

Recreation for Wellbeing

Course Resource Guide

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Inter-association Definition of Well-being

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Purpose & Background

Health and Well-being in Higher Education:

A *Commitment to Student Success* commits to innovating, supporting, and fostering a holistic, integrated, and strategic approach to well-being from the association level to the institutional level. In our pursuit to co-create cultures of integrated well-being on campuses worldwide, we want to ensure we are building from a shared understanding and foundation. Since there was not an existing definition that defined well-being, especially as it applies to higher education, the members of our organizations asked that one be created.

To this end, we have worked together — as a community of experts from across our respective fields — to review the many existing well-being theories and to adapt those theories

and language into an overarching definition of well-being for higher education. This definition, and its supplementary material, is meant to be foundational; we hope a shared understanding can be a stepping stone to systemic change. This document is, of course, not exhaustive, and it does not intend to mean all things to all organizations or specialty areas; rather, the goal is to be widely usable. Our definition is tailored to inform programming, policies, and practices in support of well-being in higher education settings. Additionally, we acknowledge that well-being is not solely a place-based concept. An opportunity exists for us to consider well-being more broadly in a plurality of higher education contexts, including the online environment. In this manner, connectedness to the institution is an overarching sense that students take with them wherever they go.

Simple definition

We define well-being as an optimal and dynamic state that allows people to achieve their full potential.

Expanded definition

We define well-being as an optimal and dynamic state that allows people to achieve their full potential. Our focus is on two interdependent types of well-being: 1) individual and 2) community. **Individual well-being** is defined within three broad and interrelated categories: (a) the perceived assessment of one's own life as being generally happy and satisfying, (b) having one's human rights and needs met, and (c) one's contribution to the community. **Community well-being** is defined by relationships and connectedness, perceived quality of life for *all people* in the community, and how well the community meets the needs of *all members*. By focusing on the whole — the whole person, the whole educational experience, the whole institution, the whole community — well-being becomes a multifaceted goal and a shared responsibility for the entire institution.

Individual well-being

Individual well-being is more explicitly defined by three interrelated components – subjective well-being, objective well-being, and civic well-being. Table 1 presents the definitional and contributing factors by individual well-being component.

1. **Subjective well-being** is expressed when people feel good and think their lives are good; they would rank themselves high on measures of happiness and life satisfaction and low on measures of negative mood. The affective (e.g., feeling good) and cognitive (e.g., thinking life is good) aspects of subjective well-being can move independently from one another.
2. **Objective well-being** is realized when people have their basic human rights and needs met. Objective wellbeing includes but is not limited to: sufficient resources such as food, housing, safety, and physical/mental health care; experiences of systemic equity and diversity; experiences of liberty and freedom of participation at all levels of society; and experiences of unfettered human rights such as freedom of speech, voting access, and justice system protections.
3. **Civic well-being** is demonstrated by acting on community-supportive values and contributing to the communities in which they live. These communities may include institution, local, state, national, and global communities. Recognizing their own value and impact on the whole community, they actively participate in at least one behavior that benefits others. Additionally, they reject biased and prejudicial beliefs, and work within communities that are anti-racist and established to address and overcome social injustice. In other words, they act in support of the subjective and objective well-being of others, rather than detracting from it.

Community well-being

Community well-being is similarly defined by two interrelated components – subjective well-being and objective well-being. Although a community cannot be well if its members are not well, community well-being mainly refers to the structures, systems, and normative behavior of the community rather than the sum of individual well-being. Individuals striving for well-being need communities of well-being to engage fully in this pursuit. Table 2 presents the definitional and contributing factors by community well-being component.

1. **Subjective community well-being** is a collective perception expressed by groups of people regarding their shared sense of community and satisfaction with community life. Additionally, people perceive that the overall quality of life is good and just for all community members regardless of differences across individual identities.
2. **Objective community well-being** is an externally verifiable measure of the structures, systems, practices, values, and normative behaviors that contribute to sufficient and equitable opportunities, resources, conditions, and other socio-ecological factors that make a particular community setting more conducive to the achievement of full potential beyond what is possible for a single individual. It is also important to recognize that institutions of higher education are embedded in a larger society and are dependent on the well-being of the ecosystems of the planet.

