

REPORT ON ENGAGEMENT

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Multi-Campus Student Wellness Review
Winter 2020 - Summer 2021



This summary report has been prepared enthusiastically by Unless Design Partners.

We are design consulting partners working on sustainable development projects in our own backyard. We exist to make life better for people and the planet, today and into the future.

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Executive Summary

Throughout the winter term of 2021, the Deans of Students' Offices at Waterloo and Brantford campuses initiated a multi-campus review of student wellness at Laurier. With the support of an external consultant (Unless Design Partners), a comprehensive review was conducted.

Ten intersectional insights emerged from the consultation—each of which has implications on undergraduate and graduate student wellness across Laurier campuses:

- “Wellness” is an ambiguous term at Laurier, and a lack of clarity around who owns it and how much it's valued contributes to topic complexity and students' sense of agency.
- Equity-deserving students at Laurier experience university life inherently differently than other groups. Their wellbeing isn't consistently or appropriately addressed by traditional services and approaches which, in many cases, do more harm than good.
- For students, wellness isn't separate from the totality of their curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular experiences at Laurier. Neglecting to tackle wellness in integrated ways hurts students.
- Laurier's systems feel fragmented and as though they were designed with a now outdated and narrow conception of “student”. Navigating these systems feels unintuitive.
- The dissonance resulting from the gap between Laurier's advertised and students' lived experience is a factor in student wellness.
- Communications about student wellness don't produce the desired effect. In part, this is because they're not always well-timed, seen as relevant, or perceived to have been crafted with a diversity of students in mind.
- Educators have a disproportionate influence on student wellness.
- A deficit of community, caring adult connections, and peer relationships exacerbate conditions for unwellness (and even worse, misery) to take root.
- The pace of growth at Laurier coupled with the shifting needs of a new generation of students has taxed overall system capacity and raises questions about service design. Student wellness is implicated.
- Stakes are higher than ever, payoff is less guaranteed, and students face more pressure than ever before.

Process and methodology for how these insights came to be, along with strategic considerations the consultant recommends exploring in light of these insights, are detailed in the full report.

Specific next steps have been identified by the Deans of Students' Offices and will be shared, separately, with the Laurier community. For more information about the work happening to address the outcomes of the review, please reach out to the Deans of Students' Offices.





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