

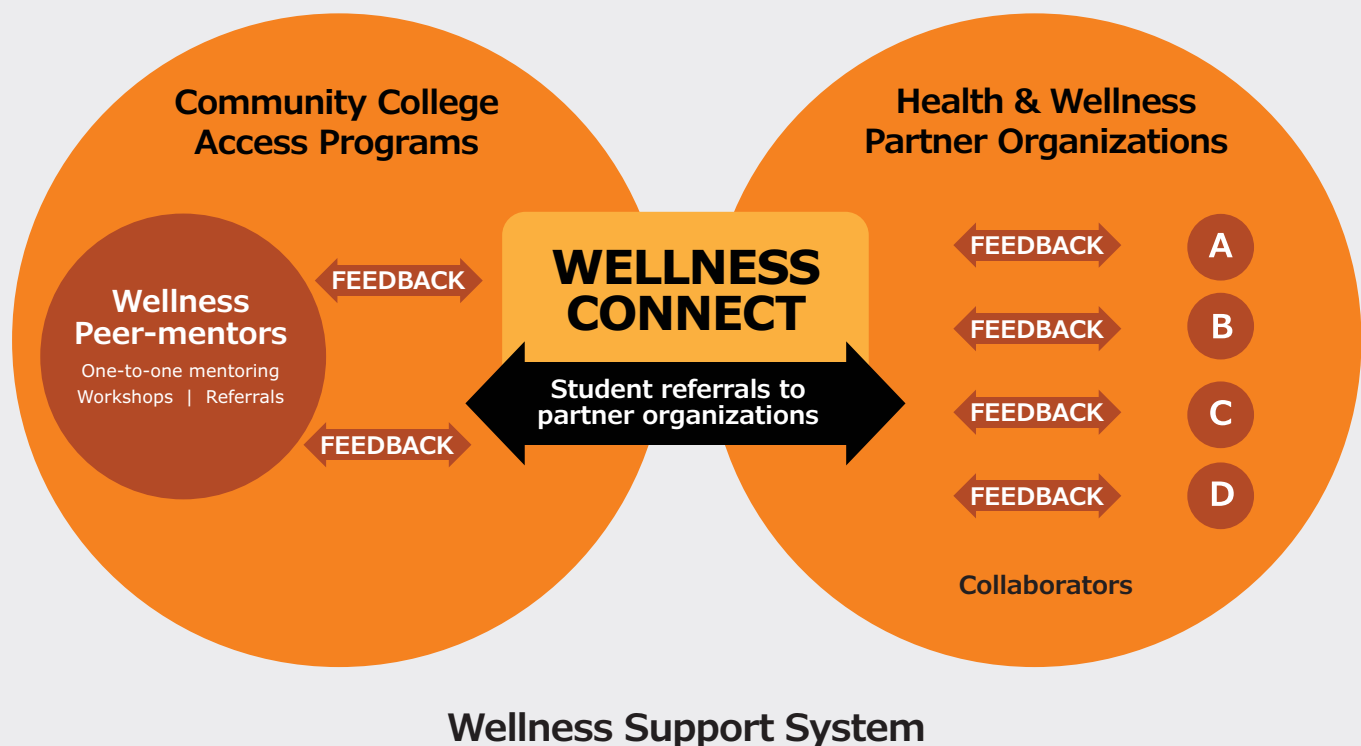
# Wellness Connect

Improving At-Risk Student Capabilities and Well-being to Access and Persist in Postsecondary Education (2020-2023)

A Research Snapshot by *Clara I. Tascón, PhD*. June 30, 2022

## Research focus

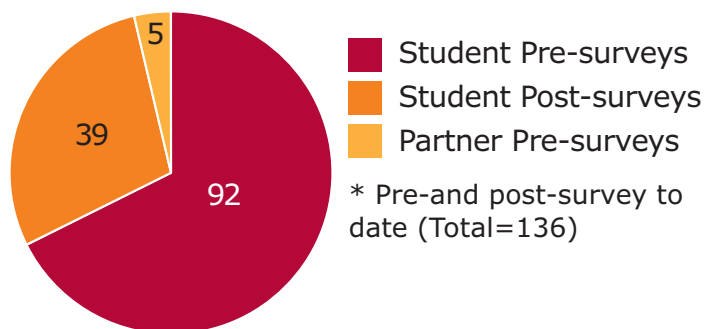
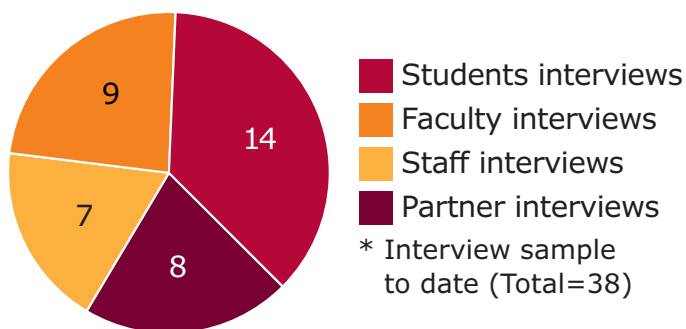
- Explore a collaborative referral approach with four health and wellness organizations in the community to build a sustainable support system for students of the Access programs of a community college in a large urban centre in Ontario
- Identify factors that intervene, challenges, and systemic barriers in the collaborative approach between the Access programs and the four health and wellness partner organizations
- Assess the processes and advances in building a wellness support system and in fostering students' capabilities and well-being to access postsecondary education and employment pathways



