

2017 Mental Health Summit
University of Calgary
June 20th, 2017

Attending the Mental Health Summit was an amazing experience: it's extremely refreshing to see a renewed commitment from the Provincial Government and Post-Secondary Institutions to the Mental Health needs of students. Nearly the entire executive travelled to Calgary to attend a full day workshop and public announcement regarding Mental Health on Post-Secondary campuses.

I've summarized details regarding the Mental Health Summit below:

8:55am: Breaking the Stigma

Victoria Maxwell

Victoria took us through her very personal journey of Mental Illness, beginning with her childhood all the way to today. The stigma associated with Mental Illness played a large role in her life and it was very inspiring to hear how effective therapy and effective support systems helped her to live the happy life that she never believed that she could.

10:00am: Nurturing Resilience on Campus

Dr. Michael Unger

Twitter Handle: @MichaelUngarPhd, www.michaelunger.com, www.resilienceresearch.org

Dr Michael Unger talked extensively about the interesting complexities associated with the concept of Resiliency. As someone who experienced adversity from a very early age by growing up in the Foster Care system, I found this session extremely intriguing. Dr. Unger expressed that Resiliency is not a "cognitive trick" that some people have and others do not. Resiliency is complex and it's based on a number of external supports and internal cognitive factors. Resiliency is a very relevant dimension that requires further exploration.

12:00pm: Mental Health Funding Announcement

The Alberta Government pledged \$8.9 million to all 26 PSI's (Post-Secondary Institutions) for 2017. The Government also pledged \$25.8 million in funding for the next three years. I eagerly await further details for how this will benefit the U of L campus!

[Click here for more details regarding the Mental Health Announcement](#)

1:00pm: Honoring Lived Experience

Sydney Quick & Dr Alan McLuckie

This session allowed us to hear from people that have experience in the real world. The topics were personal to their mental health and followed their journey. Sydney had a complex eating disorder when she entered Post-Secondary. Alan struggles with anxiety and ADHD, despite having a PHD.

An individual asked a question about professors who fail to provide accommodations for students that experience anxiety (which can be more difficult to physically identify than other ailments). The individual stated that professors use the argument of "You wouldn't get away with missing a deadline in the **real world**, so why should that change in University?"

Alan had a fantastic response that I paraphrased below:

I want to live in a world where we reject the inherent marginalization of groups. By saying that we are simulating the "Real World" as a defense for not providing accommodations; we are choosing to accept the **real** fact that the **real** world oppresses different groups. I want to live in a world where we reject those systems of marginalization, especially in a space where we embrace higher learning.

2:00pm: Measuring Resilience

Kevin Friese, Keith Dobson, and Dr Michael Unger

This session focused on the difficulties associated with measuring resilience across different regions. So many different factors play a role in determining resilience that a universal approach to measuring it may not be appropriate. On top of that, resilience hasn't had significant research done on it. However, some stronger models exist and Dobson identified them: The College Student Scale (2013) and the [Conner-Davidson RISC](#)

3:15pm: Applying the Principles of Resilience Panel

Presenters: Jeannie Gorrie & Sarah Grodecki (Alberta College of Art and Design Students Association), Latasha Calf Robe (Mt Royal), Jennifer Thannhauser & Russell Thomson (U of C)

There was a number of programs that were highlighted from across Alberta that delved into developing resilience. Each of the programs were very specific to each institution: ACAD implemented an Art Residency program, U of C implemented an institution and student driven focus group, and Mount Royal supported Latasha in reaching out to marginalized students.

It was a privilege to attend the 2017 Wellness Summit with my fellow executives. We are excited to bring forward our recently acquired 24/7 anonymous peer to peer support system, 7 Cups, so that students will have the ability to connect with an active trained listener anytime.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me! Thank you!

Regards,



Royal Adkin
Vice-President Operations and Finance