

EMBEDDING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN VALUE STATEMENTS OF CANADA'S POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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Abstract

Many post-secondary institutions contain organizational values, which describe enduring beliefs that support strategic priorities and guide members of an organization. Relatedly, the adoption of health-promoting frameworks calls on embedding health within post-secondary institutions' core values. The study objective was to map Canada's post-secondary values to determine how health is integrated within value statements. Mixed methods were used to map institutional values, contextualize well-being, and identify thematic messages of health-related content contained within values. Most institutions espoused values ($n = 64$, 71%), yet only a small proportion of these institutions espoused health within their value statements ($n = 7$, 11%). Qualitative analysis revealed three thematic messages: (i) health as a descriptor for other institutional priorities, (ii) wellness broadly acknowledged or embedded within non-health values, and (iii) well-being as a core value or commitment. These novel findings suggest more institutions must embed health as a core value to demonstrate institutional commitment.

Keywords: post-secondary, health, well-being, content analysis, education, organizational change

Résumé

De nombreux établissements postsecondaires ont des valeurs organisationnelles, qui décrivent les croyances durables soutenant les priorités stratégiques et guidant les membres d'une organisation. Dans ce contexte, l'adoption de cadres de promotion de la santé nécessite l'intégration de la santé dans les valeurs principales des établissements postsecondaires. L'objectif de l'étude était de dresser une carte des valeurs des établissements d'enseignement postsecondaires du Canada afin de déterminer comment la santé est intégrée dans les énoncés de valeurs. Des méthodes mixtes ont été utilisées pour établir les valeurs institutionnelles, contextualiser le bien-être et identifier les messages thématiques liés à la santé dans les valeurs. La plupart des établissements ont adopté des valeurs ($n = 64$, 71 %), mais seule une petite proportion d'entre eux ont adopté la santé dans leurs déclarations de valeurs ($n = 7$, 11 %). L'analyse qualitative a révélé trois messages thématiques : (i) la santé est utilisée pour décrire d'autres priorités institutionnelles, (ii) le bien-être est souvent reconnu ou intégré dans des valeurs qui ne sont pas liées à la santé, et (iii) le bien-être est considéré en tant que valeur ou engagement principal. Ces résultats suggèrent que davantage d'établissements doivent intégrer la santé comme valeur fondamentale pour démontrer leur engagement.

Mots-clés : postsecondaire, santé, bien-être, analyse de contenu, éducation, changement organisationnel

INTRODUCTION

An organization's mission statement, vision, and values are presented within its strategic plan—a document that outlines overall goals, priorities, and institutional frameworks for the conduct of its individual units (Rowley & Sherman, 2002). The values contained within it are central in orienting an organization's culture, identity, and individual-organization fit (Bourne & Jenkins, 2013), and they vary across organizations because the organizations differ in the individuals they serve, the goals they have, the scope of their operations, and the need to differentiate themselves from institutions they are in competition with (Molesworth et al., 2011). While the mission statement describes the core purpose, philosophies, core competencies, and sometimes values of the institution (Davis et al., 2007), its values are often presented as stand-alone guiding principles. Organizational values are formally defined as enduring beliefs that guide the members of an organization through the selection or evaluation of behaviours; in other words, they represent a group consensus of important characteristics that support the organization's aims and collective welfare (Bourne & Jenkins, 2013; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). Therefore, collating and analyzing an industry's institutional values can reveal the overall beliefs, culture, and priorities of management.

Four types of organizational values have been identified in the literature: (i) espoused values (i.e., those that upper management adopt); (ii) attributed values (i.e., those that members attribute to an organization); (iii) shared values (i.e., those that are shared by members of an organization); and (iv) aspirational values (i.e., what members believe an organization's values should be; Bourne & Jenkins, 2013). Espoused values refer to published or articulated values by an organization (Jonsen et al., 2015) and they can be beneficial to an organization's strategic planning and organizational development regardless of whether they are conventionally academic or socially engaged (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Gurley et al., 2015). Articulating values is linked to performance, organizational commitment, identity, profitability, orientation of an institution, and

encourages desired conduct from its members (Bourne et al., 2019; Bourne & Jenkins, 2013; Davis et al., 2007; Jonsen et al., 2015; Shapiro & Naughton, 2015; Williams, 2002).

