Discussion Paper

Cultivating a Flourishing Campus: Towards A Whole Campus Approach
For Consideration and Discussion

Outline

1   Purpose

This discussion paper will present the following:

- Common approaches and practices driving the development and implementation of a whole campus approach to supporting wholistic student success and wellbeing.
- Evidence-informed guiding models guiding the development of a whole campus approach.
- A sample model for StFX, including principles, priorities and actions

2   What is a Whole Campus Approach?

Well-being is created through the experiences of our everyday lives, and is influenced by diverse stakeholders, many of whom are outside of the traditional health realm (World Health Organization, 2014).

Whole Campus

A whole campus approach is about everything. From policies, the physical environment, social inclusion, curriculum, classroom interaction, education of faculty and staff, skill-building for students, counselling and crisis intervention, and more. It requires a proactive, systemic approach.

This requires faculty, staff, administrators, student leaders and students – that is, everyone on campus – to be engaged in understanding and enacting the role they play in supporting student mental health, well-being and success.

Whole Student

Taking a whole campus approach is about the whole student, recognizing the powerful link between physical health, emotions, thinking, behaviour, social interaction, and student success. It means taking a wholistic approach and not artificially separating 'academic' support needs from 'personal' support.

This approach is about all students, all of the time. It is about recognizing that mental health and well-being can fluctuate, and that the focus needs to be on flourishing at university, understanding that mental health and well-being is much more than the absence of illness.

Common Elements:

- Extends the focus beyond the individual to include the environment, organizational structure, policies and practices; views the whole campus as the domain to be addressed.
- Creates environmental conditions for the flourishing of all students that are grounded in values of equity, accessibility and inclusion.
- Provides targeted programs for students who would benefit from assistance; and provides specialized services for students experiencing mental health issues.
- Grounded in values of informed choice and inclusion of students' voices in strategy development and decision-making, especially of students with lived experiences of mental health issues.

- Involves all stakeholders in a collective, shared responsibility for creating campus environmental conditions that support student learning and mental health.

3   What Have We Heard

Student mental health and well-being has become a primary concern for post-secondary institutions (PSI), with many adopting a systemic, whole campus approach. Aligned with this, in June 2020, the Mental Health Commission of Canada released the National Standards for Mental Health and Well-being for Post-Secondary Students. The Standards include a set of flexible, voluntary guidelines that institutions can use to apply an evidence-informed approach to support the mental health and well-being of their students.

A review of campus mental health strategies identifies a common but changing landscape of student mental health needs. Common drivers highlighting the need for a collaborative, integrated approach to supporting wholistic student success and well-being include:
.
- Recognition that PSIs have a responsibility and role to play in their students' mental health and the reciprocal relationship between student mental health and academic achievement.
- Recognition that students undergo a number of psychosocial transitions from secondary to post-secondary education (e.g., moving away from home for their education, changing social supports, and movement towards independent living arrangement and study).
- Recognition of diversity related to cultural identity, international student needs, gender identity, sexual identity, Indigenous student needs, Black student needs, and students with disability and the need for culturally-relevant and trauma-informed services and spaces.

Student Experience and Opportunity Plan

In Fall 2021, the StFX Senate Quality of Life Committee hosted a series of campus-wide consultations sessions to inform the StFX Student Experience and Opportunity Plan. Across all constituencies at StFX – students, staff and faculty – there were strong recommendations made around the University's collective approach to issues concerning student mental health and well-being:

- StFX – as an institution and community – would benefit from a more comprehensive understanding of the roles and responsibilities that every member of the university community in supporting student success and well-being.

- Historically excluded students face particular challenges – including Indigenous, Black, international students, and students with disabilities. Programs and services must be tailored and sensitive to their needs.

- Faculty and staff could be more consistently and deeply included in the conversation about mental health and well-being, including an understanding of their roles and responsibilities in responding to student mental health concerns as teachers/mentors (*not* as counsellors) and best practices in creating and sustaining a caring, empathic, healthy and trauma-informed learning environment.
- Novel approaches are required to anticipate, manage and satisfy student demand for mental health resources. The addition of more staff alone will not be satisfactory and definitive solution. It is essential to think differently about service models.

