

Investigating the Impact of MindfulU on Student Well-Being

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Abstract

In recent years, post-secondary students have been in the midst of a growing mental health crisis. High levels of stress and loneliness have meant that an increasing number of students are seeking support, leading to campus counselling services becoming overtaxed and highlighting the need for additional sources of support on post secondary campuses. MindfulU is a recently implemented student-led campus mental health initiative with the aim of supporting student well-being by fostering community and connection amongst peers. This study sought to understand students' perspectives of MindfulU and determine if differences existed between students who had and who had not accessed its services. Results demonstrated that a majority of students who had accessed MindfulU were only doing so rarely or occasionally. Independent sample t-tests demonstrated that students who had accessed MindfulU tended to be significantly lonelier and were flourishing less than students who had not accessed MindfulU, likely reflecting the fact that students who were struggling were turning toward MindfulU for support. Comments from students demonstrate that those who had accessed MindfulU found value in doing so, and additional comments further emphasized the need for this service. The results of this study will be used to better understand the current needs of students and how MindfulU is being perceived, which will in turn inform the development and expansion of MindfulU moving forward.

Keywords: Students, Well-being, Connection, Peer Support

Investigating the Impact of MindfulU on Student Well-Being

For many, post-secondary is a pivotal time in life, as it is characterized by a multitude of personal and professional life changes (Arslan, 2021). These can include changes in an individual's social support networks, adjusting to newfound independence and responsibilities, increased financial pressure, and more (Arslan et al 2021; Slimmen et al., 2022; Maunder et al., 2013; Pitt et al., 2017; Wang & Tong, 2025). These changes can be extremely difficult and amount to a great deal of stress (Kang et al., 2024; Pitt et al., 2017; Pelletier et al., 2016; Satıcı, 2020; Stoliker & Lafreniere, 2015). The new social environment may also cause students to feel an increased sense of loneliness, despite being in an environment surrounded by people who are experiencing similar struggles (Ogrodniczuk et al., 2021). Unfortunately, these challenges can lead to the development of mental health issues (Davis et al., 2017; Ganson et al., 2025; Slimmen et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2018). In recent years, mental health symptomology amongst post-secondary students have shown an alarming increase (Linden et al., 2021; Moghimi et al., 2023; Ogrodniczuk et al., 2021). Counseling services have become overburdened, unable to meet the increasing demand of student needs and resulting in increased wait times being a major barrier for students to access the care they need (Abrams, 2022; Baik et al., 2019; Cohen et al., 2022; Moghimi et al., 2023). Some have suggested that post-secondary campuses need to institute additional services to support student well-being (Centre for Collegiate Mental Health, 2023; Cohen et al., 2022; Curtis et al., 2023; Faghan et al., 2025; Linden et al., 2021; Pelletier et al., 2016; Satıcı, 2020). The purpose of the current study was to explore the impact of a recently developed and launched student well-being program, MindfulU. Another aim of the study was to understand students' perspectives of this campus service and to gain insight into what they would like to see from MindfulU moving forward.

Student Mental Health Crisis and Loneliness Epidemic

The rising rate of mental health challenges among post-secondary students is alarming. The findings from a World Health Organization survey across 21 countries showed that approximately one-fifth of college students had 12-month DSM-IV disorders (Auerbach et al., 2016). In a cross-sectional study of Canadian post-secondary students, roughly 66% of students reported a decline in their mental health upon entry into school, and over half reported experiencing depression and anxiety symptoms (Moghimi et al., 2023). Additionally, in a large-scale study of students across 41 post-secondary institutions in Canada, a staggering 95% of students reported feeling overwhelmed and exhausted, with more than half of the participants reporting that their high stress and anxiety levels had negative impacts on their academic work (Ogrodniczuk et al., 2021). The issue of student mental health has become increasingly severe over time. Linden and colleagues (2021) analyzed data from the National College Health Assessment Survey II which collected data from Canadian post-secondary students in 2013, 2016, and 2019. Results showed that there were significant increases in students who were reporting mental health challenges from 2013 to 2019, with a larger portion of students reporting a high degree of psychological distress and being diagnosed with a mental illness. Similar results have been found with US students as well (Lipson et al., 2019). Of particular concern is the significant (though moderate) increase in students who reported instances of self-harm, suicidal ideation, and suicidal attempts from 2013 to 2019 (Linden et al., 2021). Although the challenges associated with post-secondary are shared experiences among students, research suggests that students are feeling isolated in their struggles. Loneliness rates among post-secondary students are high, with over 81% of students reporting that they regularly feel lonely (Ogrodniczuk et al., 2021).

Mental health issues among students pose an issue for student retention and academic success as well. For example, first year students who dealt with mental health problems tended to have reduced academic functioning compared to their peers without mental health problems, with a tendency to have a 0.2-0.3 decrease in grade point average (Bruffaerts et al., 2018). In their 2022 annual report, The Center for Collegiate Mental Health (CCMI; 2023) noted that first year students who were accessing campus counselling services and who displayed high levels of academic distress and who had also had a history of psychiatric hospitalizations were 48% more likely to drop out of school.

Stress

As previously mentioned, students tend to report high levels of stress, and students' stress levels have been shown to be increasing in recent years (Linden et al., 2021; Ogrodnickuk et al., 2021). An individual's perceived stress level refers to the extent to which they interpret events in their life to be stressful (Cohen et al., 1983). High perceived stress has been found to be related to numerous negative physiological outcomes including obesity, back pain, poor quality of sleep, lower quality of life, and has been associated with risky health behaviors such as meal skipping and smoking (Demench et al., 2021; Pelletier et al., 2016). High levels of perceived stress have also been found to be associated with numerous psychological impacts as well, including lower levels of hope, difficulty concentrating, and irritability (Liu et al., 2020; Harrison et al., 2025, Satici, 2020). Additionally, chronic stress is thought to contribute to the onset of various mental illnesses including major depressive disorder (MDD) and bipolar disorder (Davis et al., 2017). High stress levels are also related to academic challenges (Fincham & May, 2021). For example, high stress earlier in an academic semester was found to be related to a higher degree of procrastination later in the semester (Fincham & May, 2021).

It is also clear that students are conscious of the negative impacts that their high prolonged stress can have on them (Ogrodniczuk et al., 2021; Tollefson et al., 2018). For example, in a large-scale study across 41 post-secondary students in Canada, more than half of students reported that their high stress and anxiety negatively impacted their academic work (Ogrodniczuk et al., 2021). It is evident that strategies to aid students in reducing this stress are necessary.

A variety of factors can influence an individual's perceived stress level. For students, academic pressures, family pressures, financial pressures, and side activity pressures have all been shown to significantly impact perceived stress (Pitt et al., 2017; Slimmen et al., 2022). Specifically, academic pressure has been shown to play a particularly large role in student's perceived stress (Fincham & May, 2021; Slimmen et al., 2022; Wang & Tong, 2025). Loneliness has been found to be related to perceived stress as well, though the directional relationship between these two variables is not entirely clear (Kang et al., 2024; Satıcı, 2020; Stoliker & Lafreniere, 2015). While some studies show that loneliness tends to predict high stress levels (e.g., Stoliker & Lafreniere, 2015), others suggest that high stress levels tend to predict loneliness (e.g., Campagne, 2019; Satıcı, 2020). However, Satıcı (2020) discusses how each of these variables impact each other, providing the example of a student who may withdraw from social situations due to their high stress levels, furthering the extent to which they feel lonely. This in turn increases the student's perceived stress levels, exacerbating their propensity to withdraw and the cycle continues (Satıcı, 2020).

Because of the numerous impacts that high stress levels can have on students, many have urged the importance of post-secondary institutions placing emphasis on stress reduction programs (Bearden et al., 2024; Deshpande et al., 2024; Pelletier et al., 2016; Tollefson et al.,

2018). Deshpande and colleagues (2024) assessed a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program at a post secondary institution and found it to be effective in reducing perceived stress levels, as well as improving life satisfaction and reducing psychological distress. Simply educating students about ways that they can reduce their stress may be helpful as well. Tollefson and associates (2018) assessed the impact that a class assignment regarding stress reduction techniques had on post secondary students. Most students reported that learning about various techniques including progressive muscle relaxation, journaling, breathing exercises and more helped them to reduce their stress levels in and outside of the classroom (Tollefson et al., 2018). Considering the negative effects that high perceived stress levels have for students, it is evident that stress reduction initiatives are needed on post secondary campuses.

