



Green Mountain
Higher Education Consortium
Champlain • Middlebury • Saint Michael's

2020

GMHEC Well-Being

Annual Report

Message from the GMHEC Executive Director

2020 will be the year that is not soon forgotten as it changed the way we live, work, play, and connect but 2020 also shined the spotlight on the importance of well-being and resilience. Resilience was the buzzword of the year and everywhere I turned it seemed that people were talking about how to stay well and resilient in the face of the challenges that 2020 brought. It is my hope that as we move into 2021 and beyond that well-being and resilience will stay in the forefront of our collective consciousness and thriving individuals are the key to thriving organizations.

Sincerely,

Corinna Hoelke

Message from The GMHEC Well-Being Coordinator

For many of us 2020 was one of the most challenging years of our lives. We witnessed and experienced egregious acts of violence, unrest, and suffering. It was a year plagued by unbelievable hardship and continued challenge. And while 2020 may have been incredibly trying, it also provided ample opportunity for growth and reflection. 2020 reminded us of our values and how we aspire to show up in the world. It provided us with opportunities to come together as families and communities albeit in a socially distanced way. It gave us gifts of learning to be flexible, to be open to possibility and to making peace with uncertainty. Here at GMHEC Well-Being the Covid crisis forced us to pivot and reimagine how to deliver our programming and services in a way that continued to meet the demands and expectations of our customers while keeping safety at the forefront. Moving the delivery of our programming to virtual turned out to be a gift as it enabled us to more effectively utilize our dollars, to reach a wider audience and to forge new partnerships, to facilitate new relationships and expand connections among our member institutions. Covid also put the spotlight on self-care and well-being forcing many of us to take a closer look at how we take care of ourselves and spurring leadership to take a harder look at how as organizations, employee well-being is promoted and supported. While 2020 was undoubtedly difficult, the future is looking brighter because of it.

Rebecca Schubert

MS RDN, NBC-HWC



WELL-BEING MISSION: Establish a culture of health and well-being at our member colleges, engaging employees and their families in finding their own well-being.

WELL-BEING VISION: Faculty and staff of the member colleges thrive in the five domains of well-being including physical, career, social, community and financial, enabling them to bring their best selves to work and life every day.

STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Foster an environment that makes the healthy choice the easy choice.
2. Foster an inclusive and engaging culture of well-being that enables employees to bring their best self to work and life every day.
3. Educate and empower employees to effectively manage and utilize the health care system while maximizing opportunities presented to stabilize cost.

Major efforts of the past twelve months

1

Leadership Engagement and Support of Well-Being

In 2020, the leadership of Champlain and Middlebury Colleges began discussions of faculty and staff well-being from a strategic perspective, recognizing the importance of employee well-being on an organizational level. At Champlain, the "Flourishing Worksite" initiative that is part of the Champlain 2025 strategic planning, describes a commitment to amplifying the existing organization's strengths to foster a more comprehensive well-being commitment and experience for students, staff and faculty. A committee convened and a set of recommendations was proposed to the President. This work continues and the College continues to work toward the proposed recommendations which include creating a cross-college Well-Being leadership team, implementing "Well-Being Wednesdays" and providing professional development for faculty and staff to foster their own resilience and support the resilience of students.

In addition, the GMHEC Well-Being Coordinator was busy networking and meeting with leadership groups from our member colleges to share information about the abundant resources available to support faculty and staff well-being. Numerous virtual sessions were presented on topics such as "Cultivating Resilient Teams" and "Managing Energy for Full Engagement." Presentations were provided to approximately three hundred faculty and staff.

2

Awards and Recognition

Congratulations are in order to Norwich University and Champlain College who were both recognized with two separate awards. Norwich University was recognized by the Vermont Department of Health and the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports with a 2020 Governor's Excellence in Worksite Wellness Silver Level Award and Champlain College was recognized by the Council with a Gold Level Award. In addition, both schools were also recognized with a 2020 Cigna Well-Being Award. The Cigna Well-Being Award honors workplaces that are making a difference in the health and well-being of their employees. Organizations are evaluated on five key areas which include leadership, organization foundations, policy and environment, program implementation and participation. This is the second time Champlain has won an award and a first for Norwich. Champlain took home the top prize for an "Outstanding Culture of Well-Being" and Norwich University is being recognized for having an "Honorable Culture of Well-Being."

3

Virtual Programming

Prior to our moving to remote work in March of 2020 as a result of the Covid pandemic, most of the programming offered by GMHEC Well-Being was being provided on an in-person basis at our individual colleges. While we loved the intimate connection that these in-person opportunities afforded, it was not the most efficient use of our resources as we were limited in the number of people we could reach and the in-person model put a strain on our budget. Once we moved to remote work, we were able to move all of our programming to remote. This proved to be an incredible opportunity to reach more faculty and staff, to open doors to relationships between faculty and staff of the different schools and enabled us to more effectively utilize our budget. We began offering daily fitness classes including yoga, strength training and cardio classes. We began offering cooking and mindfulness classes, art classes for kids and adults and promoting the variety of resources available throughout EAP. Between March and December of 2020, there were over 3,000 unique attendees at our events and the feedback has been fantastic. Here is a sample of some of the anonymous comments we received:

"Everything has been SO AMAZING! It is really nice to have a break in the day from work. Also, it's nice to have things to look forward to. I'm really enjoying the lunch hour events. Thank you for doing this!"