Several dimensions of change in university culture are needed – including: (1) infusing a culturally-relevant, trauma-informed ethic of care in policy, decision making, teaching; (2) a broader and more strategic commitment to supporting student success and well-being; (3) helping students engage with both academic goals and personal needs. The following sections outline the guidance from best practices research, the literature and key organizations in developing campus mental health strategies

4   Student Support Models

Over the last few years, there has been increasing attention paid to the challenges of student mental health, and the best ways to operationally address these challenges. Major initiatives and reports have been launched by key post-secondary groups and there has been considerable interest in the academic literature as well. This section outlines some of the key models that are driving a comprehensive, whole campus approach to supporting student success and well-being:

Mental Health Continuum

Wholistic student success and well-being is a combination of physical, social, and mental well-being, and not simply the absence of disease (World Health Organization). While the majority of students flourish during their time at university, many others experience mental health challenges that may put them at risk. The mental health continuum can range from healthy and flourishing behaviour where students are comfortable, confident and capable of performing, to situations that create anxiety and stress, to clinical disorders that persist and impair ability to function in a safe and productive manner.

At StFX we understand that mental wellness is a continuum that recognizes the spectrum of all mental and physical health concerns that may affect people during their lives. Our preferred continuum model moves from healthy adaptive coping (green) to mild and self-limiting distress or functional impairment (yellow) to more severe, persistent injury or impairment (orange) and clinical illnesses and disorders that require more concentrated medical care (red).
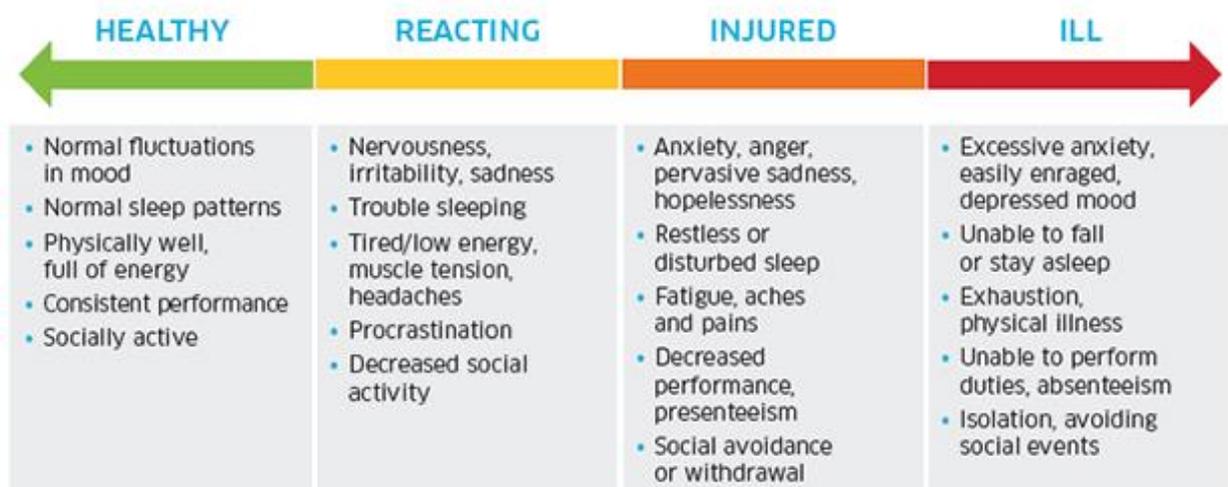

HEALTHY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
• Normal fluctuations in mood • Normal sleep patterns • Physically well, full of energy • Consistent performance • Socially active	• Nervousness, irritability, sadness • Trouble sleeping • Tired/low energy, muscle tension, headaches • Procrastination • Decreased social activity	• Anxiety, anger, pervasive sadness, hopelessness • Restless or disturbed sleep • Fatigue, aches and pains • Decreased performance, presenteeism • Social avoidance or withdrawal	• Excessive anxiety, easily enraged, depressed mood • Unable to fall or stay asleep • Exhaustion, physical illness • Unable to perform duties, absenteeism • Isolation, avoiding social events

Figure 1: Mental Health Continuum (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2014)

The arrow along the four colour blocks indicates health is a continuum and the state of one's health can move back and forth. Mental wellness is not static. Many people have physical and mental health

concerns that – when identified and treated early – can be temporary and reversible. Even if injured or ill, it is possible to return to healthy and achieve a high level of functioning.

