The StudyWell Initiative: A Campus Partnership Promoting Student Wellness, Engagement, and Belonging

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StudyWell is a series of events and programming supporting student wellness and well-being

go.vcu.edu/studywell
In a world of the common, we are the uncommon. Because we do things others can't. Or won't.
VCU / VCU Libraries

- Approx 29,000 students
- Minority Serving Institution (MSI)
- $\frac{1}{3}$ of undergrads Pell-eligible
- $\frac{1}{3}$ of undergrads first gen
- Two libraries: general and health sciences
Before we dive in, let’s learn a little about you.
Outline of session

- Overview of StudyWell initiative
- Specifics about events and programming
- Measures of success
- Broader effects of StudyWell at VCU Libraries
Summer 2021
StudyWell idea is born
Students return to campus

- Mid-pandemic
- Awareness of disproportionate impacts
- Mental health and well-being (Copeland et al., 2021; Pandya & Lodha, 2022)
- Creating a “caring, supportive, and welcoming environment” (O'Keeffe, 2013)
- Our role in wellness (Ramsey & Aagard, 2018)
Initial goals:

● Support wellness and well-being
● Mental, physical, social, financial
● Prerequisites to academic success
Real talk: scrambling since day one to pull this off
The StudyWell Core Team

- Associate Dean for Research and Learning
- Director, Communications & Public Relations
- Events Coordinator****
- Undergrad Student Engagement Coordinator
- Deputy Director, Health Sciences Library
- Research & Education Coordinator, Health Sciences
Recurring StudyWell Partners

● RecWell
  ○ Peer Health Educators
  ○ Counseling Center

● Student Success
  ○ Campus Learning Center
  ○ Writing Center
  ○ YouFirst (First Gen student support)
**Summer 2021**
StudyWell conceptualized

**Fall 2021**
StudyWell pilot events - $1K budget

**Spring 2022**
StudyWell full campaign and events - $5K budget

**2022 - 2023**
The show goes on! $7500K budget
Evolving goals:

- Support wellness and well-being
- Prerequisites to academic success
- Joy, delight, belonging
StudyWell events
The details
General info about events

- Mostly in-person
- One-off events work well as “drop-in” or “stop by” in high traffic areas
- Some staffed, some not
- Several series of events
- Scale: 100 - 200+ (?) events per year
Questions so far?
“Categories” of events

- Health-focused events
- Take-a-break events
- Building connections
- Well wishes / good vibes tables
Health-focused events
Peer Health Educators

- Sleep
- Sexual health and relationships
- Cannabis
- Alcohol
- Physical health
- Menstrual Health
- Mental health
- Meal planning
Other health-focused events

- Food for Fines
- Massage chairs
- Blood pressure screening
Take a Break
Take a Break
Take a break events

- Legos
- Puzzles
- Chess
- Leisure reading and free books
- Zine making
- Coming soon: collective sticker art
Building Connections

Science Hub Drop-in Hours for STEM Students

Description

Faculty members from math, chemistry, biology and physics offer joint "open hours" in the Cabell Library Multipurpose Room (235). STEM students in introductory courses may drop in for answers to questions, problem solving, tutoring and mentoring and getting to know their teachers.

These drop-in hours are a part of the Science Hub a major component of a significant grant-funded program designed to support STEM students, particularly those just beginning their academic work at VCU.
Building connection events

● Writing Center
  ○ Book Club / Reading Group
  ○ Writing Group
Well wishes /
Good vibes
Well wishes / good vibes

- Exams tables wishing students good luck
- Spring flower / seed packet giveaway
- Gratitude cards and joy journals (from the Peer Health Educators)
- Rodney the Ram (VCU’s mascot)
Whiteboard Wednesdays
Always a hit
What song have you been jamming to?
How are you prepping for finals?
Draw your best bug
Whiteboard prompts

https://tinyurl.com/VCULwhiteboards
Your successes and... not successes
Questions so far?
Measuring success

Engagement and assessment
# The numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total 2021-2022</th>
<th>In progress 2022-2023</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendees</td>
<td>2664</td>
<td>3947</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avg attendees per event</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39</td>
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</tbody>
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Assessment can be... awkward

“Thank you for dropping by, want to answer a survey about your 3 min interaction?”
StudyWell @ VCU Libraries Feedback

Thank you for attending today's StudyWell @ VCU Libraries event, and for taking the time to tell us about your experience! Your feedback will help VCU Libraries improve future StudyWell programming.

lwegariepy@vcu.edu Switch account
Not shared

How would you rate the event/program you participated in today at Cabell Library?

1 2 3 4 5

Poor Excellent
We started this in April and had 15+ events since

# responses?
We started this in April and have had 15+ events.

# responses?
So, is it working?

- Wellness and well-being
- Joy, Delight, Belonging
- Engagement

Is StudyWell contributing to these things?
Assessment next steps (for now)

- Largely focused on engagement of students (i.e., numbers) to measure success
- Aiming for 10-15 engagements per event (formally stated as an objective starting in 2023-2024)
StudyWell Challenges

● Scope creep
  ○ “Want to table in the libraries? How can we make that part of StudyWell…”

● Perma-frazzled: limited time
  ○ Executing the events, but difficult to find time to be reflective and understand impact
A larger influence
StudyWell's influence on other initiatives
StudyWell as a wider lens for VCU Libraries
Advance Students’ Holistic Well-being
Support VCU students’ physical, emotional, social, and financial wellness to position them for academic success. This outcome is inclusive of all students—undergraduate, graduate, and professional students.
References


Credits

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome resources for free:

- Presentation template by SlidesCarnival
- Graphics by The Noun Project and SlidesCarnival
Thank you!

Questions?
See next slide for comments and questions that were shared.
Big success with ‘study with a plant’. We grew little succulents and the students check them out.

Did you have to deal with campus security issues or concerns with therapy dogs being in the library building?

Have you faced pushback from Admin? How do you demonstrate ROI or is that something given the active engagement/visibility you’ve been able to justify? We often hit walls when we try to innovate!

PLANTS ARE SUCH EXCELLENT SOURCES OF JOY AND DELIGHT, we’ve had great success with plant-based events.

To assess, we use touch screen emoji scales (frowny face to smiley face). Increased rates of response.

Our Ux librarian empowered all our student colleagues to use 5 minutes of their shift to “inspire moments of delight”. They come up with the coolest things.

Book speed dating. FallBook fall (scholastic style). win

I’m currently banned from dancing in the library (in fun) after our dance break at midterms completely flopped. You cannot conga to Taylor Swift.

Our podcast booths are also promoted as zoom therapy spaces.

Cat cafe event!! For the cat people

We have an origami table