Loneliness and Social Connection

Baumeister and Leary (1995) describe the need to belong as a fundamental human desire for frequent positive interactions with others whom we feel show consistent care for our well-being. Under this view, not only is belongingness dependent on regular social interactions, but that these interactions are occurring with people whom we feel have our best interests at heart. Social connectedness is an aspect of belongingness which can have a great impact on an individual's sense of well-being (Avci, 2023; Lee & Robbins, 1995). Lee and Robbins (1995) describe social connectedness as the extent to which an individual feels connected to those around them, both friends and the society in which they live. A sense of social connectedness is important for all individuals, and especially post secondary students. Avci (2023) showed that students who felt a sense of social connectedness tended to have higher levels of life satisfaction.

When an individual feels as though there is a gap between their desire for social connection and their actual level of social connection, it arouses feelings of discomfort and distress which we refer to as loneliness (Gierveld, 1998). Alongside the growing mental health crisis, students have become increasingly lonely as well (Ogrodniczuk et al., 2021). With the transition into post secondary, many students are moving away from their primary social support networks of family and friends, and are tasked with trying to maintain these relationships, while also forging new connections (Ogrodniczuk et al., 2021). Due to this, a high proportion of students are reporting feeling lonely (Ogrodniczuk et al., 2021). Research has demonstrated that loneliness levels negatively predict extent of subjective vitality, meaning that those who were feeling a high degree of loneliness were doing worse across many areas of their life (Arslan, 2021). Loneliness has been shown to have several adverse effects including increased risk for eating disorders, poorer depression and anxiety outcomes, and has been correlated with mental distress (Fagan et al., 2025; Ganson et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2018). Research has also demonstrated that feelings of loneliness for post-secondary students can contribute to experiences of burnout (Dopmeijer et al., 2022; Stoliker & Lafreniere, 2015). Students also show an understanding of the negative impacts that a lack of social connection can have on their academic life and have made suggestions that there is a need to increase feelings of community and connection between one another on post-secondary campuses (Baik et al., 2019; Maunder et al., 2013). With the benefits of a strong social support network and the risks that loneliness brings to students, it follows that campus initiatives that seek to enhance connection between students are imperative. Some programs that aim to enhance connection and reduce loneliness among students have been evaluated and show promising benefits (Beard et al., 2024; Costello et al., 2022; Gregoire et al., 2024).

Positive Well-Being

Post secondary institutions should focus not only on limiting student ill-mental health, but also on bolstering positive functioning. Well-being and mental health are not solely defined by the absence of mental illness but also ought to be defined by positive functioning across multiple areas. Complete mental health includes psychological well-being, social well-being, and physical well-being.

Diener and colleagues (2010) constructed a scale to measure the extent to which an individual is flourishing. This concept was derived from models that suggest the existence of basic psychological needs all humans must meet to attain social-psychological prosperity (Diener et al., 2010). These needs include competence, relatedness, and self-acceptance (Diener et al., 2010). Through this lens, an individual is thought to be flourishing if they have positive relationships, have a sense of meaning and purpose in life, and have feelings of competence across multiple areas of their life (Deiner et al., 2010).

Related to this is the concept of thriving, a term which refers to a state of positive human functioning, mentally, physically, and socially (Su et al., 2014). This concept encompasses seven dimensions of human functioning: subjective well-being, positive relationships, engagement in daily activities, meaning and purpose in life, a sense of accomplishment, feelings of control and autonomy, and optimism (Su et al., 2014). Importantly, an individual who is thriving is not only a person who has rewarding relationships or a high sense of accomplishment, but someone who has a collection of these elements (Su et al., 2014). Su and associates (2014) developed both a Comprehensive and a Brief Inventory of Thriving and found that individuals who scored highly on these scales tended to have high self-reported health status, fewer medical problems, higher levels of positive functioning, and more frequent health promoting behaviors.

In addition to the concepts outlined above, the degree to which an individual is mindful may be indicative of the extent to which they are experiencing positive functioning (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Individuals who are more mindful may be better able to manage stress and negative emotions, have a higher degree of self-efficacy, and experience greater psychological well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Deshpande et al., 2024; Schmeidler et al., 2023). Additionally, interventions aimed at increasing students' level of mindfulness have been shown to be effective in reducing stress and maladaptive perfectionism, while increasing life satisfaction, self-compassion, and social connectedness (Bearden et al., 2024; Deshpande et al., 2024).

Overwhelmed Campus Counselling Services

The extent of this mental health crisis may mean that there are more students without access to the care they need. With higher numbers of students in need of support, campus counseling centers may become overwhelmed, limited in the number of students that they can serve (Abrams, 2022). One study showed that nearly half of students reported long wait times were a major barrier to accessing on-campus mental health services (Moghimy et al., 2023). Additionally, most of the participants reported that they were unable to access private mental health care services, which usually provide more immediate support (Moghimy et al., 2023). Responses from students have reflected that these long wait times may not only restrict students from seeking support but also may limit their motivation to continue with counseling (Baik et al., 2019; Cohen et al., 2022). With long wait times between sessions, students may be withdrawing from counseling before they have adequately received the support they need (Cohen et al., 2022). These issues highlight the need for campus mental health support services that exist outside of counseling centers and can offer more immediate support to students.

Mental health supports on campus that are more casual may be able to reach more students who are struggling but remain functional, as students have been shown to perceive more traditional counseling services as only necessary for students who are in dire need (Cohen et al., 2022). Due to the increasingly prevalent mental health crisis, the Centre for Collegiate Mental Health (2023) recommended that campuses have holistic support services on campus which center connection and stress reduction, so that students who are struggling can utilize both traditional counselling services and the more holistic connection-based ones. Students can not only benefit from these services directly by utilizing them when they need a boost in well-being, but students can also benefit in the sense that reduced strain on campus counseling services can lead to students being treated sooner.

Other Approaches to Supporting Student Well-Being

Programs that aim to improve well-being for post-secondary students are vital, and peer support services may provide a unique benefit to campuses. Generally, peer support involves a volunteer providing support to a fellow student, with the opportunity to connect over the shared lived experience of being a student (Pointon-Haas et al., 2023). These services have been shown to be vital for supporting student well-being, with students who utilize the service displaying reduced anxiety and depression symptoms, reduced stress, reduced loneliness, and a higher sense of belongingness (Byrom, 2018; Costello et al., 2022; Gregoire et al., 2024). Many of these programs involve weekly group support sessions in which students meet consistently for a set period (Byrom, 2018; Costello et al., 2022; Gregorie et al., 2024). For example, Costello and colleagues (2022) assessed a program on a post-secondary campus called the Connection Project, which was a group-based program that focused on enhancing relationships and social support. Each week for nine weeks, the group of students met for an hour to work on and discuss a

different issue, and the sessions were designed to provide increasingly deep support throughout the duration of the program (Costello et al., 2022). Due to the nature of programs like The Connection Project, researchers are able to evaluate the efficacy of these programs either using pre-and post-measures of student well-being, or by using a wait-list control group. Costello and colleagues (2022) found that students who participated in the Connection Project reported a higher sense of belonging and displayed less loneliness than students in a wait-list control group. Structured, one-to-one peer support sessions have been shown to be extremely important as well, with students who use these programs showing increases in their mental well-being (Suresh et al., 2021). For example, Suresh and colleagues (2021) evaluated a more informal, one-to-one peer support service in which students could drop in when they needed support. To evaluate this program, participants were given the opportunity to fill out a questionnaire following each session they attended. The design of this program, and consequently, the design of this study made it difficult to draw a causal connection between well-being and peer support. However, students accessing this program reported that peer support was more accessible and had fewer barriers than traditional counselling services (Suresh et al., 2021). Peer support programs can offer a unique benefit, as they provide students with an opportunity to discuss their issues with someone who may currently be experiencing similar issues. Students accessing these services have reported that participating in these programs helped them to not feel alone in facing their issues, and that it gave them a sense of belonging and empowerment (Beard et al., 2024).