Multi-Level Approach

One of the key shifts in addressing mental health issues in the post-secondary context is the need to have a multilevel approach that encompasses both a range of supports to individuals and initiatives to address issues at a group, campus and community/society level (CACUSS, 2011).

The key to the multilevel approach is that it recognizes the broader context for mental health that individuals exist in (such as group interactions, the stigma of mental health issues, campus social environment and institutional policies) and helps to identify initiatives at the group, campus and community society level that can affect mental health challenges.
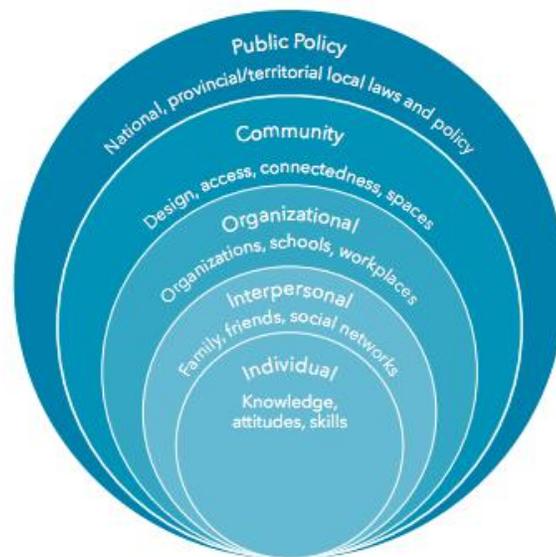

Figure 2: Social Ecological Model – Adapted from Heise, L., Ellsberg, M., and Gottemoeller, M. (1999). University of Washington (2017). Social Ecological Model.

Taking a multilevel approach is important for three reasons:

- It shifts the focus from being solely on the individual, and recognizes the importance and interconnectedness of group, campus and community issues on mental health, leading to more wholistic and effective interventions.

- It supports the development of better mechanisms for early interventions. By engaging more members of the group, campus and community, there are more mechanisms to identify students who are under threat and support them before their challenges become a major problem.

- It supports more proactive approaches to address the contextual factors that can affect mental health and wellbeing. By looking more broadly at these issues, interventions can be focused on initiatives that can reduce the potential incidence or severity of mental health issues, such as building more supportive environments, reducing environmental stressors, and addressing underlying campus and community issues.

Collective Responsibility

Campus mental health cannot be addressed by health and counselling services alone (CACUSS, 2011). While these clinical supports play a crucial role, by themselves they will not be sufficient to address the mental health issues of the campus community.

There is a need for a wider ownership of the issue of student mental health and well-being, including the integration of mental health issues into all into all facets of the institution through policy and practices (and providing a wider range of supports and mental health activities than just counselling services). This includes looking at opportunities to address some of the underlying stressors, supports to increase the capacity of students to manage, and identifying cross-departmental approaches to build more cohesive supports for students.

The Importance of a Systemic Response

Given the diversity of needs, and the interrelatedness of those needs, best practices strongly support the need for a comprehensive and systemic approach to promoting wholistic student well-being. Models of prevention and intervention such as the *Campus Population Health Promotion Model* (ACCC 2008), *NASPA Health Education and Leadership Program's ecological approach* (NASPA, 2004), and the *Health Promoting Universities report* (World Health Organization, 1998) are based on a number of key assumptions including the interrelatedness of health, learning and campus structure/culture; interdependence of social, emotional, physical, spiritual health and learning; and the importance of collective responsibility and campus-wide involvement in creating a campus environment that is conducive to student mental health and academic success.