Mission statements and values have been increasingly used by post-secondary institutions since the 1990s (Molesworth et al., 2011). In fact, integrating shared missions within institutions may be one of the factors that differentiates an effective organization from a less effective one (Stemler & Bebell, 2012). Previously published studies have investigated and analyzed mission statements of post-secondary institutions (Arias-Coello et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2007; Ellis & Miller, 2014; Kosmützky & Krücken, 2015; Seeber et al., 2017). Post-secondary institutional mission statements generally emphasized traditional orientations of academia such as “research,” “teaching,” “learning,” and “global reach” (Arias-Coello et al., 2018; Ellis & Miller, 2014; Flavin et al., 2019). There are far fewer studies exploring value statements of post-secondary institutions, despite strategic planning in recent decades being based on core values that contribute to an organization's purpose (Elwick, 2019, 2020; Williams, 2002). Values are largely under-investigated, under-implemented, and misunderstood in the post-secondary context (Gurley et al., 2015), but findings from the broader literature contend values provide benefits to the organization and its members (Bourne et al., 2019; Bourne & Jenkins, 2013; Davis et al., 2007; Williams, 2002). We conducted a preliminary scan of Canada's post-secondary websites which revealed many institutions listed discrete values within their strategic plans and websites, yet no study has examined their value statements in Canada to assess their institutional commitments and cultural orientations.

Rationale

Post-secondary institutions have been historically distinct from profit-based institutions and businesses, yet educational institutions appear to be moving toward corporatization and marketization over the last few decades (Elwick, 2020; McCartney & Metcalfe, 2018; Meyer &

Evans, 2005; Mills, 2012; Molesworth et al., 2011). In Canada, provincial governments are responsible for higher education policies in the country and these governments have utilized post-secondary institutions to address social inequities, meet economic objectives, support the development of the labour force, and drive innovation (Kirby, 2012). Marketization, according to Kirby (2012), has resulted in shifting from traditional values to market forces such as competition, profitability, and private interest. In the United States, many regions have or had at one point implemented some form of performance-based funding within post-secondary institutions, which allocates operating funds based on student outcomes such as retention and graduation rates (Ortagus et al., 2020). In Canada, Ontario recently implemented a performance-based funding scheme which increases the proportion of institutional operating funds tied to performance indicators related to student and economic outcomes (Government of Ontario, 2022, 2023; Spooner, 2019). Critics of these performance-based schemes highlight unintended consequences to post-secondary institutions such as deterioration of academic quality, reduced enrolment within underserved groups, gaming the system to meet desired metrics, and negligible intended positive effects (Ortagus et al., 2020; Spooner, 2019). The potential shift in emphasis from student-serving to performance- and profitability-based post-secondary institutions suggest a need to revisit the Canadian landscape and broadly determine current values across these settings.

During recent years, there have been increasing concerns surrounding student mental health and well-being (Linden et al., 2021; Lindsay et al., 2022). For instance, the prevalence of anxiety, depressive symptoms, loneliness, and hopelessness have increased in the last decade (American College Health Association, 2013, 2022), and this likely negatively impacts student learning and success (Lindsay et al., 2022). In addition to ongoing interventions, supports, and services provided within post-secondary settings, researchers have also suggested institutions reorient well-being by transforming its culture (Amaya et al., 2019; Baik et al., 2019).

One of these ways is to incorporate health, well-being, and health promotion into an institution's core principles and values (Amaya et al., 2019; Baik et al., 2019). However, a study out of the United Kingdom found only 10% of its universities incorporated well-being into their value statements (Elwick, 2020). Thus, marketization of post-secondary institutions and general interest in student well-being points to a need to map Canadian post-secondary institutions' espoused values and determine the emphasis of health and well-being within value statements.

