

# Generation Education Wellbeing Courses

***Strategic Plan Theme: Student Success***

***Funding Level: Below \$1 million***

***Facility Needs: No new facilities will be needed***

***Submitting Unit: RISE***

***Collaborating colleges/departments/units involved with this proposal.***

MSU Health Promotion, Student Health and Wellness; SLE Recreation Sports, CANR- Liberty Hyde Bailey Scholars, Student Organic Farm, RISE, RCAH- Liberty Hyde Bailey Scholars, Health4U

***What is the proposal's big theme or idea?***

Problem statement: Current National College Health Assessment 2020 data shows that college students are struggling with a wide variety of serious health/wellness issues. MSU's undergraduate population mirrors these same findings. We know that students cannot be academically successful while struggling with these stressors (depression, anxiety, financial, substance abuse, etc.). MSU aspires to close the gap on student success by addressing academic barriers, but until we address whole student well-being, we will never completely close the gap.

Our big idea is to design and offer two required first- and second- year undergraduate general education courses focused on student well-being.

Polacek et al. (2014) has found that wellness education offered in a general education curriculum impacts students' wellness and wellness knowledge retained after graduation. With implementing a well-being graduation requirement, we desire to increase the resources of proactive/preventative care and curriculum associated with healthful decision-making and help-seeking behavior.

Specific Aim 1: Develop two 1-credit courses modeled after the successful Stanford University Design Your Life courses, Yale's Science of Wellness, Harvard's Happiness, and UVM's Surviving and Thriving in College. We envision integrating these courses into the multi-unit wellbeing initiative proposed by Traskie and Phillipich.

The courses will be grounded in the proposed campus-wide wellbeing framework, which includes planetary health, whereby human health and wellbeing are inseparable from environmental sustainability. We see these as the twin crises of our time—planetary health and human health are intertwined and rapidly deteriorating.

We support the principles articulated in the Okanagan Charter Health Promoting Universities and Colleges. Our courses will draw upon the Okanagan action framework for higher education in their content and design. Aligning with the Okanagan Charter will also support revising our commitment to our land grant identity.

Key to the success of these required courses is that students in the second course will have the option to select from various sections designed to meet diverse learners where they are in their journey to wellbeing.

Course Accessibility- one-credit easy to fit into block tuition, low time commitment, scaffolded content designed to meet the students' wellness knowledge and skills

Specific Aim 2: This initiative will bring previously taught wellbeing courses at MSU under one coordinated framework with an organized set of learning outcomes and assessment metrics. We believe this will create a critical mass of faculty and learners pursuing a shared goal of wellbeing at MSU.

Courses such as KIN 121, SOC 350, ISS 210, NSC 292, ANR/UGS 110, and other similar courses offered through support units (Health4U) are examples of the courses that would be brought into this framework and assessment metrics.

***What is the proposal's goal?***

Our goal is to increase student success while improving student well-being through transformational learning environments that enable and inspire students to become healthy and engaged citizens who will contribute to the well-being of others and the planet.

Supporting Goals

Improve student well-being

- Align course learning outcomes as metrics of student well-being
- Place-based pedagogy to address students' sense of belonging
- Experiential learning for diverse learners
- Increase/contribute to student retention and persistence
- Provide each student with a core set of skills to increase emotional resilience and psychological flexibility to best navigate academic and personal life.
- Contribute to campus wellness culture -These courses are a direct need expressed in the Traskie and Phillipich proposal for a university policy for a general education well-being requirement -Utilize Spartan Center for Recreation and Well-Being by integrating their resources into these courses
- The skills taught in these courses will increase student capacity to engage in authentic relationships within and across human differences, thus supporting both DEI strategic plan and the efforts to center ethics and ethical behavior in our institutional culture/ practices.

Improve campus sustainability -Integrate content into both courses to links personal, community, and ecological health and wellness. The courses will provide learners with resources and guidance on how to move from knowledge to changed behavior (agency, advocacy, engagement).