A systemic response requires not just that there are multiple levels and types of initiatives, but that they are working in coordination and cooperation as part of a multi-tiered, integrated support model (or continuum of care). A strategic framework can provide a guide to a systemic response, but it requires ownership and leadership at all levels of the institution for a systemic response to be effective
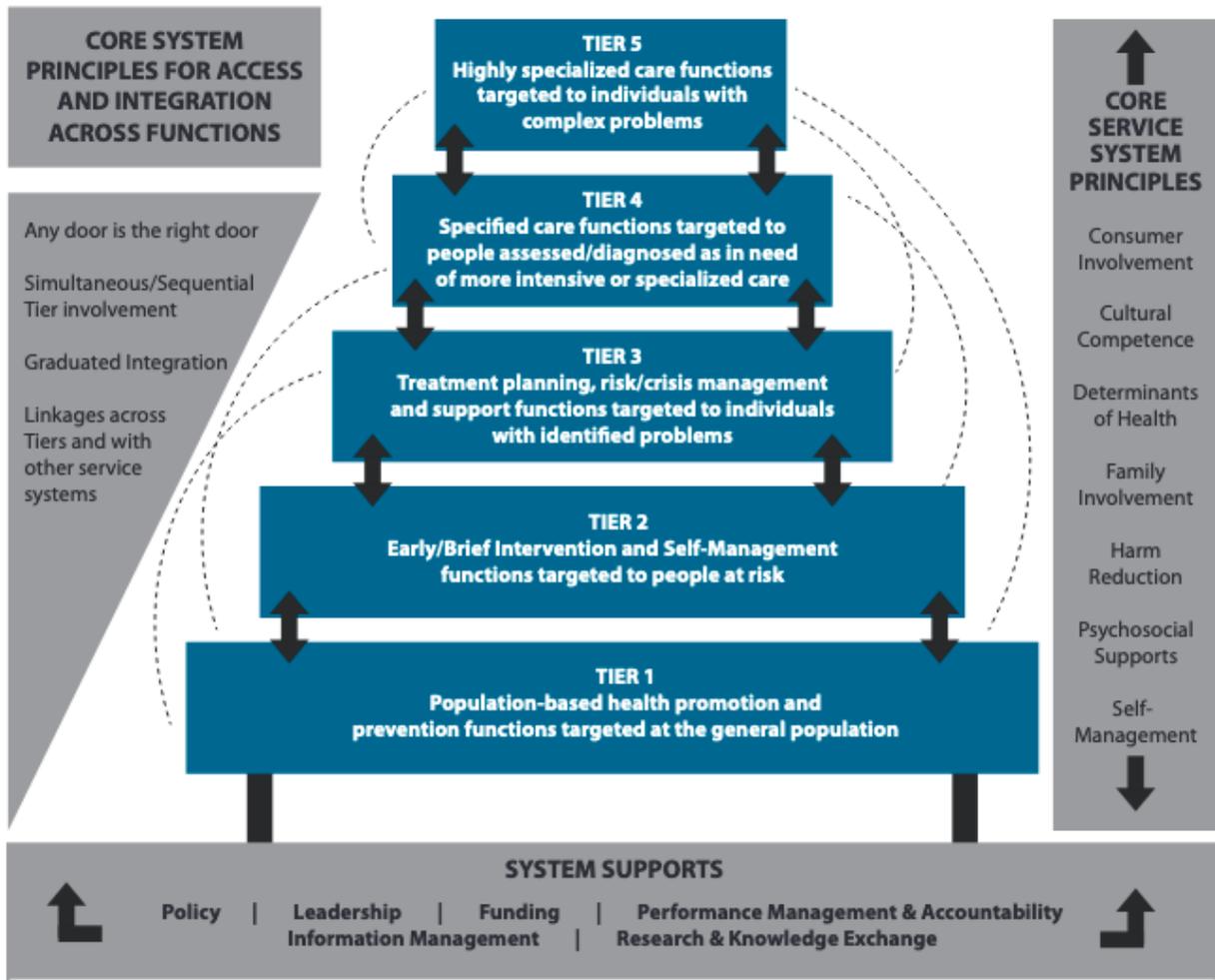
CORE SYSTEM PRINCIPLES FOR ACCESS AND INTEGRATION ACROSS FUNCTIONS

