Book Review

Harward, D. (Ed.) (2016). *Well-Being and Higher Education: A Strategy for Change and the Realization of Education's Greater Purpose*. Association of American Colleges and Universities. (302 pp., paperback $25.00)

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Well-being may not be the first thing that comes to mind as an objective of a communication center. However, communication centers play a crucial role in the success of students, including their well-being. Centers help address anxiety (Brophy, Adebayo, & Broeckelman-Post, 2021), emotional and cognitive interest in learning (Mazer, 2013) and create support for students' learning environments (Reeve, 2013). In the book *Well-being and Higher Education: A Strategy for Change and the Realization of Education's Greater Purpose*, thirty-four individual essays provoke thought on what well-being means in higher education. The contributors include professors from varying backgrounds such as Communication, Psychology, African American studies, and Education. Other authors include a Director of the Advancement of Well-being and a student administrative assistant for a first-year experience program. Their perspectives and contributions are diverse. Though the book is not written directly for communication center professionals, the essays have resounding implications for what centers can do. The book invites communication centers to consider what role they play in developing the "whole" student.

Many communication center administrators have understood the need for developing student belonging and spaces that support the entire individual (Gann, 2021; Prentiss, 2021). Well-being and mindfulness lead to better academic performance and higher resiliency (Egan, O'Hara, Cook, & Mantzios, 2022). The prospect of student well-being is complicated, but this book explores the concept by providing specific examples of what well-being can look like in higher education. The book is divided into four parts. First, it examines the meaning of well-being. Second, it theorizes how to implement well-being initiatives, programs, and practices. Third, the authors identify measurable curricular and pedagogical implementations that promote well-being at specific institutions. Finally, the book examines how we can restructure education to focus on well-being through a series of reflective questions.

The first ten chapters help readers conceptualize the dimensions of well-being. Essay contributors cover how we measure well-being, the constructs that make up well-being, and how to identify well-being in students. Well-being is connected to enjoyment, belonging, self-care, and self-awareness and the book explores these connections across several essays. Two separate essays by Astin and Bronsteen encourage universities to measure student well-being. Specifically, the chapters address measuring equanimity which students

can use to navigate difficult situations. Provocations like this lead to questions such as, should we ask users of communication centers how happy they are? I would argue yes, and this text helps explore why and how this data might strengthen the work of communication centers.

Part two outlines actual implementations of assessment measures, how to be accountable for the well-being of students, and specific arguments for administrators to emphasize well-being as an important value at a university. The first thing readers encounter in part two is a valuable short-form questionnaire called the "mental health continuum," which could easily be placed in a communication center to allow evaluation of student feelings. Student emotions in the communication center are connected to the concept of self (Butler-Ellis & Stuart, 2021). When center workers understand the obstacles created by low self-worth, the academic goals of the center can be better accomplished. Another essay in the book by Wolf and Rodas entitled Student Narratives and Well-being features a student author discussing a narrative activity to help understand where students are coming from, how they view the course content, and to connect their emotions and stories throughout the semester. Mechanisms like these would be very beneficial to communication centers. Part three names particular schools' programs, initiatives, and successes in implementing well-being. An essay by Lucas and Rogers outlines a university ecosystem at a particular institution dedicated to ensuring institutional continuity of well-being initiatives. This model could provoke the communication center to examine the role it plays in a university's well-being ecosystem. The book includes helpful visual depictions in multiple essays but, specifically, three separate essays by Seifert, Dahill-Brown, Jayawickreme, and Keyes help simplify and visualize a potential approach to well-being. Part four wraps up the book with thought-provoking questions that encourage a commitment to well-being amidst change, such as: "What kind of college learning results in the demonstrable increase in the well-being of students?" "How do educators help foster that kind of learning?" None of the questions posed in part four have easy answers but they facilitate thinking about why and how we can incorporate well-being in communication centers.

While some of the essays provide very in-depth solutions such as how to train educators to capture student narratives of well-being, some stop short of the solutions and simply provide a framework for what could be considered. However, overall, the collection of essays provides a robust consideration of what it means to incorporate well-being into the communication center. Student well-being is a prerequisite to academic success. Communication centers can use the essays found in this book to promote well-being in concrete ways.

References

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