Chapter 2
Defining and Promoting Student Well-Being: American and International Colleges

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ABSTRACT

The chapter includes a summary of how American and international colleges define students’ wellbeing. American colleges began using wellbeing within the practice of positive psychology. Now, colleges in the United States use the term health and wellness, which encompasses a multidimensional meaning including psychological, social, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. The international colleges primarily define wellbeing as subjective wellbeing, dependent upon the students’ perceptions, culture, and social support. A few wellness assessments will be introduced. The remainder of the chapter discusses varying wellness programs conducted on today’s American college campuses.

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INTRODUCTION

Well-being is a term that is most commonly applied to persons but is never intersected with their circumstances—more specifically, with college students. In this chapter, the authors will use a global discussion of how well-being is defined, in conjunction with how it is discussed and normalized, to compare the American standard. The authors will also compare the assessments American college campuses are utilizing to the ones used by their global counterparts. Applying well-being to college students would add more to the conversation regarding their academic success, retention rates, and likelihood to graduate. Colleges have become increasingly concerned about their students’ health and well-being.

DEFINING STUDENT WELL-BEING ON AMERICAN COLLEGE CAMPUS

Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, and Linkins (2009) mention three factors on why colleges should be concerned with students’ well-being. First, the prevalence of depression and anxiety among adolescents has increased. Second, Americans are less satisfied with life and happiness, in comparison to 50 years ago. Third, improved well-being leads to better learning. According to Seligman et al., “more well-being is synergistic with better learning” (p. 294). Seligman et al. (2009) believe well-being can be taught in school “as a vehicle for increasing life satisfaction, and as an aid to better learning and more creative thinking” (p. 294).

Subjective Well-Being

Overall, four models of well-being on American college campuses are currently available. One of these models is subjective well-being (SWB). SWB comes from a psychological perspective which influences a person’s level of anxiety and depression. There seems to be some overlap of subjective well-being with positive psychology, yet there is a greater emphasis on measuring neurosis and creating implementation strategies for improving neurosis. Ratelle, Simard, and Guay’s (2013) study mentions the importance of SWB among college students, because “SWB has also been associated with important outcomes, such as educational aspirations, academic engagement, class attendance, educational track/choice of field of study, and academic achievement, and dropout” (p. 894). The study’s purpose was to examine students perceived social support. Kim and Kim (2017) studied the impact social networking has on SWB. Munzel, Meyer-Waarden, and Galan (2018) also investigated the influence of social networking upon students’ SWB. Overall, many
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