Volunteers for these programs also stand to gain substantive benefits as well (Crisp et al., 2020; Lovell & Webber, 2024; Suresh et al., 2021). These benefits can be both tangible in the sense that they often receive free training and opportunities to build their resumes, but also intangible in that they receive valuable skills needed for their future careers. Student volunteers

at one university peer support program reported that they felt their involvement was rewarding, and that they valued the opportunity to develop their leadership and communication skills (Crisp et al., 2020). Additionally, these volunteers, as well as volunteers for similar programs, reported feeling as though their confidence had increased due to this volunteer experience (Crisp et al., 2020; Lovell & Webber, 2024). Similarly, another study sought to assess perspectives of both students and the student volunteers of a campus peer support program (Suresh et al., 2021). In this study, the peer support providers reported that they felt that their involvement was fulfilling (Suresh et al., 2021). Existing research suggests that holistic campus well-being programs can play a vital role in defending against the student mental health crisis and loneliness epidemic.

MindfulU: A Student-led Mental Health Initiative

In the 2023/2024 academic year, Red Deer Polytechnic launched a campus well-being program which was developed by students for students and continues to be led by students (Students Association of Red Deer Polytechnic, 2024). The program is called MindfulU and seeks to support students through four foundational categories: empowerment, relaxation, fun, and connection. MindfulU aims to empower students by providing educational workshops related to nutrition, mental health, addiction, and more. MindfulU also seeks to provide students with opportunities to relax, either by providing a quiet space with calming music or pop-up massage events throughout the term. This is done with the intent to help students feel more balanced, allowing them to better cope with stress. Additionally, MindfulU provides a selection of fun activities for students to engage with to take a break from their academic work. These include puzzles, games, and puppy rooms. The puppy rooms also relate to the final foundational category, connection. MindfulU seeks to enhance student's sense of connection on campus not only by facilitating this form of pet therapy, but also by providing a physical space for students

to connect with one another and by offering one on one peer support. Peer supporters are student volunteers who receive a breadth of training that equips them to provide confidential support to other students. MindfulU was designed around the stepped care model, which is a model that involves providing support to individuals that is proportional to their specific needs (Marques et al., 2024). For mental health care, this often involves initially providing support through group sessions and self-help approaches. Using this approach helps to reduce the pressure on support services, which in turn reduces wait times for those seeking help (Marques et al., 2024).

MindfulU peer supporters receive professional training sessions to provide students with quality confidential support, however, they are also taught how to recognize the limits of their training. If a student accessing peer support through MindfulU appears to need a higher level of care, the peer supporter will refer them to campus counselling services. In this way, MindfulU may act as a first stop for students who are needing a higher level of support or can act on its own to support the well-being of students.

The Present Study

MindfulU was recently implemented and introduced to Red Deer Polytechnic students. As such, it has not yet been assessed. With the intention of MindfulU being to support student well-being and connection on campus, the purpose of the current study was to assess how the program is being perceived by students and to determine if differences exist between those who have and who have not accessed MindfulU's services. Specifically, we sought to determine if students differed in their perceived stress levels, social connectedness, loneliness, mindfulness, flourishing, and thriving. Additionally, this study sought to understand student's perspectives on the perceived value of attending MindfulU and where they would like the program to go in the future.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to not only understand the impact that MindfulU has had on students, but also to provide feedback to MindfulU. Because MindfulU was recently implemented, this study is exploratory and descriptive in nature. With the intended goal of MindfulU being to support student well-being on campus, and in line with previous research on peer support programs, it was expected that students who have accessed and have more frequently attended MindfulU would experience higher well-being than students who have not and do not regularly access MindfulU, and it was anticipated that students would have a positive perception of this service. MindfulU is an informal program which provides students with the opportunity to drop in at various times when they need support. When a student does attend MindfulU, they have the option of participating in a variety of different types of activities and can stay in the space for varying amounts of time. Because of the way that MindfulU is currently operating, it was not feasible to obtain pre- and post-measures of student well-being before and after they access MindfulU. Instead, all RDP students were eligible to participate in the study, regardless of they had accessed MindfulU or not to make comparisons between these groups.

Method

Participants

All RDP students were eligible to participate in the study. Participants were recruited through posters placed around campus that contained a QR code linking to the survey. A total of 148 students participated. Most were White, around 18 to 24 years old, and female (Female = 81.1%; Male = 8.8%; Other = 10.3%). Most of the participants majored in either a social science or education, and the sample was relatively equally distributed between year of study. For a full breakdown of demographic data, see Appendix A. As an incentive, participants were eligible for entry into a draw to receive one of four wellness gift baskets valued at approximately \$50 each.

Materials

The Brief Inventory of Thriving

The Brief Inventory of Thriving (BIT; Su et al., 2014) is a 10-item scale that measures overall psychological well-being. Specifically, this scale measures thriving, which indicates positive mental, physical, and social functioning. The BIT is a shortened form of the Comprehensive Inventory of Thriving which contains 54 items assessing 18 facets of positive functioning. The BIT contains 10 items and measures 10 of these facets of positive well-being. The scale asks participants to respond to each item on a 5-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Example items include “I am achieving most of my goals” and “my life has a clear sense of purpose”. The BIT has been shown to have strong internal consistency and has been validated with post-secondary populations (Su et al., 2014). Additionally, the BIT has been shown to have good convergent validity with other scales measuring psychological well-being (Su et al., 2014). Internal consistency for this scale was found to be high in the present study (Chronbach Alpha = .87).

The Perceived Stress Scale

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen et al., 1983) is a scale designed to measure the extent to which an individual perceives their life to be stressful. The measure contains 10 items that ask participants to reflect on the way that they have been feeling during the last month. Participants are asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from (0) not at all to (4) always. Example items include “in the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?” and “in the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?”. The PSS has been

validated for use with post-secondary students and has been shown to have good internal and test-retest reliability, as well as good convergent reliability with other scales that assess the appraisal of stressful life events (Cohen et al., 1983). Internal consistency was high in the present study (Chronbach alpha = .90).

Social Connectedness Scale-Revised

The Social Connectedness Scale-Revised (SCS-R; Lee et al., 2001) is a measure used to assess the extent to which an individual feels connected to those around them. The scale contains 20 items, 10 of which are positively worded and 10 of which are negatively worded. The SCS-R is revised from the original 8 item scale which contained only negatively phrased items.

Participants are prompted to respond to each statement using a 6-point Likert scale to indicate the degree to which they agreed with the statement. Example items include: “I feel disconnected from the world around me” and “I feel understood by the people I know”. This scale has been validated for use with post-secondary students and has been shown to have good psychometric properties. The SCS-R has been shown to have good psychometric properties with good internal reliability, and evidence of convergent and discriminant validity. In the present study, internal consistency was high (Chronbach alpha = .95).

6-Item Revised-UCLA Loneliness Scale

The 6-Item Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale (RULS-6; Wongpakarn et al., 2020) is a short form version of one of the most widely used scales to measure loneliness: The UCLA Loneliness Scale. The RULS-6 asks participants to respond to each item by indicating how often they feel each statement is descriptive of them. Responses ranged from “I often feel this way” to “I never feel this way”. Example items include: “how often do you feel alone?” and “how often

do you feel that people are around you but not with you?”. The RULS-6 has been shown to have acceptable internal reliability and good convergent and discriminant validity. In the present study, internal consistency for this measure was found to be high (Chronbach alpha = .93).

The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale

The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Osman et al., 2016) is a scale designed to assess the extent to which an individual is aware of their internal experiences and emotional states. The MAAS contains 15 items and participants are asked to indicate how frequently or infrequently they currently have each experience. Responses are on a 6-point Likert scale and range from (1) almost always to (6) almost never. Example items include: “I tend to not notice feelings of physical tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention” and “I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I’m doing”. The MAAS has been validated for use with post-secondary students and has been shown to have good psychometric properties (Brown & Ryan, 2003). The MAAS has been shown to have excellent internal consistency and good convergent validity with measures of well-being and discriminant validity with measures of ill-health (Ruiz et al., 2016). In the present study, internal consistency for this measure was high (Chronbach alpha = .87).