Any door is the right door

Simultaneous/Sequential Tier involvement

Graduated Integration

Linkages across Tiers and with other service systems

TIER 5
Highly specialized care functions targeted to individuals with complex problems

TIER 4
Specified care functions targeted to people assessed/diagnosed as in need of more intensive or specialized care

TIER 3
Treatment planning, risk/crisis management and support functions targeted to individuals with identified problems

TIER 2
Early/Brief Intervention and Self-Management functions targeted to people at risk

TIER 1
Population-based health promotion and prevention functions targeted at the general population

CORE SERVICE SYSTEM PRINCIPLES

Consumer Involvement

Cultural Competence

Determinants of Health

Family Involvement

Harm Reduction

Psychosocial Supports

Self-Management

SYSTEM SUPPORTS

Policy | Leadership | Funding | Performance Management & Accountability
Information Management | Research & Knowledge Exchange

Figure 3: Sample Integrated, Multi-Tier Continuum of Care Model

5 Towards A Whole Campus Approach at StFX

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

All programs, resources and supports provided by StFX Student Services will be intentionally designed and grounded in the following evidence-informed frameworks to support wholistic student success and well-being.

Theory	Key Concepts
Cultivate a Flourishing Campus	A flourishing framework seeks to optimize student mental health and well-being by highlighting the contexts and environment that optimize wellness. It identifies 5 key factors educators can foster to maximize the academic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal development of each student: *academic determination, engaged learning, social connectedness, positive perspective,* and *diverse citizenship.*
Support Mental Health as a Continuum	We understand that mental wellbeing exists on a spectrum, or continuum, and that the state of one's health can move back and forth. This means we need to integrate effective **upstream, midstream and downstream** approaches to support wholistic student success and well-being. We recognize that an individual can have a diagnosis of mental illness but can flourish if the proper environmental conditions and supports are in place.
Recognize and Respond to Social Determinants of Health	Taking a wholistic approach that addresses the social determinants of health is essential to build and support a culture of wellness at StFX. Part of this approach involves recognizing that the experiences systemic discrimination and marginalization have debilitating impacts on well-being for members of these communities. We are committed to ensuring that our programs, supports and services are culturally relevant, and trauma-informed. Our diversity also includes students with specific needs such as mature, distance, and off campus learners. Across the institution, our approach must be aligned with our values to ensure that our programs, services, policies meet the needs of diverse students.
Promote Agency through Wholistic Student Engagement	Learning can be intentionally programmed across all of the places where students engage at StFX. This includes cultivating spaces of belonging, with the objective of creating and sustaining equitable student flourishing. Through intentional engagement opportunities, StFX Student Services seeks to create personalized pathways to student success and well-being and provide students with the tools to be engaged citizens.
Harness a Developmental and Proactive Approach	By initiating early and frequent connections with students, StFX can support student transition and persistence, especially among students from historically excluded groups. StFX recognizes that student development needs change over the four years of the undergraduate experience. The importance of facilitated and guided transitions – entering the university and through to graduation – can build student capacity to flourish and succeed. The student lifecycle must be considered as the transitioning in and transitioning through and transitioning out stages, highlighting the importance of focusing on the first-year experience and intentionally scaffolding student learning through all years of study.

Sample Key Principles

One way to enable culture change related to student success and well-being is to foster an organizational development which demonstrates support and action. The following principles will ground our work and interactions, and collectively guide our whole campus approach to support all students flourishing. These principles inform our work with students, our partners, and with one another.

Equitable

We draw on anti-oppression, anti-racism, and trauma-informed practices, as well as inclusive and universal design, to cultivate equity, access, inclusion and sense of belonging, through an intersectional lens. Taking a wholistic approach that addresses discrimination, inequities and social determinants of health are essential to build and support a culture of well-being at StFX

Wholistic

We understand student well-being as a continuum of mental and physical health concerns that may affect people during their lives. We intentionally and proactively centre student well-being by considering the whole student's experience, highlighting culturally responsive and trauma-informed pathways to care, and building individual and institutional capacity to support wholistic student success and well-being.