Wellness Support System

# Feedback from students, faculty, staff members, and partners

OCTOBER 2020 – JUNE 2022



## Multiple dimensions of wellness

Wellness is defined as “an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices toward, a more healthy and successful existence.” (National Wellness Institute, 2018, p. 1)

Wellness entails a holistic, relational, and lifelong process of the individual and the interconnectedness within the environment/ society.” (National Wellness Institute, 2018)



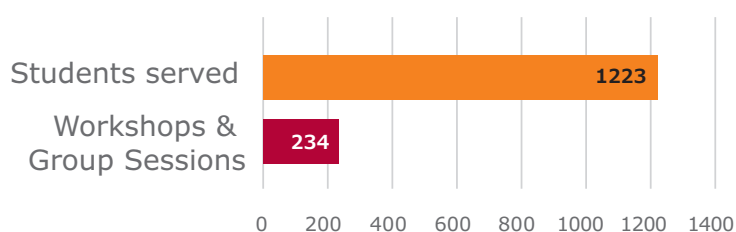
## THEMES

### Wellness awareness

“I start to read more about self-confidence or – self-confidence and self-improvement or self-development... How can [I] help myself? How can [I] be strong? How can [I] understand [my] life better and how I deal with all these things like challenge and I have to be strong to learn in this challenge?” (Student, Interview-11)

### Workshops & Group Sessions

OCTOBER 2020 - JUNE 2022



## THEMES

### Multidimensional wellness approach to foster students' capabilities and well-being

"Those things are a focus of a lot of the work that we do, is trying to support people in... being healthy, having a whole sense of wellness, and not just in the context of physical health or mental health, but a whole being, a holistic approach to wellness. And then also trying to support people in building those networks, and skills, and support systems that allow them to be resilient." (Partner, interview-7)

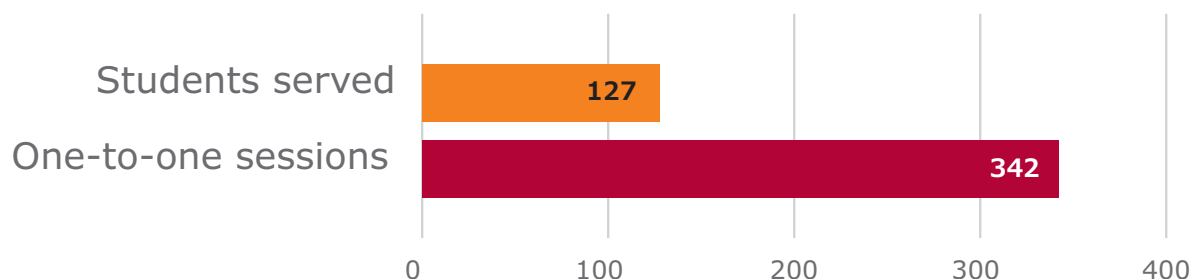
### Students' individual needs, challenges, and barriers

"It can be life circumstance barriers, such as someone might lose their job, and therefore then lose their housing, and may have a – might be in a very difficult relationship and they need some help from a legal perspective. There's a lot of that very tangible side of things that plays in, also plays into the emotional side, and that mental wellbeing. Because that can be – as we know, can be very taxing on people when they're going through something like that. It can be a huge mental distraction, and very, very stressful for them. (Staff, Interview-7)

### Relationships of trust

"Whether you participate in the activities or not, at least you knew of [the wellness peer-mentor]. And because [the wellness peer-mentor] laid that foundation and was so personable and open I grew to trust [this person] and that let me actually use the wellness connection. Because if I didn't trust her I was not touching [other] services." (Student, Interview-1)

#### One-to-one Mentoring OCTOBER 2020 - JUNE 2022



## THEMES

### Timeliness of intervention or support

“If a client needs a same-day appointment, it would be an issue. Because unless you have a cancellation, [which] sometimes happens within five minutes before the session starts, you cannot reach out to students because they may be in class. You cannot put that on the students. So, most likely the appointment will be lost. So, I would say it is one of the challenges, not to be seen immediately. ” (Partner, Interview-8)

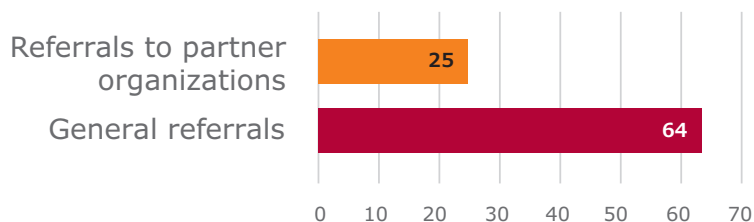
### Processes and advances in building a sustainable support system

“The vision of Wellness Connect is actually probably parallel, if not directly aligned with the mission of our organization of like, you’re looking at how do we eliminate barriers, wellness, and resilience and well-being for our students who are facing barriers.” (Partner, Interview-4)

### Ease of access

“The ease of access, so being able to easily figure out where you need to go, in that sense I think we’ve got a great setup there, right. We’ve got a wellness peer-mentor who can refer out to different programs. So, you know, that’s just really one click away.” (Faculty, Interview-9)

Student Referrals OCTOBER 2020 - JUNE 2022



### Research partnership

“I think that it is a two-way street. One is that [this organization] is building partnerships, and I would say necessary partnerships, you know, because, and now I would say for the future and for organizations to stay relevant, they have to work together. We used to work in silos and fight for funding and for the same issues, I think this is the best way our community would be healthier because you are providing education, and we are providing health, holistic health. It is about credibility as well. Who is connected with this program...Implementation of the systemic approach of support services.” (Partner, Interview-8)