Effective Wellness Communications

A summary report of FY24 outcomes for
Strategy 1D – Wellness Outreach Campaign from the
*Cultivate Well-Being Action & Transformation Roadmap
with a Focus on Students*

May 2024

Introduction

This project is in support of the following *Roadmap* goal, strategy and objectives:

Goal:	**Goal 1 – Cultural Change**: Catalyze cultural, transformational change at Georgia Tech so that the places, practices, policies, protocols, people, and philosophies that have a demonstrated positive contribution to well-being for all students are adopted, advanced, expanded and/or strengthened, while those aspects of Institute culture that impede health and wellness are minimized.
Strategy:	**Strategy 1D:** In partnership with student leaders and stakeholders, launch and sustain a vigorous social media and new media campaign designed to focus on changing health behavior, promoting wellness, shifting cultural norms, and correcting misperceived social norms, using targeted messaging for and engagement with various student communities; specific messages will distinguish between and focus on the importance of sleep, rest, relaxation, resilience, happiness, and mindfulness, as well as engage behaviors which advance all eight aspects of wellness. Messaging will also educate students, faculty, and staff about changes to GT policy and practice intended to promote health/wellness and available resources for support. Lastly, messaging will strive to pivot GT culture from an emphasis on productivity, "busyness," and celebration of human-doingness to an emphasis on resilience, passion, and honoring of human-beingness.

Objectives, Deliverables and Milestones	Status
Decide on step one overall messaging/strategy	Complete
Create and set up content calendar	Continuing into FY25
Utilize SharePoint folder for storage/distribution of shared assets	Continuing into FY25
Identify step one shareable content	Complete
Promote Student Resource Guide as centralized location for comprehensive list of resources available to students, including health, recreation, well-being, and mental health	Continuing into FY25
Request leadership provide the core team with a list of the specific information on policy and practice changes that they want disseminated to students, faculty, and staff	Continuing into FY25

The purpose of the Well-Being Outreach Campaign strategy is to assess, unify, streamline, and execute health- and wellness-related communications and marketing efforts across the Georgia Tech campus. This work is meaningful in a number of ways, but two of the main areas of impact include student well-being and departmental effectiveness. Tech offers numerous and robust health and wellness programs, events, services, and resources, but without effectual communication, students would remain largely unaware of the helpful tools they have access to,

and their well-being could suffer. Health and well-being departments also lose efficiency by allocating time, funding, personnel, and other resources to programs that are underutilized because of ineffective marketing.

Several challenges are addressed by this strategy, including misperceptions about a lack of Institutional prioritization of student well-being, false beliefs about the state of students' mental health, confusion around offered services and departmental capacities, and perceived social and cultural norms that are damaging to students' well-being. In addition to the inherent challenges of health education, program promotion, and event marketing, we also face the challenges of correcting decades of entrenched misbeliefs, false rumors, and harmful productivity culture.

Discovery

Though evaluation data is scattered and not always accessible, this committee has made efforts to gauge the effectiveness of current well-being communications and campaigns in order to establish a baseline measure upon which to improve. Main metrics used for evaluation include event registration and attendance, program participation, social media views and engagements, newsletter clicks, and student feedback, both formal and informal. Data was generally collected by individual departments within SEWB, but information about cabinet-area-wide communications are maintained by SEWB Marketing and Communications.

Initial findings indicate that outside of word-of-mouth among social groups and RSOs (registered student organizations), social media and other digital platforms like websites and emails are the most effective forms of communication. Physical communications in high-traffic areas, such as tabling, lawn signs, and sidewalk chalking, have also been identified as ways that students interact with departments and receive health and wellness information.

Additional recommendations from the Emerging Leaders Advisory Board (ELAB) in their January 2024 meeting included promotional items, GroupMe conversations, calendar invitations with event advertising, flyers in bathroom stalls, and advertising on campus transportation.

Limitations

Our team has identified four major limitations that, while not insurmountable, will continue to challenge the scope of our strategy. The first of these limitations is data, more specifically access and knowledge of what exists. As is common practice in higher education, each department, division, and cabinet area maintains its own data and evaluation tools. This means that relevant data is often accessible only by request or inaccessible completely.

The second limitation is personnel capacity. Core team members and Subject Matter Experts all maintain roles, schedules, and job duties outside of Roadmap projects and have limited time and energy to dedicate to strategy work. This was not unexpected, as it is likely a challenge to all Advisory Board members and strategy teams, but it is a limitation that must continue to be navigated.

The third limitation identified by this team is buy-in from campus partners. In order to successfully transform Georgia Tech culture, other campus divisions must not only recognize the need for change but also become active participants. Our team has had successful collaboration within Student Engagement and Well-Being but has been unable to forge strong connections with other cabinet areas such as Institute Communications. Individual campaigns have been supported, but no commitment has been made to support the overall strategy.

The final major limitation we've identified is the existing culture at Georgia Tech. We are limited by the culture of productivity, both real and perceived, as well as by pervasive misinformation and beliefs surrounding mental health. Despite increased messaging surrounding well-being and continuous promotion of services and programs, progress toward shifting the overall narrative in the minds of students has been incremental.

Recommendations

In exploring how to best reach our primary identified audience of students with key messaging, student stakeholders were identified and asked directly. Results suggest that word-of-mouth, social media, websites, and email, are the primary ways they receive and share information. Additionally, students identified physical communication in high-traffic areas, such as tabling, lawn signs, and sidewalk chalking as ways they regularly engage with information and campus departments. Beyond these recommendations, members of the Emerging Leaders Advisory Board (ELAB) endorsed promotional content, GroupMe conversations, event advertising that includes calendar invitations, flyers in bathroom stalls, and advertising on campus transportation.

Next steps include the need to review research-supported approaches and best practices for health promotion messages (HPMs), especially those around the importance of sleep, rest, relaxation, resilience, happiness, and mindfulness (see citations). The core team, along with input from SMEs will apply insights gained through review of research to the creation of HPMs to be disseminated via the SharePoint Folder to campus community stakeholders by the end of 2026.

The core team faced barriers related to expanding access to a SharePoint folder that campus community stakeholders could obtain shared assets from, hindering seamless dissemination of communication campaign content. The core team also found they lacked access to relevant data sources, obstructing their ability to provide data-driven insights and tailor health promotion messages effectively. This barrier underscored the importance of improving data accessibility within the Institute's infrastructure to enhance the effectiveness of health promotion initiatives. Future team members should expect problems navigating these kinds of barriers and increase time estimates for deliverables accordingly.

Acknowledgements

Sources

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