The 2013-2016 Strategic Plan before you is the result of numerous conversations between student leaders and representatives from many areas of the University of British Columbia (UBC) campus. The UBC Mental Health Network (UBC MHN) hosted a strategic planning session in which over twenty participants from groups including the Alma Mater Society, Kaleidoscope, Mental Health Awareness Club, Healthy Minds and many others collaborated on identifying areas of focus to improve, support and enhance student mental health at UBC. The results of these discussions were distilled into goals and distinct action items that are contained in this document.

The purpose of this strategic plan is to set a strong foundation for the future of the UBC MHN. As the network gains momentum and our membership increases, it is important the leadership and member groups identify core goals. Because the UBC MHN is a collection of many different campus groups and student leaders, coming together around a collective plan will ensure the long term success of the Network.

The UBC MHN has recently undergone an internal restructuring which has led to the opportunity to form a strong and sustained relationship with the AMS. This plan will not only serve as a guiding force for the UBC MHN but will also provide direction to the AMS to ensure that our student leaders at the highest level are aware and a part of the future of a thriving and healthy campus environment.

Sincerely,

Kimberley Carter
MHN Chair

Kiran Mahal
AMS Vice-President, Academic
**Vision, Mission and Values**

**Mental Health Network Vision:**

We envision a community that strives to support a culture of holistic well-being for students during the course of their academic career at the University of British Columbia.

**Mental Health Network Mission:**

The MHN advocates for due consideration for mental health in present and future student affairs at UBC. To support student well-being the MHN works proactively to facilitate collaboration between key campus partners, engage in advocacy on mental health issues, and strive for a thriving and healthy UBC community.

**Mental Health Network Values:**

The following are the values of the Mental Health Network:
1. Communicate openly and effectively
2. Demonstrate teamwork and team-building
3. Have a positive attitude
4. Achieve results and goals
5. Show responsible leadership at all levels

**Mental Health Network Strategic Goals:**

1. Network Development - establish a core internal structure that supports the execution of the vision, mission, values and broader strategic plan

2. University Policy - work with the University to enhance awareness and accessibility of academic and non-academic policies to support students in a proactive manner

3. Student Services - work within the campus and broader community to strengthen and diversify the mental health and well-being services available to students in all stages of their academic career.

4. Cultural Shift - fulfill a leadership role in shifting campus culture and conversation around student mental health and well-being
In 2009, the National College Health Assessment found stress, anxiety and depression (first, third and seventh respectively) to be in the top self-reported factors negatively affecting UBC students' academic performance (Mirwaldt and Washburn, 2009). The study also found that UBC students experienced higher levels of stress compared to the average North American academic institution (Wellness Peer Educator Training, 2009). For example, the study found that 61% of undergraduate women and 55% of undergraduate men reported experiencing “more than average stress” at UBC (Mirwaldt and Washburn, 2009).

In response to these reports, student mental health has been identified as a priority by the UBC institution. Accordingly, the working document, Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, was developed to address the following: policies and practices related to mental health, provision of a supportive environment, increased mental health awareness and self-management skills, early identification of students needing assistance and connection to appropriate resources, adequate and timely mental health services and case management and risk mitigation protocols (Student Development & Services, 2012).

The AMS has identified two areas of concern negatively affecting the majority of UBC students including: financial burden and academic stress (Cregten, 2012). In relation to academic stress Cregten (2012) stated:

> In section 3.2, course workload was identified as a major factor causing students stress or anxiety on a regular basis, with 81% of all respondents supporting the statement, 35% strongly. While much work has been done to provide resources and support to students with mental health related needs, more work should be done to proactively address causative issues stemming from the student academic experience. (p. 5)

The MHN was formed after a Mental Health Symposium held in February 2011 to address the above concerns. The network aims to better coordinate and promote mental health resources and student groups on campus. The Network is made up of mental health related representatives and currently includes the Graduate Student Society, Neurology Club, International Students Association, AMS Speakeasy, AMS Sexual Assault Support Centre, Healthy Minds, The Kaleidoscope, UBC Mental Health Awareness Club, UBC Yoga Club and UBC Wellness Centre. Representatives meet monthly to share ideas, collaborate on various events and achieve the goals of the strategic plan.

In light of the university recognizing the need to address student mental health it is equally important for the MHN and AMS partnership to support a parallel initiative on behalf of UBC students. This strategic planning document emphasizes where the MHN will target its efforts.
# Strategic Goals

This section discusses our strategic goals, outlines the objectives we have identified to realize them, and provides examples of activities the Network will undertake.

## Strategic Goal 1 – Network Development

As the Mental Health Network grows into its newly developed structure, it is necessary to build a strong internal foundation for continued growth and expansion. The MHN has ambitious goals for creating a connected and engaged campus community on the issue of mental health. In order to do so the MHN must connect with key partners and fulfill its unique role on campus as a connecting and advocating body.

**Goal:** *The Mental Health Network will establish a core internal structure that supports the execution of the vision, mission, values and broader strategic plan.*

To accomplish this we will:

### Implement and Define New Structure

- Expand membership by engaging more key campus partners, specifically faculty-based student government, that can advocate on a faculty and departmental level
- Develop communication channels to effectively engage and leverage member groups
- Create a framework for the role and expectations of the Advisory Board
- Leverage MHN Advisory Board to create partnerships with faculty and staff
- Solidify a long term partnership with the AMS

### Act as Connecting Point for Information Sharing

- Develop the MHN website as an online hub for collection of survey results, data, information and research surrounding student mental health and wellness at UBC that all students, faculty and staff can access
- Review inventory of questions that other university surveys address about student mental health and wellness (such as the NCHA, NSSE, Undergraduate Experience Survey, New to UBC Survey, Graduating Students Survey, iGrad Survey, AMS Academic Experience Survey) and make suggestions for gaps in information and data collection that should be filled
- Share information through the MHN website about other mental health initiatives at institutions across Canada
**Strategic Goal 2 – University Policy**

Policy is one facet of the university that impacts all students. The way in which policies are developed and implemented has implications on the university environment as a whole. In order for policies to be most effective and supportive for students, they should be developed with students in mind. Many students are not aware of the support mechanisms available to them and when they do need to access these mechanisms, many times they are faced with a confusing and complex bureaucratic system.