Organizational values have been adopted by post-secondary institutions to further their reputation, create a cohesive community, and complement their mission statements. However, there is a paucity of the literature in this area and no study to-date has identified and mapped the values of Canada's post-secondary institutions to determine the extent to which these institutions have embedded health within their values. Therefore, the objective of this investigation was to conduct a mixed methods study to map the espoused values of Canadian post-secondary institutions, describe the frequency of institutions integrating health-related content compared to other values, and qualitatively analyze how health and well-being are being embedded across value statements. The results from this study will assist in the strategic development of post-secondary institutional values and provide insights on how health and well-being can be better integrated into post-secondary institutions' value statements.

METHODS

Study Design and Worldview

The research questions were: (1) "What are the espoused values of Canada's degree-granting post-secondary institutions?" and (2) "How are health and well-being embedded across institutional value statements?" We used an explanatory sequential mixed methods design with content analysis approaches to comprehensively map the espoused values of Canadian post-secondary institutions. First, a basic content analysis was used to identify and broadly map the

content of institutional values through the systematic and quantitative description of overtly and literally present content (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). Subsequently, we followed a conventional qualitative content analysis of health-related content of institutional values to explore the value placed on health and well-being. This involved quantifying concepts, followed by interpreting meaning from the content of the textual data through an inductive generation of codes, categories, and central themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analyses have been used to map institutional mission statements (Breznik & Law, 2019; Morphew & Hartley, 2016; Seeber et al., 2017), and we used similar approaches for coding and reporting institutional values.

We are a group of interdisciplinary public health researchers and health and medical professionals, and our research team consists of both students and employees representing multiple post-secondary institutions. We approach this research from a pragmatic worldview. Pragmatism invites the use of different methods, assumptions, and analytical approaches to the current needs and purposes of an investigation and research team (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Eligibility Criteria

All English- and French-language publicly recognized, post-secondary degree-granting institutions in Canada were eligible for inclusion acquired from the Government of Canada's list of designated educational institutions (Government of Canada, 2021). These criteria were used to make findings applicable to the Canadian context. The following types of institutions were excluded: schools outside of Canada, private institutions, satellite campuses, unaccredited schools, junior colleges, and technical and vocational institutes. This resulted in a total of 90 institutions across 11 provinces and territories.

Data Collection

A codebook consisting of 12 variables was developed, pretested, and refined through consultation with members of the research team. The codebook contained information on institutional

characteristics, mission statements, institution size, and value-related characteristics (e.g., "Do the institution's values mention equity, diversity, inclusion, or accessibility?"). Enrolment data not available from institutional websites were retrieved from Universities Canada (Universities Canada, 2022). Institution sizes were categorized by using established classifications of very small (< 1,000 students), small (1,000–2,999 students), medium (3,000–9,999 students), and large (\geq 10,000 students; Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2023). Details on all variables within the codebook are listed in Table 1. The associated raw data are available upon request. All institutional websites were coded by the first author during April 2023 using Microsoft Excel.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated by importing the coded files to NVivo 1.7.1 qualitative analysis software (QSR International, 2022). To determine whether espousing health-related values differed by geographic region or size of institution, data were imported into Stata 17.0 (StataCorp, 2021) and Fisher's exact tests were conducted due to low expected observations.

Next, a preliminary review of all institutional value statements was conducted to assess and include institutions mentioning "health." Due to the lack of published literature in the area, we cast a wide net and included for analysis any institutions containing relevant keywords (e.g., "health," "wellness," "well-being," "quality of life"). Rather than aiming for an exhaustive list, institutions at this stage were selected for inclusion on a case-by-case basis because of wide discrepancy in institutions describing well-being (e.g., "supportive of the whole person"). These institutions were selected for conventional content analysis using an inductive approach to coding. This process involves deriving codes from the data to generate patterns or themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Coding was performed by multiple readings of the institutional values, followed by the development of a coding structure. The codebook and interpretations of text were reviewed and verified by

Table 1

List of All Collected Variables and Response Type for the Content Analysis Codebook Investigating Canada’s Post-Secondary Institutional Values