Integrated

Our work is supported by and in collaboration with our partners. With students at the centre, we work to evolve our programs, services and resources to meet their needs. Through partnerships, we support a rich, vibrant student experience.

Developmental

We support wholistic, strengths-based learning and development by providing opportunities for students to achieve their personal, academic and career goals, and instill passion and skills for continual exploration, learning and growth.

Learning Focused

We recognize student learning and development as a process that takes place during a student's entire university experience. By intentionally scaffolding student learning and engagement, we provide opportunities and supports to help student learning and development though all programs and years of study.

Personalized

We acknowledge diversity in student lived experience and proactively respond to evolving student-centric needs in order to provide services, supports and experiences that are personalized and adaptive. We draw on assessment, data, research and consultation to improve our planning, processes and decision-making.

Sample Learning Goals

Our *Whole Campus Approach* is based on a framework of *equitable student flourishing.* Research on flourishing identifies five key factors post-secondary administrators and educators can foster by maximizing the academic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal development of students. These five factors are positive perspective (optimism about the future), academic determination (investment of effort to reach educational goals), engaged learning (engagement in the process of learning), social connectedness (healthy connection to others) and diverse citizenship (commitment to making a difference in the world) (Schreiner, 2010).

By taking a whole campus approach, StFX has the opportunity to intentionally support student development and well-being across all factors of flourishing. This will include focusing on several critical areas of intervention, including: our institutional structures; proactive mental health education and awareness; capacity to respond to early indicators of student concern; mental health services; and crisis management.

By integrating shared learning goals across all of our units, we can ensure that when students engage with our programming, across all of our departments, they will be empowered to *discover* their personalized pathway through StFX's rich, wholistic learning environment; *engage* in brave conversations with our diverse community on and off campus and develop the courage to be uncomfortable without fear of failure in order to *flourish.*

To achieve these goals, we can intentionally map our shared learning goals to the five factors of flourishing. We can also base the development of these learning goals on complementary, but distinctive competencies, including Seven Sacred Teachings, Ubunto, Nguzo Saba (Appendix A). We will also adapt and adjust these learning goals to reflect the goals of a StFX education outlined as part of the development of the StFX Academic Plan.

Throughout our collective work, we seek to cultivate flourishing students who are distinguished by the following characteristics:

Learning Goal	*Characteristics*
Critical Thinkers	*Students who are curious, engaged and reflexive.*
Future-Focused Planners	*Students who are goal-oriented, motivated, and self-directed.*
Adaptable Problem Solvers	*Students who are hopeful, self-determined, resourceful and creative.*
Community-Minded	*Students who are relational, empathetic, collaborative and self-aware.*
Engaged Citizens	*Students who are equitable, globally aware and socially responsible.*
Innovative Leaders	*Students who exhibit integrity, judgement, and intercultural competency.*

Discussion Questions: Are these the shared learning goals that we want to intentionally integrate into the co-curricular programs, services and supports we provide? Do we effectively integrate the valued outcomes of all members of our diverse community? Is there a spiritual dimension that we need to consider?

Sample Delivery Model

Strengthening an integrated, multi-tier student support model facilitates a cohesive and coordinated approach to supporting wholistic student mental well-being that incorporates a range of resources, supports and services. This integration will:

