

Mission Statements

Of the 120 institutions of higher education with operational Health Promotion office websites, 61 had published mission statements, an additional 41 had “about us” statements, 7 listed their office’s goal, 3 listed their purpose, and the final 8 are best described as services offered. For the purposes of this report, the institutions solely describing services offered will be eliminated leaving an analysis of 112 institutions. We are assuming no significant differences in the content of statements based on whether they were classified as mission statements, about us, goal, or purpose; therefore the frequencies will be reported together.

A review of the statements highlighted fifteen broad topic areas, which will be discussed in further detail based on frequencies.

Education

The most mentioned topic was education with 41.4% (n=46) of institutions discussing the use and importance of education in their mission statement. Most schools addressed education generally (n=32), while others were more specific and included workshops (n=1), services (n=2), programs (n=3), resources (n=2), or some combination of these (n=6).

Wellness

The second most mentioned topic, not surprisingly, was wellness. This includes the terms “wellness”, “health”, and “well-being” when described as concepts, not merely adjectives describing some other concept. 37.5% (n=32) of institutions incorporated wellness into their statements, with the term “health” being used most often (n=13), followed by “wellness” (n=11), and finally “well-being” (n=7). A combination of these terms was used by 11 institutions, with the term “health” appearing in each combination.

Campus Environment

The third most cited topic was that of the campus environment or community. This highlights the importance of looking at health from an ecological perspective and is something that was addressed by a third of institutions. They strive to create healthy (n=16), supportive (n=10), safe (n=3), learning (n=1) environments and communities with 7 institutions striving to meet more than one of these descriptors.

Healthy Choices

Another widely used topic was that of helping, enabling, encouraging, and supporting students to make healthy choices. While the strategies varied by institution, 20.5% (n=23) seek to assist students to make healthy choices and another 7.1% (n=8) aim for behavior change as an accompaniment to these choices.

Prevention

Prevention is another largely used concept among institutions. The majority (n=13) refer to disease prevention specifically while less (n=6) refer to prevention generally. A minority speak about prevention services (n=3) and practices (n=1).

Healthy Lifestyle

Maintaining, inspiring, and promoting healthy lifestyles for their students are a key part of the missions of 21 institutions.

Success

The idea of health as an enabler of success is crucial to the missions of 20 institutions. They strive to increase their students' academic, personal and professional successes by working to promote health.

Knowledge & Awareness

Quite a few institutions (n=17) focused on intermediate outcomes, changes in knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes, as the crux of their health promotion mission.

Health Promotion

The concept of health promotion was addressed in the statements of 16 institutions, with the majority referring to a general concept (n=9) and the remainder discussing services (n=2) and programs (n=5).

Learning

The idea of using health as a means to increase learning was discussed by 10 institutions as vital to their own missions, as well as advancing the missions of their respective institutions.

Collaboration

As the concept of wellness addresses many aspects of a student's life, it is crucial that collaboration occur between various departments on campus in order to ensure an ecological approach to health. Eleven of the institutions focused on their partnerships and collaborations as an integral part of their approach to student health and wellness.

Support

An integral part of the mission statements of 9 universities is the idea of supporting their students, whether it is through their choices, lifestyles, environments, or a myriad of other ways.

Campus Culture

Eight institutions stressed the importance of developing and/or changing the campus culture in order for it to support their mission.

Evidence-Based Practice

The use of evidence-based practices and theory was highlighted in the statements of five institutions.

Research

A few institutions (n=4) included research as a vital part of their work in enhancing the health of their populations.

Discussion

Despite serving as the primary descriptor of the mission of Health Promotion offices, majority of the statements do not discuss the concept of health or wellness at all. However, they often discuss activities and services which are implied to promote health or wellness; the words are just not explicitly written.

Some examples follow:

“Our mission is to provide the following services to the university community: Activities - provide fitness activities for faculty, staff, students, and the community; Awareness - disseminate information related to healthy lifestyles; Collaboration - promote efforts with multiple university and community organizations; Research - health risk assessments and yearly effectiveness survey”

“To prevent and reduce preventable health risks and illnesses that interfere with academic performance, learning, student retention, and personal growth opportunities.”

“The mission is to promote a campus environment that is conducive to the adoption of healthy lifestyle choices that lead to the academic, personal, and professional success of students.”

“XXXX strives to assist students in the adoption of a healthy lifestyle by providing information, education, consultation and referral on a wide variety of health-related issues.”

“To provide students with accurate, up to date Health Education information.”

“XXXX strives to create a campus culture that is an inspiring and healthy place to learn, work, play and live.”

“XXXX offers students activities aimed at life balance, social engagement, and positive change.”

Although not explicitly discussing the concepts of health or wellness, it is pretty clear from the statements that they are intended to increase student health and wellness. Because the concept of health and wellness is so broad and encompassing, it may be that many institutions found it simpler to describe more specific and measurable strategies and outcomes that they sought to achieve in their mission statements rather than discuss such an elusive concept.

In terms of statements not having a majority word, or concept really, it may be that, because there are so many aspects to health and wellness, priorities on where to focus vary greatly by institution making it difficult for a consensus to be reached. When looking at the word cloud on the cover page the words “health”, “students”, “healthy”, “wellness”, and “community” stand out, indicating the high frequency of those specific words in the institutions’ statements. Although the cloud does not differentiate between whether the words are used as adjectives merely describing other things or as concepts among themselves it does highlight that the idea of health and wellness has not been lost, but perhaps merely reframed into more achievable aspirations.