Table 1. Definitional and Contributing Factors by Individual Well-Being Component

	Definitional Factors	Contributing Factors: What are the necessary skills, resources, and conditions?
Subjective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling happy Life satisfaction Self-esteem Feeling hopeful/content Feeling calm/at peace Limited experience of negative moods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy coping and stress management skills Optimism Appropriate/healthy skepticism Meaning Purpose Belonging Engagement in activities and academics Social support networks Achievement Mastery Supportive campus norms, policies, practices, resources, and spaces Faculty and staff who design curriculum and programs with these factors in mind Faculty and staff who model these factors
Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficient resources such as food, housing, safety, and physical/mental health care Experiences of systemic equity and diversity Experiences of liberty and freedom of participation at all levels of society Experiences of unfettered human rights such as freedom of speech, voting access, and justice system protections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supportive campus norms, policies, practices, and resources (see Community Well-being)
Civic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valuing doing good for others Valuing political engagement Valuing humanitarian rights Valuing volunteering Being connected to others regardless of identity Engaging in political activism Engaging in environmentally-friendly practices Valuing well-being for yourself and others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supportive campus norms, policies, practices, and resources Faculty and staff who teach about these things Faculty and staff who model these things School-supported opportunities to engage civically

Table 2. Definitional and Contributing Factors by Community Well-Being Component

	Definitional Factors	Contributing Factors: What are the necessary skills, resources, and conditions?
Subjective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equity Sense of community Collective efficacy Social capital Place and planet Satisfaction with the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respect, fairness, and justice for all Equal opportunity to achieve full potential Resilience and empowerment Interpersonal relationships Shared emotional connection Shared sense of identity Belonging Influence Trust Cooperation, co-creation, and reciprocity Integration and fulfillment of needs Leadership of beneficence, integrity, competence, and vision Satisfaction with the institution Institutional pride
Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Accessible, secure sources of food and housing Accessible health-supporting services Accessible culture and arts Accessible recreation and leisure opportunities Systemic equity Systemic diversity Liberty and freedom of participation at all levels of society Unfettered human rights Environmental quality and ecosystem stability Sustainability Economics Infrastructure/buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supportive policies, practices, and norms Supportive campus expectations and norms Sufficient resources and allocation of resources on campus Fair and equitable distribution of resources on campus Available helping relationships Procedures and practices that facilitate sense of community, relationships, and social connection “Green spaces” and good air quality Biophilic design

References

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- Based on these readings, are there things that you or your department should keep doing, start doing or stop doing?

Keep	Start	Stop

- Additional Notes

Post-Module Reflection & Activity Checklist:

- Submit your Post-Module Reflection survey
- Revisit/update [Connecting the Definition Activity - Personal](#)
- Complete [Part 1 of the Action Plan Project](#)
- Respond to Connect community discussion question
 - Considering the content presented in Module 1, post a response to the question: How does your work in higher education, specifically recreation, contribute to wellbeing?

Connecting to the Definition Activity – Personal

Connecting the Definition to Your Life Experience

In this section, you will think through ways in which wellbeing shows up in your life using the components of the [Inter-association Definition](#). This activity is for your own reflection and to help ground the concepts of wellbeing – outside of our work context.

Don't get stuck on perfect; focus on getting comfortable with the components in each column. Note that this reflection can show where your wellbeing is being supported, as well as where it may be struggling.

Brief examples are provided to get you started, followed by a blank chart for your work. List as many things as you can think of and, if needed, add more lines.

Example:

Individual			Community	
Subjective	Objective	Civic	Subjective	Objective
I struggle to balance the demands of my family and work.	I have food and housing security.	I volunteer with my daughter's Girl Scout troop.	My community has an amazing outdoor recreation community that I am a part of.	I have access to a variety of safe spaces to engage in movement and recreational activities I enjoy.
My work with colleagues and students feels rewarding.	I feel respected in my department, but not in the larger community.	I serve on the university's employee recognition committee.	There's a lack of diversity in our community and not everyone feels supported.	The infrastructure for recreation/ affordable housing/etc in this area is lacking.
My dog brings me happiness everyday.	I struggle to pay my (family's) medical bills.	I always hold the door for other people.	The community reinforces my passion for sustainability.	The community lacks opportunities for my spouse to find employment.

Individual			Community	
Subjective	Objective	Civic	Subjective	Objective

- Based on these readings, are there things that you or your department should start doing, stop doing or keep doing?

Keep	Start	Stop

- Additional Notes

Post-Module Reflection & Activity Checklist:

- Submit your Post-Module Reflection survey
- Complete [Part 2 of the Action Plan Project](#)
- Respond to Connect community discussion question
 - Considering the content presented in Modules 1 & 2, post a response to the question:
What is one change you could make in your thinking and/or work that would improve your work's impact on wellbeing?

- Based on these readings, are there things that you or your department should keep doing, start doing or stop doing?

Keep	Start	Stop

- Additional Notes

Post-Module Reflection & Activity Checklist:

- Submit your Post-Module Reflection survey
- Complete [Part 3 of the Action Plan Project](#)
- Submit Action Plan Project slides on the Connect community discussion thread

- Based on these readings, are there things that you or your department should start doing, stop doing or keep doing?