"Thank you again for making the arrangements for GMHEC Participants to join True Center Yoga's online classes. This has been an important stress relief for me as I ride out the storm alone. And I have rediscovered my love of yoga and regained a lot of strength and flexibility which I thought was gone forever in my mid-50s!"

"Your offerings have been really wonderful and help remind us that we are supported."

"Thank you for offering so much great programming -- this has really helped improve my mental and physical well-being during this highly stressful time."

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Engagement with Faculty and Staff

Education is not enough to promote behavior change but education that enhances knowledge and that increases personal awareness can lead to change. Throughout 2020 our GMHEC Well-Being Coordinator has sought out many opportunities to enhance the knowledge of faculty and staff of our member colleges around a wide variety of well-being topics including Staying Well While Working at a Desk, The How of Habit Change, Cultivating Resilience to Avoid Burnout, Managing Energy for Full Engagement and Supporting Staff During Covid. Through virtual presentation to groups including the Middlebury Leadership Alliance, the St. Michael's College Admin and Faculty Staff Councils, the St. Michael's Staff Assembly, Norwich University's and Middlebury College's facilities departments, the Norwich University Admin Council and the GMHEC team, there have been direct interactions with over 600 faculty and staff.

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Leveraging Partnerships

In 2020 GMHEC launched its partnership with DIEMlife, a digital platform that supports users to add purpose and meaning to their lives by helping them set goals, plan for success, and get the community support they need to fulfill their ambitions. The platform offers Quests that encourage new personal challenges, daily exercise, and stress-management activities while enlisting the support of others on DIEMlife's social networking platform. Each Quest is broken down into manageable weekly challenges that encourage each participant to proceed at their own pace, and each encourages participants to seek and offer encouragement to others. In 2020, GMHEC offered two Quests: the Quest to Connect and the Race Around the Great Western Loop. 173 faculty and staff participated in these Quests, traveled a total of 30,000 miles, packed and delivered meals in their communities, helped neighbors with grocery shopping and shoveling, sent cards of caring to soldiers overseas, ran to raise money for local charities, took action to decrease their carbon footprint, practiced meditation and connected with friends and family.

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Focus on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

Keeping our faculty and staff healthy lies at the heart of our work and therefore much of work centers on health promotion and disease prevention. In 2020 our on-site flu vaccination clinics, the Omada Diabetes Prevention Program and The Edge Virtual HealthyCARE 90 Day Program (previously called The Edge Commit to Get Fit Program) supported our efforts to promote the health and well-being of our faculty and staff. Two of our four colleges elected to have GMHEC organize their employee flu clinics and 305 employees participated in these clinics. In 2020, three of the four colleges launched the Omada Diabetes Prevention Program, a one-year, virtual group-based coaching program aimed at supporting participants to implement and maintain healthy lifestyle behaviors to reduce their risk of developing diabetes. To date, 103 faculty and staff have participated in this program. In 2020, we also promoted The Edge Virtual HealthyCARE 90 Day Program, a comprehensive wellness program that focuses on education and behavior modification. Twelve people completed this program. Here is what one participant had to say about her experience:

"The Edge Commit to Get Fit Program worked so well for me because it was remote. The program was really informative and having three one-on-one sessions with the nutritionist was great. It was my first time meeting with a nutritionist, and I really enjoyed our conversations. I lost 25+ pounds over the course of the 13-week program and feel like it gave me the motivation to carry all of my new eating and exercise habits forward. This program just clicked with me for a variety of reasons, and I was able to reap the benefits!"

- Liz, Middlebury College

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Health Care Trends & Utilization

Covid certainly played a role in the trends and utilization of health care among the faculty and staff of our member colleges in 2020. Overall, plan spending was down over 2019. Emergency Department visits were down, as were annual well visits as Covid kept many people from seeking care. Virtual visits were up 4500% and it is our hope that this is a trend that will continue.

What will 2021 bring?

No one could have predicted what 2020 would have brought and we are fooling ourselves if we knew what 2021 holds. What we do know is, whatever 2021 brings our way, we will remain focused on our vision to provide excellent resources and services to support faculty and staff of our member colleges. We will look to our values of excellence, thoughtful cost management, promoting creative solutions and leveraging talent at our member colleges to continue to guide us forward. We will continue to engage leadership at all levels to enhance the culture of well-being at our schools and continue the work we began in late 2020 to integrate well-being with benefits shared services.