- Advance a wholistic approach to student mental health and well-being, that facilitates access to both proactive and responsive services and supports.
- Enable equitable access to culturally relevant, trauma-informed resources for students from historically excluded populations.
- Foster an integrated philosophy of care that recognizes everyone with the StFX community has a role to play in supporting student success and well-being.
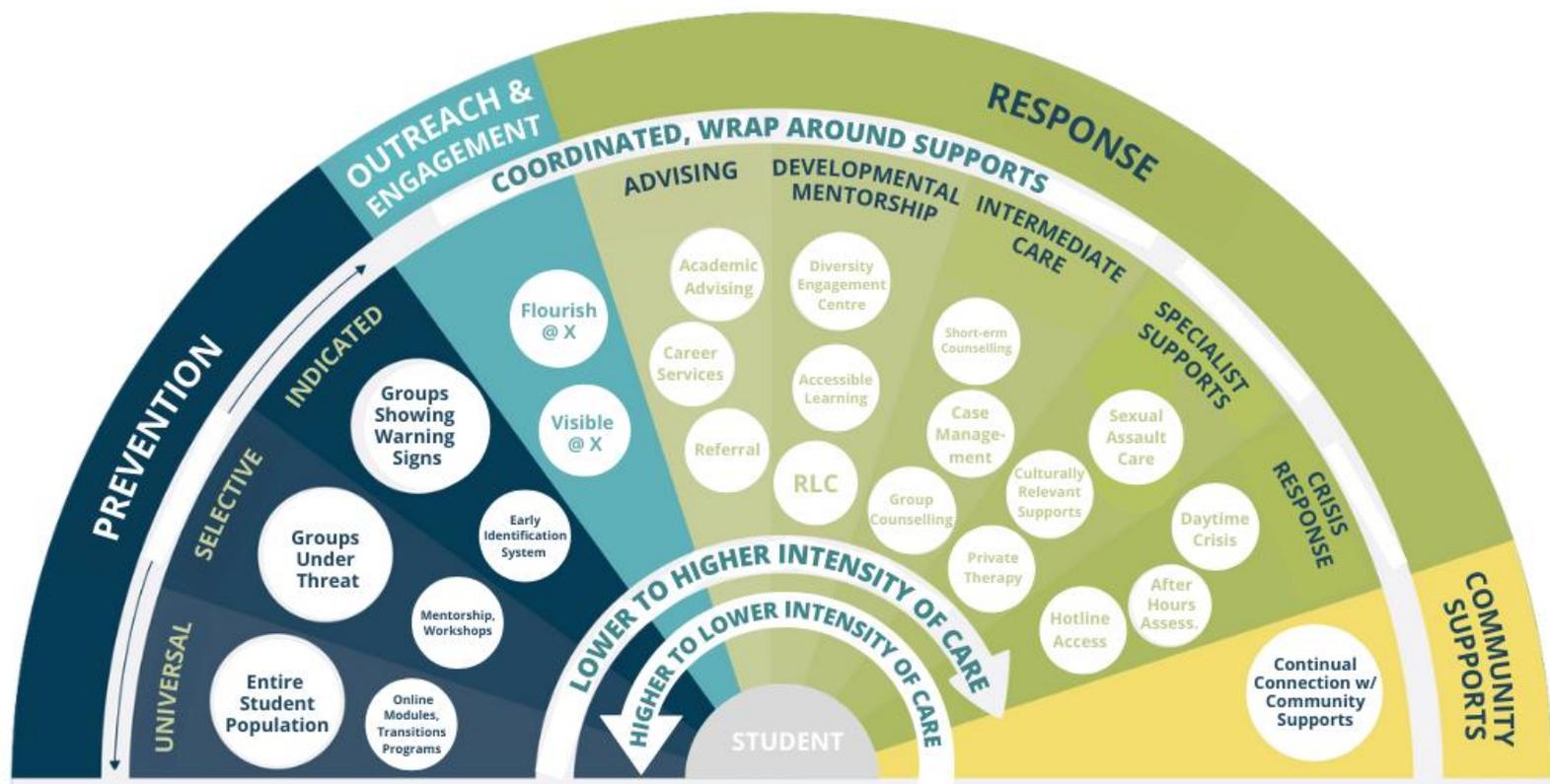

*Figure 4: **Sample** Integrated Student Mental Health and Well-being Delivery Model, StFX*

Sample Priority Actions

In order to make immediate progress towards achieving several recommendations, the following emerged as *priority actions* that could enhance our ability to support student success and flourishing across multiple areas of focus. Achieving these key priorities by 2027 will help to ensure StFX Student Services is on track to cultivate a whole campus approach to all students flourishing:

1. **Develop an Integrated Mentorship Program:** Develop an integrated mentorship program that will cultivate meaningful connections and enable all students to discover their personalized pathways to success.

