

Organizing a Campus Wellness Day

Institutions must implement a range of initiatives to educate international students about important health and wellness themes and connect them with services. One such initiative to consider is a campus-wide Wellness Day, designed to reach a mass of students at once with a variety of information and education. This type of event can simultaneously increase student awareness about their physical and emotional wellbeing, clear up common misconceptions about services, and introduce them to the range of resources available on campus.

In developing a Wellness Day initiative on your campus, consider the following logistical issues, keeping your campus resources and demographics in mind:

Identify Campus Units to Participate

Invite campus units representing all facets of student wellness to participate. By expanding the focus of the event beyond mental health, there will be reduced stigma associated with participating, and the institution will reach students with a more comprehensive range of services.

What campus units will you invite to participate? *(Consider: the Counseling Center, Wellness Education Groups, Student Health Services)*

Determine an Optimal Time and Location

Optimize your Wellness Day by holding it when and where it will reach the most students. The Forum recommends holding the event in mid-fall, which is late enough for students to have started identifying some challenges they're facing but early enough to be of use in addressing them.

When deciding on a location, consider central campus locations that students may frequent already, such as the quad, the student center, or near a dining hall. This way, you may be able to reach not just students that intend to attend the fair, but also those whose interest is piqued as they walk by.

Where and when would be feasible to hold a Wellness Day at your institution?

Organizing a Campus Wellness Day (cont.)

Think Strategically About How to Market the Event

Make your Wellness Day more inviting and student-friendly by marketing it as an overall wellness and community event rather than solely as a mental health initiative. By emphasizing themes of physical wellness and raising some of the common adjustment issues international students often experience, students will feel more comfortable attending and being open to sharing the challenges they're facing.

What channels and messaging will you use to get the word out about Wellness Day?

Incorporate Hands-on Activities

International students often find it intimidating to approach faculty and staff with questions, whether due to a language barrier, shame about the issues they're facing, or different cultural perceptions of authority. Incorporating interactive and engaging activities (e.g., art contests or short quizzes with prizes) will reach students with education and information while driving engagement with campus units.

Wellness Day is also a valuable opportunity to provide onsite services to students, such as vaccines and mental health screenings. Providing streamlined versions of these traditional services will allow you to reach a broader population of students than you otherwise would.

What activities will you incorporate into Wellness Day? How will you engage students?

Leverage Peer Support

Peers have enormous influence over each other, particularly among international students. Inviting mental-wellness-focused students groups, such as Active Minds or NAMI, or international student organizations will give the event credibility with students and give you an additional mouthpiece to communicate your message to international students.

Organizing a Campus Wellness Day (cont.)

Do you have a student organization or group of students at your institution that could support this effort?

Provide Follow-up Support

Wellness Day should be the first touch point in an ongoing relationship between your international students and various wellness services on campus. By introducing the staff and services they have access to on campus, you can prepare your international students to take better advantage of all that you have to offer them. This event can increase awareness, reduce stigma, and jump-start engagement with this often hard-to-reach student population.

In particular, this event can provide an opportunity to obtain contact information, disseminate important information to students, make referrals, and identify at-risk students.

How will you continue to engage your international students on an ongoing basis?
