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### Health Education: Wellness Ambassador Program Development and Training

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Palmer, Lily, "Health Education: Wellness Ambassador Program Development and Training" (2021).  
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# Health Education: ' Wellness Ambassador Program Development and Training ' Lily Palmer, Psychology, '23 % In Collaboration with Erica Beachy, Director of Wellness Education % (Sponsor: Esteban Cardemil) %



CLARK UNIVERSITY

## Introduction

A long-term solution for student wellness, mental, and physical health on college campuses is extremely necessary. Given the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, I found it especially important to address such concerns with alacrity. The percent of high-risk appointments at the Center for Counseling and Personal Growth (CPG) increased from 50.4% in 2019-2020 to 64.2% in Fall of 2020, displaying an escalation in already present mental health crises (CPG, 2020). Using my previous training in psychology and wellness as well as knowledge from my psychology courses, my project this past summer was to work with the Director of Wellness Education, Erica Beachy, to further develop and strengthen the new Wellness Ambassador program at Clark University. I aimed to do so by collaborating directly with Erica in the recruitment and selection of new Wellness Ambassador candidates, making adjustments to the Certified Peer Educator (CPE) training through the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), training the new Wellness Ambassadors through the CPE program, and preparing them to begin their wellness education work in the fall of 2021. The project's main goals were the growth of the Wellness Ambassador team, further development of wellness education, and increased resources for student wellness at Clark.

## Methods

Beginning in April, I assisted Erica in advertising the opportunity to become a Wellness Ambassador. Erica and I then reviewed applications and selected candidates to be interviewed. Next, we scheduled interviews with applicants, conducted the interviews, and finalized selection. During this time, I conducted independent research by reviewing existing health and peer education literature. The NASPA CPE training, which focuses on eight areas of expertise necessary in peer education, began June 23rd and ended July 16th, which Erica and I co-facilitated. The training consisted of ten meetings, two hours each. First, we held a meeting for introductions and the course pretest, then we had eight meetings covering each module of the training, and finally we had a final meeting to reflect on the contents of the training and conduct the posttest. After training, I acted as a resource for the new Wellness Ambassadors.

## Results

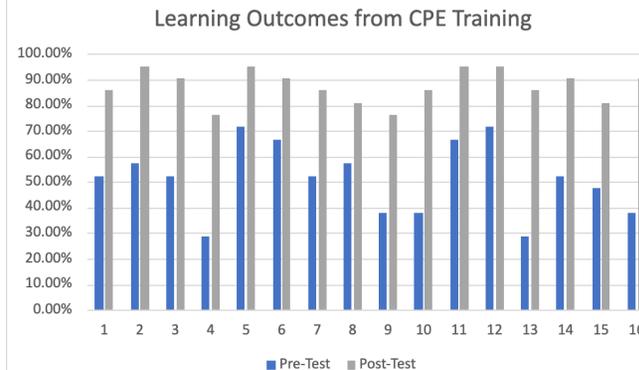


Figure 1: ' There were significant increases in understanding for every question on the posttest compared to the pretest. The NASPA CPE training increases peer education skills and knowledge/ '

Trainees increased their knowledge on all learning outcomes measured. The biggest increase in knowledge gained was in steps needed to plan a successful program, from about 29% to about 86%, at an increase of 57%. Additionally, trainees showed a dramatic increase in knowledge for characteristics of highly effective peer education groups, from about 38% to about 91%, at a total increase of 53%. There were also large increases in knowledge of the process through which change happens on a community level, from about 29% to about 78%, and how to intervene safely and effectively as a bystander, from about 38% to about 87%, both at an increase of 49%. For knowledge of creating a plan of action to help a student deal with a distressing situation, trainees displayed an increase in knowledge from about 38% to about 82%, an increase of 44%. Three knowledge sets increased by about 29%: how to craft a successful presentation from about 52% to about 91%, roles of peer educators on campus from about 58% to about 91%, and strategies for facilitating behavior change from about 52% to about 91%. Additionally, knowledge of ways to encourage individuals to share when speaking with them increased from about 52% to about 87% at a 35% increase, knowledge of how groups form and develop increased from about 48% to about 82%, at a 34% increase, and knowledge of ways to encourage individuals to share when speaking with them increased from about 48% to about 82% at a 34% increase.

Knowledge of acting with ethics and integrity from about 53% to about 88%, at a 33% increase, knowledge of trainees' own social identities increased from about 67% to about 96% at a 29% increase. Two knowledge sets increase by 24%: techniques for active listening from about 72% to about 96%, and barriers to active listening from about 67% to about 91%. Lastly, knowledge of campus resources and how to refer students increased from about 58% to about 81% and knowledge of the ways in which social identities might affect your work as a peer educator increased from about 72% to about 95%, both at a 23% increase.

## Discussion

The goals of this project were certainly met. Through the interview process for new Wellness Ambassadors that I facilitated with Erica, we identified a cohort of amazing additions to the Wellness Ambassador group. These individuals expressed deep passions for student health and well-being, concerns surrounding the coming year and necessary resources for students, and genuinely cared about others. When receiving verbal feedback from the trainees, they only had positive things to say about their experience with the training. They appreciated the online format so that they could attend sessions from wherever they were, which we anticipated and will likely continue with in the future. Additionally, they expressed high regard to the content of the training, stating that it was very relevant to issues we face in college. After completion of the training, they felt that they were prepared to be Wellness Ambassadors and engage in peer education at Clark. Data from the trainees' post training examinations displayed dramatic increases ranging from 23% to 58% in all focuses of the training. This training has clearly prepared these individuals to be peer educators on Clark's campus this fall, and to contribute to the growing Wellness Education department.

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