The Flourishing Scale

The Flourishing Scale (FS; Deiner et al., 2010) is a measure designed to assess aspects of positive human functioning including feelings of competence and feelings of meaning in life. The FS consists of 8 items for which participants are asked to indicate their level of agreement. Responses are on a 7-point Likert scale with responses ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. Example items include: “my social relationships are supportive and rewarding”

and “I am a good person and live a good life”. The FS has been shown to have good psychometric properties, with high reliability and high convergent validity with other similar scales. Internal consistency in the present study was high (Chronbach alpha = .89).

Additional Survey Items

Participants were also asked questions regarding their experiences with MindfulU. There was an initial question if they had or had not accessed MindfulU. For those who responded that they had accessed MindfulU, participants were asked to answer further questions regarding their experience with the program. This included their frequency and pattern of use, how they heard about MindfulU, what they would like to see from MindfulU moving forward, and what value they felt they had gained from attending. Additionally, participants were asked if they were a volunteer with MindfulU, and if they were, they were asked about the value they may have gained from the experience. If participants had responded ‘no’ to the initial question of if they had accessed MindfulU, they were then prompted to answer questions regarding why they had not used the services, and what other elements they feel would be valuable additions to the program moving forward.

Procedure

Recruitment materials containing the link to the survey were available from mid January to March 1st. During this time, any current RDP student had the opportunity to participate in the survey. This study employed the use of mild deception, to receive more authentic responses from participants. Recruitment materials informed participants that the purpose of the study was to understand student well-being and connection on campus, and they were not informed that the true nature of the study was related to MindfulU.

When students began the survey, they were presented with an informed consent form, informing them that they would be taking part in a study designed to understand student well-being and connection on campus. By continuing with the survey after this page, participants indicated that they had read and understood the informed consent form, and that they were providing their consent to participate in the study.

Participants were initially asked to respond to brief demographic questions. This included gaining information about their gender identity, age, program, year of study, and if they were an international student. Participants were then asked to complete the well-being measures. Scales were organized in a way that counterbalanced positively and negatively phrased items such that participants were first presented with a section of positively phrased items, then a section of negatively phrased items, then positively framed items, and so on. Following this, participants were presented with a short informational blurb about what MindfulU is and the services that they offer. This was done as some students may have been familiar with the program, but unable to recognize it by the name alone. Presenting the participants with information about what services are provided by MindfulU may have helped to ensure that participants who have only rarely accessed the services were still able to respond to the questions accurately.

After completing the questions regarding MindfulU, participants were then presented with a debrief form to fully explain the true nature of the study and the rationale behind the use of the mild deception. Participants were given the opportunity to withdraw consent if they wished to. Finally, participants were presented with a final page of the survey to provide contact information to be used for the incentive prize draw.

Results

A majority had not accessed MindfulU ($n = 120$, 81.1%), with only 28 (18.92%) participants having accessed it before. Most participants who had accessed MindfulU reported only rarely ($n = 12$) or occasionally ($n = 13$) accessing MindfulU (42.8% and 46.4% respectively). Of the sample, only three students total had reported accessing MindfulU more regularly than that, with two students accessing sometimes (7.1%) and one student accessing MindfulU very often (3.6%). Two participants (1.35%) were MindfulU volunteers.

The most accessed element of MindfulU was the puppy rooms ($n = 20$). Following this, students reported accessing MindfulU for its mindfulness activities ($n = 16$) and using it as a quiet space ($n = 15$) most often. See Appendix B for a full description of the elements of MindfulU that were accessed by students.

Access of MindfulU by Year of Study and by International Student Status

The largest portion of the sample was made up of second year students ($n = 48$), followed by first year students ($n = 39$). This was followed by third year students ($n = 34$), and then by fourth year students ($n = 18$). The remainder of the sample was made up by students who were in their fifth year or above, answered that they preferred not to say, selected *other*, or did not answer ($n = 9$). Of the 28 students who had accessed MindfulU, 4 were first year students, 10 were second year students, 5 were third year students and 7 were fourth year students. For a more detailed breakdown of this, see Table 1.

Table 1*Breakdown of Students in Sample and Accessing MindfulU by Year*

Year of Study	Number of Students in Sample	Number of Students who had Accessed MindfulU
1 st year	39 (26.5%)	4
2 nd year	48 (32.35%)	10
3 rd year	34 (22.97%)	5
4 th year	18 (12.16%)	7
Other	9 (6.08%)	2

Note. *other* denotes students who were in their 5th year and above, who selected that they preferred not to say, selected *other* and wrote in a response, or did not answer the question.

A noticeable pattern emerged in which first year students made up the largest portion of those who had never heard of MindfulU ($N = 57$; $n = 18$). This was followed by second year students ($n = 17$), third year students ($n = 15$), and then fourth year students ($n = 5$). In relation to the number of students who had participated, there were more fourth year students who were aware of MindfulU, with first year students being the least aware. For a more complete description of these results, see Table 2.

Table 2*Students who were Unaware of MindfulU by Year*

Year of Study	Number of students in Sample	Unaware of MindfulU
1 st year	39 (26.4%)	18 (46.15%)

2 nd year	48 (32.4%)	17 (35.4%)
3 rd year	34 (23.0%)	14 (44.1%)
4 th year	18 (12.2%)	5 (27.7%)

Note. First year students made up the largest portion of the sample and also made up the largest portion of those who were unaware of the existence of MindfulU. There were 57 students total who reported being unaware of the existence of this program.

Additionally, the sample was made up mainly of domestic students ($n = 140$), with eight participants being international students. Despite this, a larger proportion of the international student population was accessing MindfulU compared to the total sample. For a more detailed description of these results, see Table 3.

Table 3

Proportion of Students Accessing MindfulU by International Status

Student Status	Number of Students in Sample	Number of students who had accessed MindfulU
Total	148	28
Domestic	140 (94.59%)	25 (17.86%)
International	8 (5.41%)	3 (37.5%)

Note. 37.5% of international students in the sample had accessed MindfulU, whereas only 17.8% of domestic students in the sample had accessed it. There was a higher proportion of international students accessing MindfulU than in the total sample.

Differences in Well-Being Between Groups

Independent samples T-tests were run to assess differences between students who had and students who had not accessed MindfulU. Of the six measures of well-being, two scales showed significant differences between the groups. Students who had accessed MindfulU tended to be significantly lonelier ($M = 12.04$, $SD = 4.28$) than students who had not accessed MindfulU ($M = 13.99$, $SD = 5.02$), $t(146) = -1.91$, $p = 0.29$. Additionally, those who had accessed MindfulU tended to be flourishing significantly less ($M = 42.96$, $SD = 7.64$) than those who had not accessed MindfulU ($M = 40.21$, $SD = 7.79$), $t(146) = -1.69$, $p = .047$. For a full description of the results of the well-being measures, see Table 4.

Table 4

Scores on Well-Being Measures for Students who had and who had not Accessed MindfulU

	Possible Range of Scores	Mean (SD)		<i>t</i> -values (df)	<i>p</i> -values
		Accessed	Not Accessed		
BIT	10-50	32.61 (6.15)	34.4 (5.66)	-1.49 (146)	.070
PSS	0-40	31.32 (6.96)	30.78 (7.34)	.36 (146)	.360
SCS-R	20-120	75.57 (16.50)	80.39 (19.75)	-1.20 (146)	.117
RULS-6	6-24	12.04 (4.28)	13.99 (5.02)	-1.91 (146)	.029*
MAAS	1-6	3.37 (.83)	3.43 (.81)	-.36 (146)	.362
FS	8-56	40.21 (42.96)	42.96 (7.79)	-1.69 (146)	.048*

Note. * Indicates a significant difference

Overall, it appears that students scores for most of the well-being measures were generally moderate, however, scores for perceived stress seemed to be high, as did scores for the flourishing.

Pearson's correlations were also run to determine the relationship between the measures of well-being. Significant relationships were found between all variables in the expected direction. For example, thriving was significantly positively related to flourishing, social connectedness and mindfulness, while perceived stress was significantly negatively related to social connectedness, mindfulness, and flourishing. For a full description of these correlations, see Appendix B.

