More Than Bricks and Mortar: Building an Inclusive Student Well-being and Health Center

Jamie Leonard, MPH, CHES
Director, Office of Health Promotion
Department of Student Health and Wellness
University of Virginia
Today’s Journey

- Background about this project
- Building and design decision STRATEGIES that equitably promote well-being in a college health and wellness center
- Building and design THEMES/ELEMENTS which promote well-being
- Strategies for PROGRAMMING that equitably promote student well-being

Acknowledgement:
Most building photography by Lincoln Barbour / Design by VMDO and Duda Paine Architects
Brief Project Timeline for the Creation of UVA’s New Student Health and Wellness Building

• 2013 – Study on old building expansion
• 2015 – Feasibility study approved by the Board of Visitors to move forward
• 2017 – Selection of the Architects
• 2017-2019 – Research, focus groups, meetings with the Architects
• 2019 – Construction begins! And more research on furniture, equipment, AV, etc
• September 2021 – Moved in…
Socio-Ecological Model

- Individual
  - Knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors
- Interpersonal
- Institutional
- Community
- Policy

- Federal, state, and local legislation
- Cities, neighborhoods, resources, and norms
- Organizations, schools, and workplaces
- Friends, family, and social networks
Goals of Student Health and Wellness Project

- House the Department of Student Health and Wellness
- Serve as a University Student Center
- Integrate within the new Green Street
- Create spaces that physiologically changes those who enter

“We are not just a sick-model center; we are also looking at, ‘What can we do for those students who are well?’”

- Dr. Chris Holstege, Executive Director
UVA Department of Student Health and Wellness
Goals of Student Health and Wellness Building

House the Department of Student Health and Wellness in an equitable way for all units
Goals of Student Health and Wellness Building

Serve as a University Student Center with a well-being lens that is inclusive of all students and actively teaches about the full spectrum of well-being.

We value and respect all persons regardless of age, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation.

UVA Department of Student Health and Wellness
Goals of Student Health and Wellness Building

Integration within the new Green Street to promote connection with the outside environment.
Goals of Student Health and Wellness Building

Space that physiologically changes those who enter through use of evidence-informed, welcoming and calming materials, light, scent, sound, etc.
Building and Design Decision STRATEGIES that Equitably Promote Well-being

- Review cross-disciplinary research
- Involve all units and all staff
- Visit other Universities and buildings
- Bring in student voices for every aspect
- Survey your staff - before and after and WAAY after

Get input on EVERYTHING
Simple Building and Design Elements that Promote Equity in Well-being

- Some space is reservable, but much is not (removes competition for spaces)
- Spaces are accessible, but equally important, WELCOMING.
- Furniture is as diverse as our students’ bodies.
Accessible AND Welcoming Spaces
Furniture
Building and Design THEMES that Promote Equity in Well-being

- Use of the natural world - Connectivity and Community through Earth’s four spheres
- Spaces for social well-being
- Promoting movement
- Public health signage
- Diverse department means more holistic care
Building and Design Theme

Use of the natural world
Building and Design Theme

Spaces for social well-being
Building and Design Theme

Promoting movement
Building and Design Theme

Public health signage

Please wash your hands

Think of one thing that brought you joy today.

for at least 20 seconds!
Building and Design Theme

Diverse department means more holistic care
Building and Design Spaces that Promote Equity in Well-being

- Art Therapy - equitable access when therapy group not in session
- Collegiate Recovery Program Safe Space
- Reflection Rooms (quiet, prayer, meditation, stretching - not prescriptive of what contemplation should look like)
- Lactation room
- Living Room vibe (ie, not a museum)
Strategies for PROGRAMMING that Equitably Promotes Student (and Staff) Well-being

- Healthier (e.g., fitness centers, wellness programs)
- Great collaboration spaces
- Collegial (e.g., shared workspaces, informal meeting areas)
- Teaching (e.g., interactive learning environments)
- Peer Health (e.g., counseling, support groups)
- Student Well-being (e.g., mental health services, stress management)
- Outdoor (e.g., green spaces, nature walks)
Are We Where We Planned to Be?

- Sign In for Room Usage
- Swipe In for After-hours
- Requests for Reservations
- Teaching Kitchen classes
- Providing Building Tours

- Observation
  - How many…
  - Doing what…
- Talking with Students
- Training Student Leaders
- Dust off staff survey?
Questions?