**Goal:** *The Mental Health Network will work with the University to enhance awareness and accessibility of academic and non-academic policies to support students in a proactive manner.*

To accomplish this we will:

**Build Awareness and Enhance Communication about University Policies Aimed at Supporting Students**

- Utilize MHN website to communicate information to students about university policies and how students can access concessions and accommodations
- Work with Student Communication Services to develop messaging around university policies for students
- Work within the framework of the university to help inform faculty members about academic concessions and accommodations so they are better able to support students in need
- Collaborate with the AMS and student senators to get information about student mental health and wellness resources into course syllabi

**Delivery and Development**

- Work with the university to make policy implementation more personal through face to face contact rather than email communication and website information
- Examine the impacts of current university policies on student mental health and well-being
- Work with experts in the area of health policy to suggest frameworks for considering student mental health and well-being in stages of policy development and implementation

**Improve Communication around Financial Policies for Students**

- Work with Student Financial Aid and Awards to develop and share information about channels of support for students who lose scholarships and/or funding when taking a leave of absence for mental health
- Clarify tuition reimbursements and refund policies/processes for students who are required to drop courses due to leaves for mental health
Strategic Goal 3 – Student Services

The University allocates a significant amount of resources towards front line and indirect student services to support the academic careers of its students. Students who face difficulties during the course of their time at UBC have access to primary care through Counseling Service, Student Health and many others; however, there is a need to look more holistically towards the continuity and availability of resources.

While student services are available, some students chose to not seek help for a variety of reasons. In order to ensure the entire student community is supported, more work is needed to identify how to address this reality.

The age range of university students corresponds with the range of natural onset of mental health issues in a person’s lifetime. Universities educate citizens that enter the workforce and Canadian society and the onus should not only be on the university but also the Provincial government to ensure that students have access to resources necessary for healthy development in an age of transition.

Goal:  *The Mental Health Network will work within the campus and broader community to strengthen and diversify the mental health and well-being services available to students in all stages of their academic career.*

To accomplish this we will:

**Frameworks for Success**
- Create structure for feedback systems to assess and improve student services
- Conduct a review of delivery and accessibility of student services from a student perspective to help understand barriers to access
- Work with university administration and undergraduate societies to develop academic advising standards that are maintained by all faculties
- Support training of staff and faculty through student driven education initiatives

**Improve Communication and Access**
- Provide information on MHN website about resources and services that students can access on and off campus
- Work with university to clarify the roles of different units (e.g., Student Health Services, Enrolment Services, faculty advising offices) in providing student services and when and how students can access them
- Encourage students to engage with their Enrollment Services Professionals for support and resources
Advocate for Holistic Service Provision

- Advocate for more financial and non-financial support to peer support groups
- Advocate for diverse methods of delivery of services and types of services offered that matches diversity of students on campus
- Work with student development and services to develop an integrated resource model that empowers and supports students to develop their own coping and treatment plans and find what works for them
- Advocate for more resources from the university and wider community to provide continuity of care for students
- Advocate for provincial government funding to facilitate a healthy development process for university students through increased resource allocation to universities for supporting student mental health
Strategic Goal 4 – Cultural Shift

The University culture is viewed by many as one of competition and stress, citing this environment as a core part of the university experience. It doesn’t have to be. University should be a positive experience for students and our campus community should be one that is supportive rather than destructive. Academics and mental health are two factors that are closely linked and to be successful in one realm requires an individual to be thriving in the other. This connection is important for students and the campus community to make in building future leaders with the capacity to be successful.

Goal: The Mental Health Network will play a leadership role in shifting the campus culture and conversation to emphasize student well-being.

To accomplish this we will:

Multi-Dimensional Approach – Students
• Help students understand link between health and wellbeing and academic success
• Address stigma associated with students accessing support services
• Educate students on how to advocate for themselves

Multi-Dimensional Approach – Campus Community
• Coordinate cross campus campaigns to deconstruct the competitive nature and culture of the university, especially in peer to peer interactions
• Host one large flagship event per year with partners – Mental Health Symposium
• Create opportunities for real dialogue on campus about mental health at UBC and beyond
• Celebrate and acknowledge the success of UBC in the area of student mental health and wellness annually
Our Values

1. Communicate openly and effectively
   • Keep others informed by sharing knowledge and information
   • Listen to others and be approachable
   • Maintain a transparent decision-making process
   • Obtain stakeholder/member input on setting goals

2. Demonstrate teamwork and team-building
   • Respect diversity
   • Create positive partnerships and relationships
   • Foster an environment of continuous learning
   • Respect our members’ needs and ideas

3. Have a positive attitude
   • Focus on solutions, not problems
   • Be enthusiastic and passionate in our work

4. Achieve results and goals
   • Set challenging yet achievable goals
   • Prioritize and measure results
   • Persevere and overcome obstacles and barriers

5. Show responsible leadership at all levels
   • Lead by example
   • Be accountable for decisions
   • Be responsive, timely and deliver on expectations
   • Delegate effectively and provide performance feedback
   • Empower students and other members of the campus community
References


