from immediate and urgent care and interventions to “upstream” strategies and policies – accept that incremental changes in an overburdened system of care are still moving in a positive direction
- Healthy people in a healthy community is the work and responsibility of everyone – infuse new opportunities throughout the whole organization and develop incentives to change behavior (e.g. faculty tenure process; merit raises; job descriptions; visible signs of gratitude; etc.)
- Establish a way forward that recognizes and included the interdependent elements that contribute to a healthier society - students, faculty, staff, alumni and the communities in which we live
- Change funding models so being healthy is less expensive and translates to measurable impacts



## Invited Forum Participants:

**Jake Baggott**, Assistant Vice President, Student Development, Health & Wellness at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (ACHA)

**Mick Deluca**, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Campus Life at UCLA

**Mark Forest**, Interim Assistant Vice President for Health and Wellness at The College of New Jersey

**Stephanie Gordon**, Vice President for Professional Development for NASPA

**Stacey Hall**, Director of Campus Recreation at University of New Hampshire

**Suzy Harrington**, Executive Director, Health & Well-Being at Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech)

**Devin Jopp**, CEO of American College Health Association

**Scott Levin**, Executive Director, Wellness and Recreation at University of Miami

**Ken Morton**, Director of Campus Recreation at Stephen F. Austin State University and incoming NIRSA Board President

**Art Munin**, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Development/Dean of Students at University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

**Erin O'Sullivan**, Director of Advocacy & Strategic Partnerships for NIRSA

**Estela Rivero**, Assistant Vice President, Student Affairs at University of Albany

**Tom Roberts**, Associate Vice President, Recreation and Wellness at University of Richmond

**Malika Roman Isler**, Director of Wellbeing at Wake Forest University

**Frank Ross**, Vice President for Student Affairs at Butler University

**Sue Wasiolek**, Associate Vice President, Dean of Students at Duke University

**Pam Watts**, Executive Director for NIRSA

**Pat Whitely**, Vice President of Student Affairs at University of Miami

Thought Leadership Forum planner and facilitator **Kathleen Hatch** is former Assistant Vice President of Campus Life at Washington State University, NIRSA Past President, and currently Principal Consultant at Hatch Group, a strategic advisor and healthy campus specialist.