Keep	Start	Stop

- Additional Notes

Post-Module Reflection & Activity Checklist:

- Submit your Post-Module Reflection survey
- Complete [Part 4 of the Action Plan Project](#)
- Respond to Connect community discussion question
 - Reflect back on what you have learned and your experience in the course. As we know, this work is never-ending; with that in mind, what area(s) do you still have questions on and/or would like additional learning on as you continue this work?

Action Plan Project

As part of the culminating work of this course, we would like you to take what you have learned and formulate an action plan for progress. The project plan should be specific to your work on your campus.

At the conclusion of each module, there will be an activity for you to complete. These activities will help you begin to connect what you have learned in the module with this final plan. In an effort to provide the most value and understanding for this project, please follow the timeline below for completing each step in this project.

- [Part 1 | Complete at the conclusion of Module 1](#)
- [Part 2 | Complete at the conclusion of Module 2](#)
- [Part 3 | Complete at the conclusion of Module 3](#)
- [Part 4 | Complete at the conclusion of Module 4](#)

Part 1a: Connecting to your work

Now that you have completed Module 1 and have a better understanding of the Inter-association Definition of Well-being, we would like you to connect it back to your work. In this activity, you will think through ways in which your daily work contributes to wellbeing through the lens of this definition. Note that there may be multiple levels to think about depending on your role. Consider your work with participants, student employees, graduate assistants, professional staff, colleagues, etc.

Don't get stuck on finding the 'right' or 'best' answer; the goal is to get comfortable with thinking differently. You may find some components more challenging to connect your work to than others; if that's the case, consider listing some questions instead. You may notice that some ideas could align with multiple components. At this stage, it is more important to recognize how your work contributes to wellbeing overall, and it's less important to label it in the 'right' column.

It is recommended that you take time individually to complete this activity first. Once completed individually, you can move to Part 1b.

Brief examples are provided to get you started, followed by a blank chart for your work. List as many things as you can think of and, if needed, add more lines.

Example: Outdoor Program

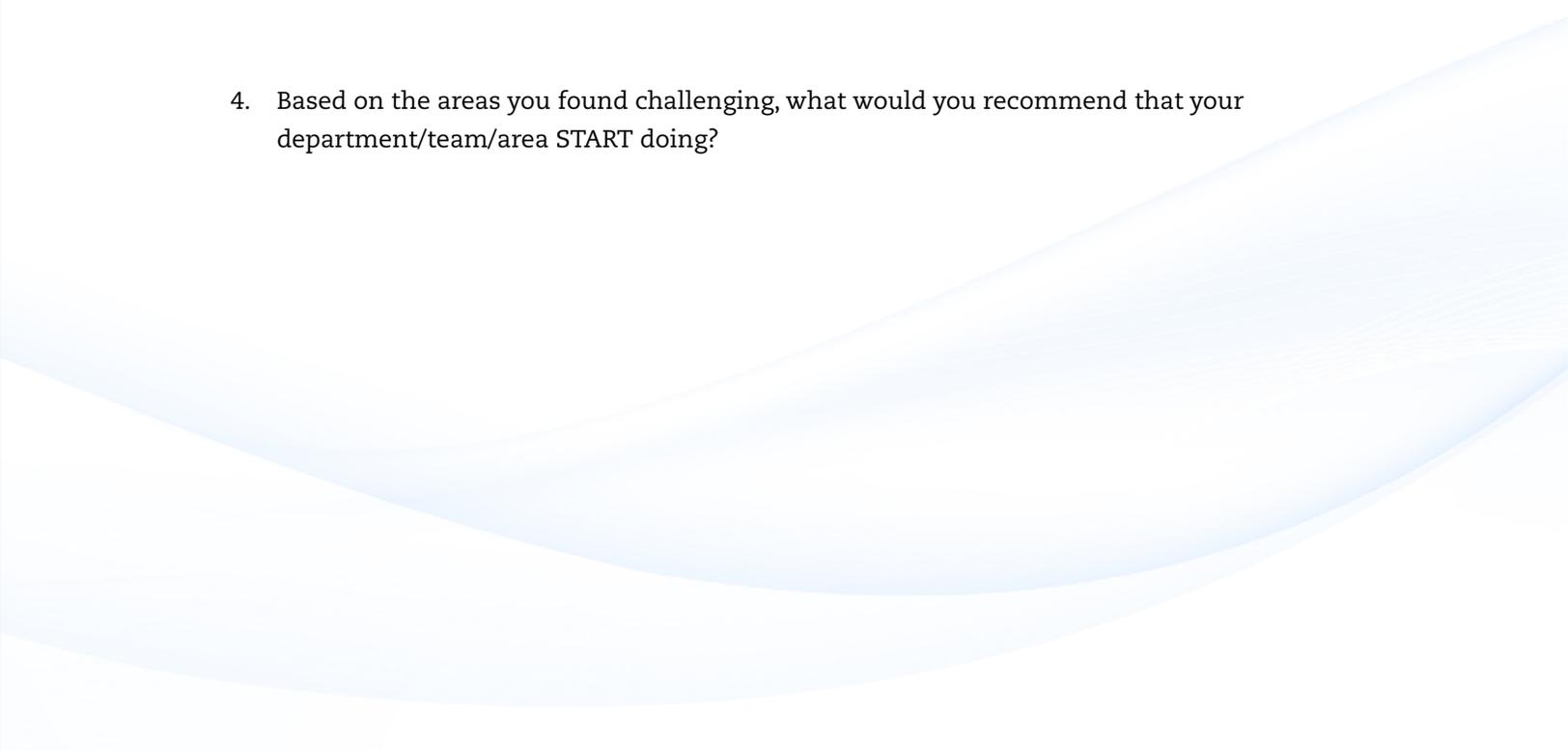
Individual			Community	
Subjective	Objective	Civic	Subjective	Objective
Give students the opportunity to learn new skills, explore local areas, and create a sense of belonging and play.	Provide opportunities for student employees to earn money for food, housing, etc.	Encourage and practice inclusive language in all programming.	Offer regular inclusive climbing wall events/ space to create a sense of community.	Build relationships with relevant academic departments and local parks and recreation initiatives/ venues for ongoing partnerships.
Leadership roles for students to gain interpersonal skills. Empower students through trips, climbing and challenge programming.	Provide training to ensure safe programs and equipment, train staff to cook inclusive meals for all diets.	Professional and student staff are trained in and promote environmentally-conscious practices.	Work with non-traditional participants to identify opportunities that would be meaningful for them.	Consider the benefits of the full outdoor community (students, staff, and local resources).