Variable	Response type
Institutional characteristics:	
Province or territory ^a	String
Student population ^b	Numeric
Mission statement describes health or well-being	Yes/no
Value statement characteristics:	
Institution lists discrete value statement	Yes/no
Number of values espoused	Numeric
Total word count of value statement	Numeric
Espousal of specific values:	
Service to society ^c	Yes/no
Decolonization, reconciliation, or Indigenous ways of knowing ^d	Yes/no
Equity, diversity, inclusion, or accessibility	Yes/no
Anti-racism	Yes/no
Sustainability	Yes/no
Health or well-being	Yes/no

^a Listed the location for the main campus for institutions with multiple campuses.

^b Used enrolment data from institution’s website from last available year. If not available, use Universities Canada to populate data.

^c Concepts and words included social responsibility, collaboration, and community engagement.

^d Included the use of Indigenous languages and traditions in value statements.

other members of the research team to ensure meanings, language, definitions, and the resulting codebook were interpreted similarly. The findings were then presented by describing the general word counts, central themes, and illustrative quotes to support these patterns.

Credibility of findings was sought by including researchers with mixed methods and qualitative research expertise throughout the analytical process, maintaining coding at a semantic level of textual data rather than risking interpretation bias, and only collapsing codes into themes if data saturation was reached.

Ethical Approval

This research was exempt by the Research Ethics Board at the participating institutions because the data were publicly available information, and no human or animal participants were involved (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2022).

RESULTS

Institutional Characteristics and Content Analysis of Values

Overall, 64 out of 90 eligible institutions had publicly listed a set of espoused values. These institutions spanned 11 provinces and territories, with student populations ranging from 530 to 70,340 students (median = 8,729). The number of values per institution ranged between three to 16 (median = 5), and the length of these values ranged between four to 749 words in length (median = 87). Most of the institutions were: from Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia (56%); categorized as large (45%); and did not mention “health” or “well-being” in their mission statement (84%; Table 2).

Regarding institutional values, the most frequently mentioned values were related to “community,” “students,” “university,” “respect,” and “excellence” (Table 2). Most institutions mentioned ≥ 1 of “equity,” “diversity,” “inclusion,” or “accessibility” (67%), and service to society (63%; Table 2). However, fewer institutions espoused “health” or “well-being” as a value (11%; Table 2). Further analysis revealed no significant differences observed between geographic region ($p = 0.696$) and size of the institution ($p = 0.367$) on espousing health-related values.

Table 3 shows the most common words mentioned across institutional values, which are categorized into four inductively generated topics: place, academic, person, and trait. Of these, traits accounted for most words ($n = 750$), followed by place ($n = 274$), academic ($n = 246$), and person ($n = 160$). “Health,” “well-being,” “wellness,” and “quality of life” were only mentioned a small number of times across the content examined ($n = 29$).

Qualitative Findings from Health-Related Content

In total, 29 excerpts attributed to “health,” “wellness,” “well-being,” and “quality of life” were captured within 17 values from 15 post-secondary institutions. Of these values, most were unrelated to well-being (e.g., “healthy discussion,”

$n = 10$) while the remaining were health-centred ($n = 7$).

A total of eight codes were categorized under three central thematic messages: (i) health as a descriptor for other institutional priorities; (ii) wellness broadly acknowledged or embedded within non-health values; and, (iii) well-being as a core value or commitment.

Thematic Message 1: Health as a Descriptor for Other Institutional Priorities

Some institutions described improving health through the research activities of institutions ($n = 2$) or used an adjective for other priorities ($n = 6$). In all instances, institutions did not refer to members of their campus community.