Perspectives of Those who had Accessed MindfulU

For those who had accessed MindfulU, participants were asked about the value they perceived to have gained from using the program. Responses tended to reflect the fact that students felt as though MindfulU was a safe space, that it provided them with a break from stressors, and that they valued the connection MindfulU provided them with.

Connection

Students who had mentioned valuing the connection that MindfulU provided them with often mentioned that they had met new people at MindfulU. For example, one participant mentioned that they “met a new friend at a Puppy Room”. Other responses mentioned “meeting friends” or that they enjoyed “how nice the volunteers [*sic*] are”.

MindfulU as a Safe Space

Responses that suggested that MindfulU provided students with a safe space reflected that they viewed it as a place to be comfortable and calm in. For example, one participant stated, “It felt like a place I could be comfortable in”. When speaking about an art activity that was available in the MindfulU space, another participant responded “MindfulU has occasionally given me a space to practice my art without feeling I need to do it well”.

Break from Stressors

Responses also suggested that students valued that MindfulU gave them a reprieve from the stressors associated with school and life in general. One participant said that they “appreciate the different activities that help break up some of the monotony of school”. These responses also demonstrated that not only did students value the break that MindfulU provided them with, but that these breaks were vital for their well-being. These responses included “It is nice to have a space to step away from stressors of class work” and “sometimes its [*sic*] needed to take your mental break”.

Results for Those who had not Accessed MindfulU

Students who had not accessed MindfulU most often cited never having heard of it as being their reason for not accessing ($n = 57$). Thirty-six students had reported that they were too busy to access MindfulU, and 29 had reported that the times did not work with their schedules. For a full description of these results, see Appendix B.

Additionally, 25 students selected *other* as a reason for not accessing MindfulU and were asked to provide a written response. These responses indicated that, despite being aware of its existence, many students lacked clarity or understanding of MindfulU. Additionally, some responses indicated that students felt anxious, shy, or embarrassed to access MindfulU. Finally, many responses indicated that students hadn’t accessed MindfulU because they simply didn’t feel the need to. These responses either mentioned feeling like they were not in need of support, or if they were, that they had other ways of coping.

Lack of Clarity or Understanding

Many participant's responses indicated that even if they were aware of MindfulU, they were unclear about the details of the program. For example, one participant wrote "I sometimes need more details of the events". Some responses suggested that students were unclear about if the program was available to and useful for all students, with one participant saying, "I've never really understood what it was or if it pertained to me". A number of these responses also suggested that the lack of clarity may be due to unclear advertising, with one student writing "I saw the puppy posters, but I've never heard of workshops or talks" and another saying that they "sometimes need more details of the events".

Anxiety, Shyness, or Embarrassment

Some responses indicated that despite being aware of the existence of the program, anxiety, shyness, or embarrassment acted as a barrier to accessing its services. One student wrote "sometimes I become unmotivated and sometimes embarrassed to talk to someone about my problems". Another student simply stated "anxiety". Two responses demonstrated this issue, while also touching on the previously discussed issue of lack of clarity. One student wrote "I'm shy/don't know what to expect" and another wrote "I don't know where the Loft is, and at this point, I'm almost too embarrassed to ask". These quotes demonstrate that a lack of clarity is an issue that can contribute to student's fears about accessing support services.

Not Needed

Finally, the majority (52%) of written responses related to students simply feeling like they didn't need to access MindfulU. Some of these responses showed that students were not accessing it because they felt that they were not in need of accessing a support service. This

included responses like “I just haven’t been interested or in need of finding out more about it” and “never felt like I needed to”. Responses also indicated that some students were not accessing MindfulU because they had other resources or coping skills to utilize in times of need. For example, one participant stated, “I have my own coping skills I have built with years of practice”. Similarly, another student wrote “I have my own ways to deal with emotions and other things like that”. Another participant wrote that “I use other resources for my mental health”, indicating that even when they were in a time of need, they had other services they chose to use.

Additional Qualitative Responses

At the end of the survey, participants were asked if there was anything else they would like to add. Several participants used this as an opportunity to express concern for the well-being of their peers. Additionally, responses reflected an appreciation for the service, regardless of if the participant had accessed it or not.

Concern for Well-Being

Though there was a small total number of responses to this question ($n = 10$), half of these responses expressed a concern for well-being ($n = 5$). The following response highlighted the issue with detail and depth:

“I feel like most students/people are struggling right now. I notice our undereye bags are worse, people look uninterested in what they are doing, when in class they are always shaking their leg or playing with something, but they look zoned out. Plus, when I talk to my friends, most of us just want to get through another day. We are all so overwhelmed that we just have to focus on one day at a time, but at the same time we are all stressed about our futures”

Other responses reflecting this concern mentioned general worry about the toll that post-secondary could have on students' mental health. Additionally, one participant mentioned being concerned about the well-being of RDP instructors.

Appreciation of MindfulU

In these comments, students also discussed their appreciation for MindfulU and other support services on campus. These responses came both from students who had and who had not accessed MindfulU. For example, one student who had rarely accessed the service wrote “I think it’s a very important service and I’d like to utilize it more often”. Another student who had not accessed MindfulU and had said that they had never heard of it, responded “this was eye opening”. One participant’s response expressed appreciation not only for the culture of RDP but also for the support services that are available:

“I love that Red Deer Polytechnic has so many support systems for students. It really makes me feel at home and comfortable being in the school. I’ve never accessed these services, but I feel grateful there is always the option”

Finally, one participant’s response not only reflected the growing mental health concern and the importance of campus support services and awareness for them. After explaining a negative experience of feeling isolated on campus, the student said:

“...if I was more aware of the options available to me, I would be more open to at least try to change something. Awareness is everything in situations like this, I think, and more of it could never hurt.”

This student's experience not only demonstrated some of the difficulties that many post-secondary students face but also highlighted the need for services that support connection between students.

Discussion

The increasing mental health crisis and loneliness epidemic for post secondary students has necessitated additional services for supporting student well-being (Abrams, 2022; Auerbach et al., 2016; Baik et al., 2019; CCMI, 2023; Curtis et al., 2023; Linden et al., 2021; Moghimi et al., 2023). MindfulU is a student-led program with the aim of enhancing connection and supporting student well-being on campus. Though it appears that many students are only rarely using this service, they still indicated that they perceive it to be an extremely valuable and important service for RDP.

Students Seeking Support

MindfulU's intended purpose is to bolster student well-being and these results showed that students who had accessed MindfulU were scoring lower on certain aspects of well-being than their peers who had not accessed MindfulU. Although this may seem concerning at face value, it is important to take these student's extent of access into consideration. With most participants having only accessed MindfulU rarely or occasionally, it follows that these few visits would not lead to dramatic increases in well-being. Rather, this finding likely reflects that students who were struggling were seeking out support on campus, meaning that MindfulU was successfully reaching its target demographic. This is supported by the qualitative data that demonstrated student's perceived MindfulU to be valuable in supporting their well-being. Students suggested that they felt that MindfulU provided them with a break from the stressors of

life, and that they felt as though this break was integral to their mental health. Additionally, because there is no pre-test data available, it is entirely possible that students who were accessing MindfulU were struggling to a greater extent prior to accessing this service.

Research has shown that students often feel that anxiety and stigma surrounding mental health act as barriers to accessing traditional counselling services (Cohen et al., 2022; Curtis et al., 2023; Moghimi et al., 2023). With MindfulU being a safe space for students to study and relax in, it may be acting as a barrier free entrance point for students to begin accessing mental health support. For example, a student may come to MindfulU to partake in a quick, fun activity. While there, they may meet one of the student volunteers, and as they become more comfortable in the space, they may become more willing to talk to a peer supporter about something they are struggling with in a one-on-one peer support session. From there, the peer supporter may be able to provide them with the support they need or can refer them to the counselling centre if they do require a higher level of care. In this way, MindfulU can act as a starting point for a struggling student who isn't sure where to begin in their mental health journey.