Example: Business Services

Individual			Community	
Subjective	Objective	Civic	Subjective	Objective
Provide training to students for transferable skills and department onboarding.	Provide safe, inclusive environments in student work stations. Deliver a welcoming onboarding experience for all staff.	Participate in the annual food drive for the Food Pantry.	Focus on inclusivity and wellbeing in our staff recruitment and hiring/training, as well as our communications and marketing.	Ensure appropriate budget management to meet the needs of the department.
Create opportunities for student recognition and promotion.	Support all department staff with inclusive hiring practices and welcoming onboarding for all staff.	Discuss how our work impacts the efforts of the rest of the department.	Review recruitment and hiring practices for bias.	What policies could we examine? What would we be looking for? How do I know I'm not making a change just because?

Individual			Community	
Subjective	Objective	Civic	Subjective	Objective

Reflection Questions:

1. What components did you find more challenging to connect your work with?
 2. What are the norms within the culture of your campus/organization that detract from wellbeing?
 3. Based on this activity, what would you recommend that your department/team/area KEEP doing?
 4. Based on the areas you found challenging, what would you recommend that your department/team/area START doing?
- 

Part 1b: Connecting with your team

Now that you have individually connected your work through the lens of the Inter-association Definition, we would like you to expand your reflection to your team(s). Schedule time with team members to discuss how your work connects to wellbeing. This exercise aims to help you to gain different perspectives, connect dots across areas and team members, and reflect on your collective work. (Given those goals, define what 'team' means to you based on your position and institution.)

Questions to consider as you reflect with your team:

1. Why is wellbeing part of our collective work?
2. How does the collective work of your team(s) enhance individual wellbeing? How does it detract from individual wellbeing?
3. How does the collective work of your team(s) reinforce an aligned vision for community wellbeing for everyone? How does it detract from community wellbeing?

Part 2: Idea brainstorm

Begin to brainstorm ideas of what specific action you could take on your campus, in your organization, etc. to impact change.

Feeling stuck? Here are some tips to help you get started:

- Refer back to Part 1 of the Action Plan Project.
- Review the discussion thread comments for ideas from your fellow course attendees.
- Reflect back on the notes you took from Modules 1 & 2.

	#1	#2	#3
Idea for change			
Why is this change important/needed?			
Who will be impacted by this change?			

Part 3: Action plan project

Use the questions below as a guide for what should be included in your plan. Please summarize your plan in a short PowerPoint presentation (3-5 slides) and upload it to the Connect community discussion board post.

1. What system are you aiming to impact?
2. What is the desired change you are wanting to make?
3. What population are you trying to impact with this change?
4. Why is this change needed?

Part 4: Continue the journey

As we wrap up this course and reflect on the information gathered over the past eight weeks, we hope you will continue to connect and share with your colleagues to collectively move this work forward.

To begin this process, please take a moment to review a fellow participants' action plan project. Then comment with your thoughts, suggestions, or reflections.

Questions to consider in your review:

1. Is there a clear outcome for what the plan is trying to accomplish?
2. Is the WHY for the change defined?
3. Does the plan include a strategy for measuring impact/improvement?