- Implement efforts to intervene in the unfolding climate crisis by addressing individual and collective lack of emotional resilience leading to experiential avoidance. This phenomenon causes people to look away and shut down when planetary survival requires innovation, risk taking, and accepting the truth of the current state of the crisis. The courses will strengthen individual and collective leadership in this arena of change.
- Increase utilization and stewardship of campus living-learning spaces and land labs such as Student Organic Farm, Bailey Greenhouse and Urban Farm, Red Cedar River, Sanford Woodlot, CMERC. By improving the health of our campus, we improve the health of our community.

Timeline Goals:

Year 1: Offer courses as an elective for 2-4 specific colleges to foresee logistical challenges for the scale- up, refine/ develop curriculum to submit to Academic Council (AC) and college curriculum committees, develop and offer a training component for faculty, staff, ULAs, build supportive community, common principles, common language curriculum development

Year 2: Approval from AC, identify faculty to teach courses, provide professional development opportunities to first- time instructors, course assessment annually to review learning outcomes for revision or modification, scale up to additional LLC's, majors, colleges

Year 3: Offer courses as general education requirement to 50% of the population

***Define the significance, or impact of your big idea.***

Student Impact: On December 8, 2021, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy issued an advisory calling for swift action to respond to a growing mental health crisis among youth that has worsened due to stressors related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, the National College Health Assessment 2020 reports that 36% of college students have had no vigorous physical activity in the past 7 days, 30% report using prescription sedatives or sleeping pills, 24% report a strong desire to use heroin, and 29% have a diagnosis of anxiety or depression. Adding to this anxiety is that Gen Z will be one of the most financially challenged cohorts to enroll in college. Stagnant wages for parents and increases in tuition leave these students with a more

significant debt load than any generation prior, which adds to their academic distress. These are just a few alarming data points that indicate the need for a more robust student wellbeing intervention across our colleges and universities in this country. These courses would also implement trauma-informed teaching practices to support the work done by Trauma Services Training Network on campus.

**Campus Impact:** Faculty and staff engaged in creating and delivering these courses will have secondary gain from the process. This may also build a stronger community voice for bringing this content to faculty, staff, executive management, alumni, etc. The campus impact would be amplified by linking this proposal to the University Wellness Coalition (Traskie proposal) and the Spartan Resilience Training Program (Laughman proposal). By raising the bar on student wellbeing, faculty and staff who regularly interact with students will experience less burnout from their daily stress dose, especially for those not trained in wellness interventions.

**Global Impact:** We anticipate advances in MSU metrics to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, commitment to more sustainable practices as benchmarked against our peers and aligned with the action framework articulated in the International Okanagan Charter “The overwhelming evidence of the IPBES Global Assessment 2020, from a wide range of different fields of knowledge, presents an ominous picture,” said IPBES Chair, Sir Robert Watson. “The health of ecosystems on which we and all other species depend is deteriorating more rapidly than ever. We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide.” Watson adds, “Through ‘transformative change’, nature can still be conserved, restored and used sustainably. . . By transformative change, we mean a fundamental, system-wide reorganization across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values.”

### ***Who will be impacted?***

Once fully implemented, a two-year wellness general education program will impact the noted population of the MSU community. During the pilot, the program will impact a subset of this community.

All first and second-year undergraduate students (~15-30K students)

Campus faculty and staff providing wellness general educational experience

Campus student affairs staff that develop and provide wellness student support services. Student affairs staff are often ‘front line’ workers responding to students in crisis. Well-being courses offer preventative care intending to ease the reactive measures often needed to support students.

We anticipate the development of partnerships with MSU Extension Child and Family Development and other mental wellness Extension programs that currently support Michigan families, children, and farmers dealing with mental health challenges.

### ***What does sustainability for your proposal look like?***

Courses have gained state and national recognition

Faculty and staff are excited to teach the course and offer to teach it

Departments are eager to provide sections for their majors

Students are excited to take the course and not viewed as a ‘just another gen ed requirement’

Metrics of success make it an easy decision for the scaled intervention to be funded on a recurring basis

Involvement of national wellness scholars to infuse most current well-being research

Continued professional development opportunities for instructors