Students Value MindfulU

The qualitative data demonstrated that students who had accessed MindfulU perceived it to be valuable. As noted, a student's sense of connection with others greatly impacts their life and their experience in school (Arslan, 2021; Avci, 2023; Campagne, 2019; Fagan et al., 2025; Ganson et al., 2025; Kang et al., 2024; Maunder et al., 2013; Satıcı, 2020; Stoliker & Lafreniere, 2015). Students noted that they valued the connection that MindfulU provided them with, with some students even saying that they made new friends through MindfulU. As MindfulU is acting as a place for students to meet and connect with one another, the reach of its benefits extend beyond the space and time that MindfulU is run.

Students face various pressures that contribute to high levels of stress (Ogrodniczuk et al., 2021; Pitt et al., 2017; Slimmen et al., 2022; Wang & Tong, 2025). Because of the negative impact that high stress can have, it is important that students have outlets through which to relieve their stress (Deshpande et al., 2024; Tollefson et al., 2018). Responses from students indicated that they felt as though MindfulU provided them with a space where they could take their mind off the stressors of life. Not only did students mention that MindfulU provided them with a break from the stressors of life, but they also specifically noted that these breaks were vital for their well-being. This shows that these students understood the value that balancing their workload and self-care has. The high demands of academic work, in combination with a lack of resources to cope with these high demands can contribute to stress levels and can lead students to experiencing burnout (Pitt et al., 2017; Dopmeijer et al., 2022). With many students indicating that they had not accessed MindfulU because they were too busy, this demonstrates that there may be a need to make the importance of balancing schoolwork and self-care more salient to students at large. Although MindfulU provides a quiet space where students can work on projects, the additional activities provided distinguishes it from other areas of campus that students may spend their time, which also contributes to MindfulU being seen as a safe space.

It can also be gleaned from the qualitative data that students found value in the four pillars that MindfulU seeks to promote: relaxation, empowerment, connection, and fun. For example, students who felt they valued the connection MindfulU provided wrote about meeting new friends and connecting with others. Students who valued the fun elements of MindfulU wrote about feeling joy while attending the puppy rooms and feeling rewarded from the different activities that were available. Many students wrote about how MindfulU offered them a sense of relaxation, speaking to feelings of peacefulness and that MindfulU gave them a space to reflect.

Finally, students found value in the empowering elements of MindfulU, with students enjoying the printed-out exercises and requesting more educational workshops. From these responses, it does seem that MindfulU is achieving its goals and likely just needs to reach a wider audience of students to increase engagement.

Finally, student's responses to being asked if they had anything else they would like to share demonstrated the need for this important service. As discussed, half of the responses were expressions of concern for well-being. These comments indicate that the growing mental health crisis is being noticed and felt by RDP students, demonstrating the need for this program. These responses are of great importance considering it was something that multiple students brought up independently, and without being primed with information about the mental health crisis. Further demonstrating the importance of this program, many students also mentioned that they appreciated that this service was available to them if they found themselves in need of support, regardless of if they had accessed MindfulU or not. Simply having services like this on campus may contribute to a campus culture in which students feel supported and safe. This was echoed by the participant who had stated "It really makes me feel at home and comfortable being in the school" when discussing that they appreciated the different supports that RDP had to offer.

As noted, peer support services have been shown to increase student's sense of belonging and decrease feelings of loneliness and stress (Costello et al., 2022; Gregoire et al., 2024). Although the present study did not demonstrate these findings through quantitative data, these benefits can be seen being reported in the qualitative data. Previous research that has shown these findings have usually been on programs that involve continuous, multi-week sessions in which students are returning each week for a set period. It is likely that these findings were not reproduced in the current study due to the informal, drop in nature of MindfulU.

Future directions for MindfulU

Participants were asked about what they would like to see from MindfulU moving forward. While many of these responses alluded to wanting more of what was already offered (e.g., more workshops) some participants also made specific suggestions for things that MindfulU could add. These suggestions included the addition of a sensory room, support groups for specific types of students (i.e., parents and mature students), and take-home elements. Each of these suggestions were usually only mentioned once, and there were no overwhelmingly popular suggestions. However, these all provide MindfulU with ideas to continue to build the program. With these, the MindfulU team can now determine which of these suggestions are feasible, and conduct follow-up evaluations to determine if these new elements are needed by other RDP students. As mentioned, MindfulU provides students with information of other resources that students can utilize. If the suggestions that students made are deemed not to be feasible additions to MindfulU, it may be wise for MindfulU to compile a list of other places where students can access these resources, as they are clearly things that at least some students are seeking out

With the puppy rooms being the most widely accessed element of MindfulU, it may be a good idea for the MindfulU team to use this as an opportunity to utilize the puppy rooms to draw students in to participate in the other elements of MindfulU. The puppy rooms that MindfulU offers can act as a form of pet therapy for students. Pet therapy interventions for post secondary students have shown numerous benefits including reduced stress and anxiety and improved mood (Cooke et al., 2023). The puppy rooms that are offered by MindfulU can therefore provide RDP students with the benefits of pet therapy, while also acting as a means of exposing more students to the other elements of MindfulU.

Additional Advertisement Needed

As mentioned, there was a high number of students who were simply unaware of the existence of MindfulU, which makes sense considering it was only recently implemented at RDP. This suggests that there is an increased need for advertisement of the program. Additionally, even for students who had heard of it, many student's responses indicated that they were still unclear about the specific details of the service, suggesting that increased clarity in advertisements may be beneficial. A desire for increased clarity in advertisement is also something that was echoed by a few students when asked what they would like to see from MindfulU moving forward. For example, one student said, "I wish the group sessions were more clearly advertised". Students who had attended MindfulU were also asked about where they had heard about the program. Most students reported having heard about MindfulU from their instructors, from social media, and from posters hung around campus, and many had heard about it from more than one source. This finding suggests that these are appropriate means of advertising to students, but that additional ways of reaching students may be required. With many of the first-year students in the sample being unaware of the existence of MindfulU, it may be wise to begin advertising MindfulU at open houses and new student orientation days.

Limitations

We were only able to gather data from a specific point in time, rather than collecting data of student well-being before and after they had visited MindfulU. MindfulU is available for students to drop in at various times throughout the week, so students will have varying levels of engagement with the program. Since there is currently not an existing feature of MindfulU in which students regularly come in at a set time, like a regularly occurring support group, it was not possible to determine how MindfulU has impacted student well-being across time.

Additionally, the small sample for those who had accessed MindfulU, and the especially small sample for those who had accessed MindfulU regularly, may have impacted these findings. We expected to see a relationship between well-being and the extent that students were accessing MindfulU. Because there were only 3 students in the sample who were accessing MindfulU more than rarely or occasionally, there was not enough statistical power to determine if this relationship existed.

Future Directions for Research

Future evaluations of this program would benefit from gaining increased depth of student perspectives through focus groups or interviews with students. These would allow for students to not only provide a more detailed description of what they value about MindfulU, but also why they value those things. Conducting focus groups would also allow for students to reflect on what they feel the value of MindfulU is and provide meaningful examples of times in which attending MindfulU may have helped them through difficult moments. It would also be helpful to conduct this type of research specifically with MindfulU volunteers to better understand the experiences of these student, as there were only two student volunteers that participated in this study. MindfulU volunteers may be able to offer a unique viewpoint into student well-being, as they have the dual role of hearing the perspectives of many students while also experiencing student life themselves. In this way, MindfulU volunteers would not only be able to elaborate on the challenges that RDP students face from their first-hand experience but also as a reflection of what they have heard from the other students accessing MindfulU.

As MindfulU continues to develop, research should continue to evaluate it in a way that best suits how the program is currently being run. For example, as many students suggested that they would appreciate multi-week programs with set times, this may offer the opportunity for

future research to obtain pre-and post-measures of student well-being before and after they attend these sessions. It is important that programs such as this continue to be evaluated to ensure that they are continuing to meet the needs of students. Future evaluations of this program may also benefit from asking students about their prior experience with other forms of support, such as more traditional counselling services. This can allow the researchers to compare student perceptions of more traditional forms of care to newer support services.

Impact

Through this study, awareness surrounding MindfulU was increased. In the survey, participants were presented with a description about MindfulU and the services that they offer. This was done to remind the participants of MindfulU, as many students may have accessed its services and not have recalled it by name. This also acted to inform students who were unaware of MindfulU. There were 57 students in this sample who had reported never having heard of MindfulU. Through simply having taken part in the survey, these 57 students became aware of this program, and therefore may have found a new source of support on campus.

