Chapter 6
What Is Next?
Future Considerations

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ABSTRACT

Because the possible problems related to mental health and well-being have been identified throughout the chapters of this book, the authors plan to implement and evaluate these strategies to help provide future directions and frameworks. This chapter describes a future research study and other explorations the authors wish to conduct. Specifically, the authors seek to measure preservice general and special educators’ character dispositions (e.g., grit), and use these data to determine how to effectively help college students handle stress. Additionally, researchers hope to examine the use of technology in college classrooms to promote mindfulness. Finally, the implementation of strategies for the college classroom will be implemented and evaluated in teacher preparation coursework.


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INTRODUCTION

As the authors of this book researched mental health on college campuses, a plethora of ideas about how to help students in coursework were posited. This section will explore some of these ideas.

OUR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Fink (2014) has identified potential strategies to promote well-being for college students through high-impact practices of learning and engagement. Fink (2014) indicates developing living-learning programs (LLPs) establishes socially supportive environments within campus residence halls. LLPs place a great deal of energy into building a sense of community within the dorms. These activities are vital for freshman transitioning to college, seeking a new social network. In our educator preparation program, we have seen the impact of building a sense of community. As we have developed and revised our programs, we have learned how essential it is for us to connect with our students immediately upon their arrival on campus and to connect to one another. Some strategies we implement include: using a cohort model for both faculty and students to progress through our 4- or 5-year programs; assigning the freshman instructor to each student as an academic advisor; looping with students for the freshman year; and incorporating community building activities and skill builders throughout the program. Each of these strategies allows teacher candidates to have a touch stone on campus within the first week of classes and helps build social and academic communities. In thinking about future considerations, we may want to research these strategies to determine if they do impact social well-being (regardless whether the student remains an education major or changes his or her major).

Social interactions and relationships and physical activity play vital roles maintaining positive mental health. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) advocates college students build, “Connections with others, including involvement with campus and community activities, can help you protect your mental health. Explore opportunities through your campus student activities center and get involved in one or more of the following: Campus events; Campus clubs; Campus interest groups; Sports; Student organizations;
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