2. **Create an Extended Student Orientation and Transition Program:** Create an Extended Orientation and Transitions Program by frontloading resources, supports and programs in first year and intentionally scaffolding student learning and engagement as part of an immersive, learning-focused experience through all years of study.

3. **Formalize Collaborative, Wrap Around Supports:** Strengthen student learning and well-being through the development of an integrated, multi-tier student support model that promotes a continuum of care which recognizes everyone with the StFX community has a role to play in supporting wholistic student success and well-being.

4. **Create and Maintain a Student Experience Catalogue:** Facilitate guided learning opportunities for all students that proactively advance common learning goals across living & learning environments and cultivates agency by engaging students in the process of discovering their strengths and personalized pathways to wholistic success and well-being.

5. **Radically Welcome and Engage Students from Historically Excluded Groups:** Radically welcome students by advancing equitable access to culturally relevant, trauma-informed programs, resources and services for students from historically-excluded populations. Create opportunities for students to cultivate meaningful connections and sense of community.

References

Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC); Patterson, P. and Kline,T. (2008). *Report on Post-Secondary Institutions as Healthy Settings: The Pivotal Role of Student Services*. Health and Learning Knowledge Centre, Canadian Council on Learning: Victoria, B.C., Canada

Canadian Association of College and University Support Services (CACUSS); G. MacKean (2011). *Mental Health and Wellbeing in Post-Secondary Education Settings*. Retrieved from http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.737.6978&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Schreiner, L. (2010). *The Thriving Quotient: A New Vision for Student Success.* Retrieved from https://www.wellesley.edu/sites/default/files/assets/departments/studentlife/files/thriving_overview.pdf

World Health Organization. (1998). Health Promoting Universities: Concept, experience and framework for action. Ed: Dooris, M. et al. from: https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/108095

Appendix A: Development of Learning Goals

Five Factors of Flourishing

	Description
Engaged Learning	Students who are flourishing are energized and **engaged in the learning process**. They are meaningfully processing the material, making connections, and attentive to new learning opportunities.
Academic Determination	Students who are flourishing are motivated to do well, they have **educational goals** that are important to them, and they have strategies for reaching those goals. When things get tough, they don't give up; they try new strategies, they ask for help, and they stick with it.
Positive Perspective	Students who flourish have a positive outlook on life, an **optimistic** way of viewing the world and their future. Seeing the glass as half-full enables them to experience more positive emotions on a regular basis.
Diverse Citizenship	Students who respond to others with **openness and curiosity**, an interest in relating to others from diverse backgrounds, a **desire to make contributions in the world** and the confidence to do so.
Social Connectedness	Having friends, being in **healthy relationships** with others, and experiencing a **sense of community** within the university environment.

Seven Sacred Teachings

	Description
Love	Must be unconditional
Respect	Condition of being honoured
Courage	The ability to face danger, fear, or changes with **confidence and bravery**
Honesty	Speaking and acting **truthfully**, and thereby remaining morally upright
Wisdom	The ability to make decisions based on personal knowledge and experience
Humility	Being humble and not arrogant
Truth	To know and understand all The Seven Teachings and to remain faithful to them

Nguzo Saba

Principle	Description
Umoja (Unity)	To strive for and maintain unity in family, community, nation, and race.
Kujichagulia (**Self-Determination**)	To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.

Ujima (**Collective** Work and Responsibility)	To build and maintain our community together and make our brother's and sister's problems our problems and to **solve them together**.
Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics)	To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together.
Nia (Purpose)	To make out collective vocation the **building and developing of our community** in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.
Kuumba (**Creativity**)	To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our **community** more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.
Imani (Faith)	To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

NACADA Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Craft a coherent educational plan based on assessment of abilities, aspirations, interests and values
- Use complex information from various courses to **set goals, reach decisions, and achieve those goals**
- Assume responsibility for meeting academic program requirements
- Articulate the meaning of higher education and the intention of the institution's curriculum
- Cultivate the intellectual habits that lead to a **lifetime of learning**
- Behave as **citizens** who engage in the wider world around them.