Finally, this study contributes to the further development of this program. With MindfulU having been recently implemented, it was important to understand how RDP students perceive this service to ensure it is serving RDP students appropriately. The qualitative data underscore the value students have found in attending MindfulU. The qualitative data also provided valuable insight into the direction that students desire MindfulU to go in the future. In this way, this study has provided RDP students with another way to contribute to the future development of this program. Upholding student voices in the creation of programs such as this is not only important because it centers students as the experts on their own experiences, but also because it creates increased awareness for these programs (Baik et al., 2019; Maunder et al., 2013).

Conclusion

Mental health issues and loneliness have been increasing on post secondary campuses, and additional sources of support have become necessary as a result. MindfulU has recently been implemented to support RDP students and enhance connection between peers. With MindfulU only recently having been implemented, student engagement and awareness so far is low. Despite this, it is evident that students who are struggling have turned towards MindfulU as a source of support, and that students who have utilized this service have found value in doing so. Now informed by student perspectives, MindfulU will continue to evolve in a way that can continue to benefit RDP students.

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Appendix A: Demographics**Table 1a***Program of Study for Participants*

Program of Study		
Program	Number of Participants	Percentage of sample
Social Sciences	54	36.49%
Education	41	27.70%
Health Sciences	12	8.11%
Creative Arts	9	6.10%
Sciences	9	6.10%
Other	7	4.73%
Open Studies	6	4.05%
Did not respond	6	4.05%
Business	4	2.70%

Table 2a*Year of Study of Participants*

Year of Study		
Year	Number of Participants	Percentage of sample
1st year	39	26.40%
2nd year	48	32.40%
3rd year	34	23.10%
4th year	18	12.20%
5th year and above	2	1.40%
Prefer not to say	2	1.40%
Other	4	2.70%
Did not respond	1	0.70%

Table 3a*Age Range of Participants*

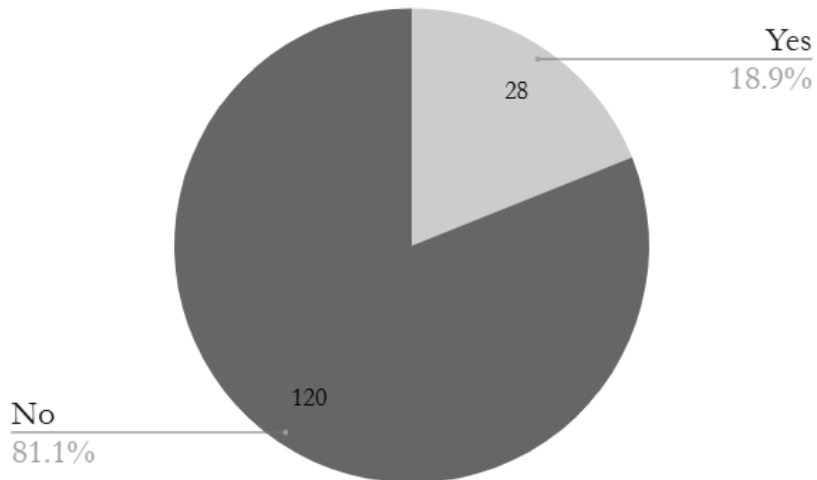
Age		
Age Range	Number of Participants	Percentage of sample
18-24	110	74.30%
25-29	15	10.10%
30-34	7	4.75
35-39	4	2.70%
40-44	7	4.70%
45 or above	3	2.00%
Prefer not to say	1	0.70%
Did not respond	1	0.70%

Table 4*Gender Identity of Participants*

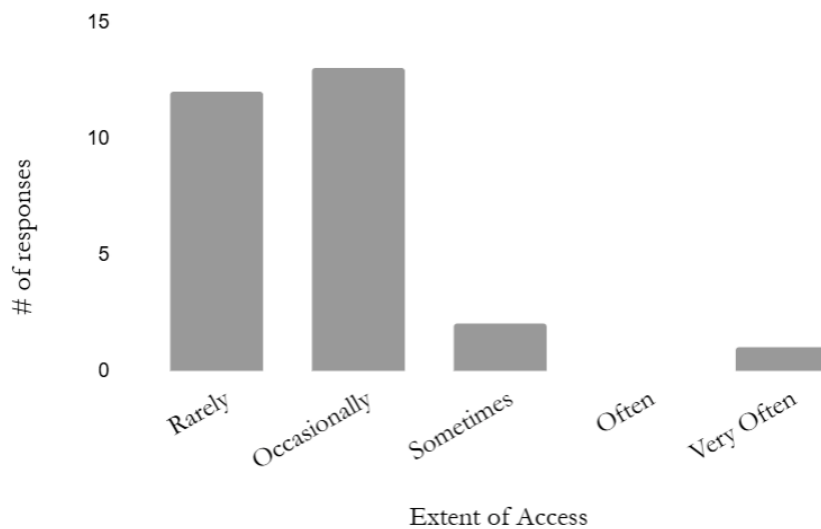
What is your gender identity?		
Identity	Number of Participants	Percentage of Sample
Male	13	8.80%
Female	120	81.10%
Non-binary	9	6.10%
Transgender	2	1.40%
Prefer not to say	1	0.70%
Other	2	1.40%
Did not respond	1	0.70%

Table 5*International Student Status of Participants*

Are you an international Student?		
Yes/No	Number of Participants	Percentage of Sample
Yes	8	5.40%
No	140	94.60%

Appendix B: Figures**Figure 1***Students Who Have and Who Have Not Accessed MindfulU*

Note. This shows student responses to the question “Have you accessed MindfulU services before?”.

Figure 2*Extent of Access of Students Who Had Attended MindfulU*

Note. Students were also given examples of what was considered rarely, occasionally, sometimes, often and very often, with the examples being as follows: Rarely (1 or 2 times ever); Occasionally (2 or 3 times per term); Sometimes (1 or 2 times per month); Often (about once per week); Very often (multiple times a week).

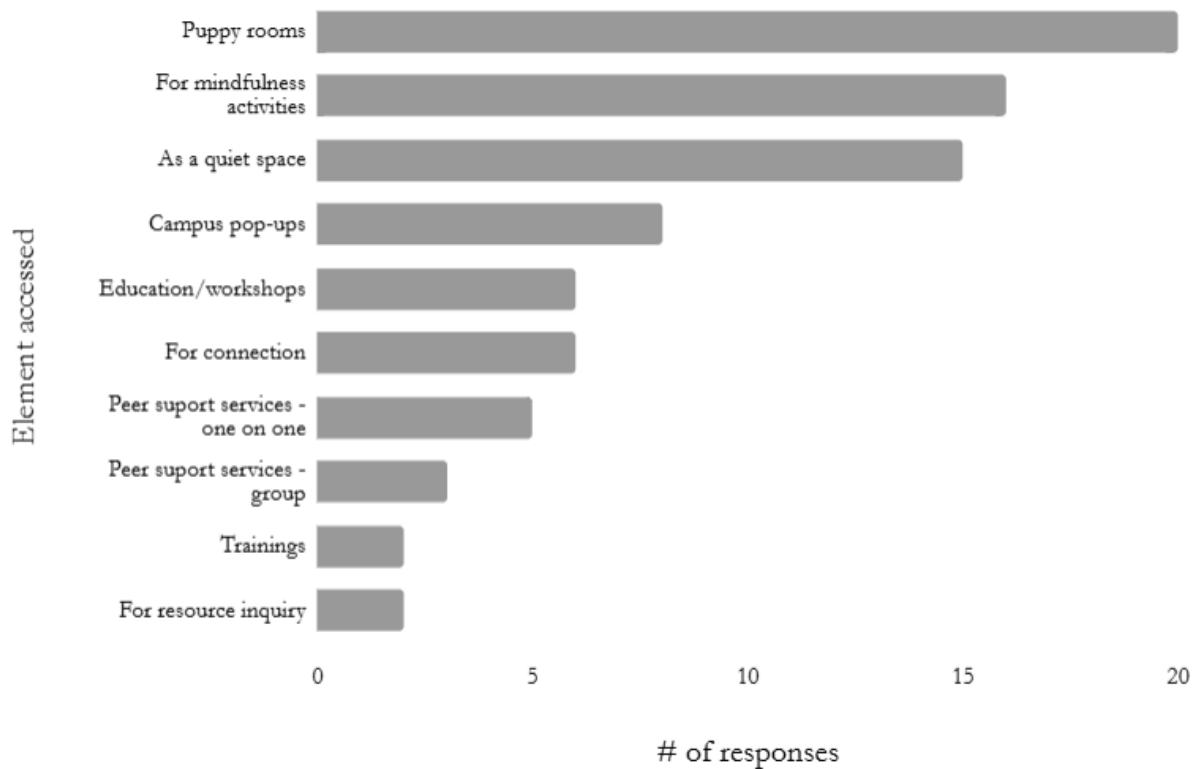
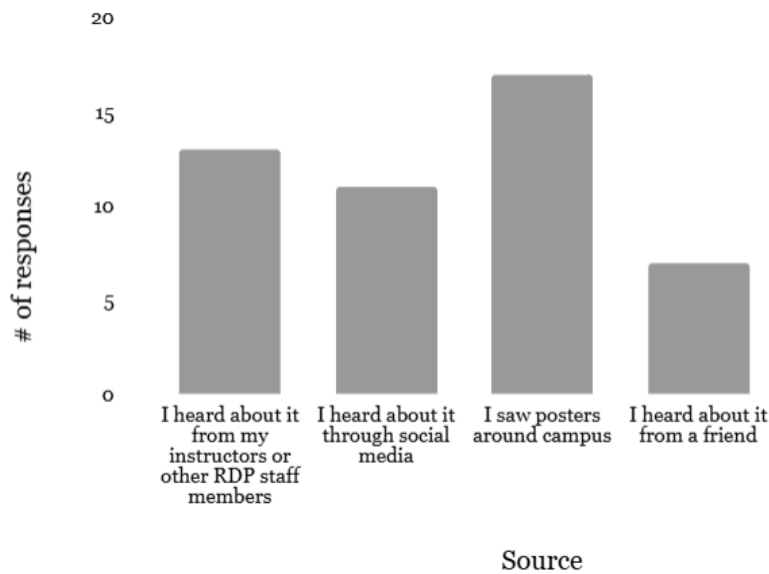
Figure 3*Frequency of Access for the Different Elements of MindfulU*

Figure 4

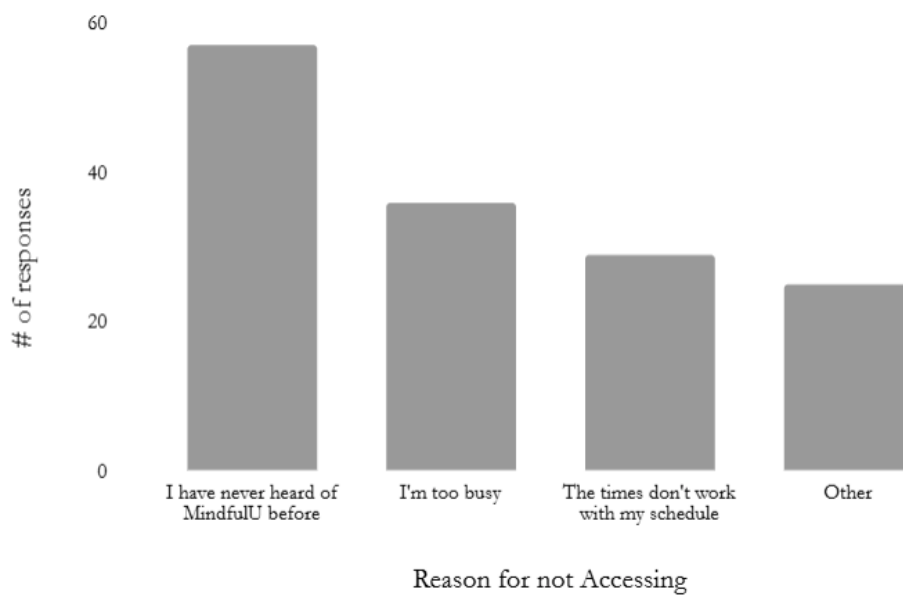
Where Students Reported Having Heard of MindfulU From



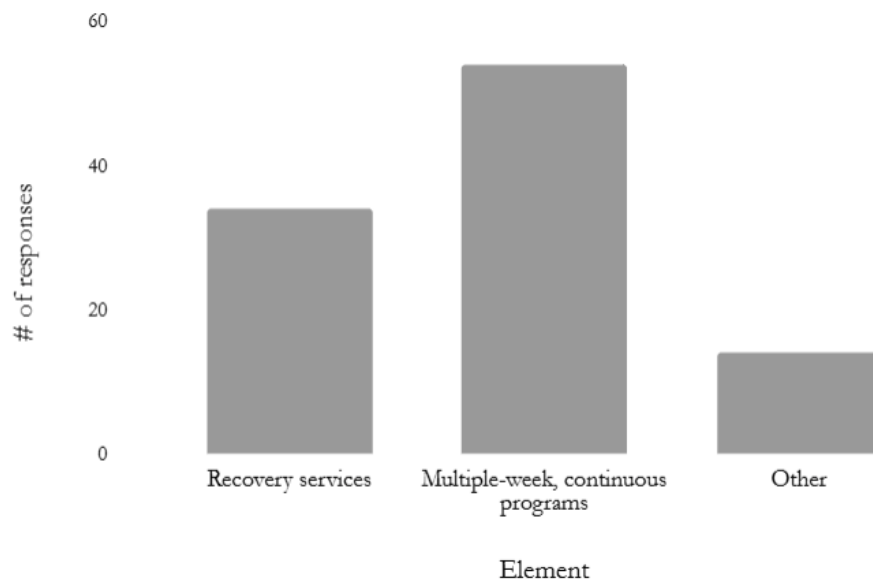
Note. The singular student who had selected *other* wrote that they heard of it from the counselling centre.

Figure 5

Reported Reasons for not Accessing MindfulU



Note. Participants who had selected *other* were asked to explain, and these were coded and a description of these can be seen in table 1c.

Figure 6*Additional Services Students Felt Would Be Valuable Additions to MindfulU***Table 1b***Other Reasons Provided for not Accessing MindfulU*

Reason	Number of Responses in Code	Example Quote
Lack of need - doing Fine	10	“never felt like i needed to”
Lack of need - using other resources	3	“I use other resources for my mental health”
Lack of clarity	5	“I’ve never really understood what it was or if it pertained to me”
Anxiety, shyness, or embarrassment	4	“I’m shy/don’t know what to expect”
Other	2	“Just got to campus last week”

Table 2b*Scores on Well-Being Measures for Students who had and who had not Accessed MindfulU*

	Possible Range of Scores	Mean (SD)		<i>t</i> -values (df)	<i>p</i> -values
		Accessed	Not Accessed		
BIT	10-50	32.61 (6.15)	34.4 (5.66)	-1.49 (146)	.070
PSS	0-40	31.32 (6.96)	30.78 (7.34)	.36 (146)	.360
SCS	20-120	75.57 (16.50)	80.39 (19.75)	-1.20 (146)	.117
RULS	6-24	12.04 (4.28)	13.99 (5.02)	-1.91 (146)	.029*
MAAS	1-6	3.37 (.83)	3.43 (.81)	-.36 (146)	.362
FS	8-56	40.21 (42.96)	42.96 (7.79)	-1.69 (146)	.048*

Note. * indicates a significant difference**Table 3b***Bivariate Correlations of Well-Being Measures*

	BIT	PSS	SCS-R	RULS-6	MAAS	FS
BIT	---	-.651	.710	.628	.398	.826
PSS	---	---	-.604	-.625	-.509	-.617
SCS-R	---	---	---	.817	.541	.794
RULS-6	---	---	---	---	.492	.706
MAAS	---	---	---	---	---	.505
FS	---	---	---	---	---	---

Note. Pearson's correlations of each of the well-being measures used for the whole sample ($N = 148$). All p values were significant ($p < .001$).