“Le respect, des personnes, des idées et des points de vue pour un dialogue sain et constructif à l’Université.” [Respect for people, ideas, and points of view for a healthy and constructive dialogue at the university.] – Université du Québec à Chicoutimi

“We support a healthy sustainable environment through progressive operational practices and promotion of environmental awareness.” – Vancouver Island University

Thematic Message 2: Wellness Broadly Acknowledged or Embedded within Non-Health Values

Institutions under this theme acknowledged health as being important to their campus and greater community. This included using phrases such as “quality of life” within their values ($n = 2$) or embedding well-being within other core values ($n = 8$):

“Mutual Respect, Integrity, and Honesty: Our treatment of each other is principled, open, transparent, and respectful. We are a safe, healthy, and supportive community that prioritizes the well-being of our students, faculty, staff, and community partners.” – University of Regina

Table 2

Institutional Characteristics and Frequency of Concepts Expressed within Institutional Values across Canada (n = 64)

Characteristic	n	%
Province or territory:		
Quebec	14	21.9
Ontario	11	17.2
British Columbia	11	17.2
Nova Scotia	8	12.5
Alberta	6	9.4
Saskatchewan	5	7.8
Manitoba	3	4.7
New Brunswick	3	4.7
Newfoundland and Labrador	1	1.6
Prince Edward Island	1	1.6
Yukon	1	1.6
Institution size:		
Large	29	45.3
Medium	22	34.4
Small	7	10.9
Very small	6	9.4
Does the mission statement include health or well-being?		
Yes	4	6.3
No, not listed	54	84.4
No, no mission statement	6	9.4
Institutions espousing values related to the following concepts:		
Equity, diversity, inclusion, or accessibility	43	67.2
Service to society ^a	40	62.5
Sustainability	26	40.6
Decolonization, reconciliation, or Indigenous ways of knowing ^b	16	25.0
Health or well-being	7	10.9
Anti-racism	1	1.6

^a Concepts and words included social responsibility, collaboration, and community engagement.

^b Included the use of Indigenous languages and traditions in value statements.

Table 3

Counts and Weighted Percentages of the Most Frequently Used Words across Universities' Values in Canada

Category	Word ^a	Count ^b (n)	Weighted percentage (%)
Place	Community	115	2.19
	University	76	1.45
	Society	29	0.55
	World	35	0.67
	Environment	39	0.74
	Institution	22	0.41
Academic	Research	57	1.09
	Educational	32	0.61
	Knowledge	30	0.57
	Academic	49	0.94
	Teaching	30	0.57
	Learning	48	0.92
Person	Students	79	1.51
	People	35	0.67
	Member	31	0.57
	Staff	26	0.50
	Faculty	20	0.38
Trait	Respect	63	1.20
	Excellence	62	1.18
	Diversity	58	1.11
	Inclusion	47	0.90
	Integrity	47	0.90
	Responsible	46	0.88
	Sustainable	45	0.86
	Engagement	41	0.78
	Creativity	39	0.74
	Freedom	39	0.74
	Innovative	37	0.71
	Development	32	0.61
	Equity	29	0.55
	Health or well-being	29	0.55
	Access	25	0.48
	Collaboration	24	0.46
	Open	24	0.46
Quality	23	0.44	
Accountable	20	0.38	
Ethics	20	0.38	

^a Similar stemmed words were grouped together (e.g., community and communities). Context-dependent words were not presented in the table, including: commit (n = 50), value (n = 41), support (n = 36), culture (n = 29), activity (n = 28), new (n = 28), social (n = 27), work (n = 27), experience (n = 25), action (n = 23), promote (n = 20), provide (n = 20), achieve (n = 20), and opportunity (n = 20).

^b Counts may exceed the number of institutions because some words were mentioned > 1 within an institution's set of values.

“Openness: ...It is apparent in the way the University cares for its community, in its concern for its members’ well-being and for maintaining a spirit of collegiality between them.” – Université de Montréal

Thematic Message 3: Well-Being as a Core Value or Commitment

Only a few institutions described health and well-being as discrete values ($n = 4$). These schools expressed a strong understanding of health or placed well-being on par with other principles like “research,” “academic excellence,” and “community engagement:”

“Wellbeing: [We are] committed to the success of its community by creating a safe, secure, collegial, healthy, and inclusive environment that puts people first, is supportive of the whole person and enhances the development of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. Wellbeing is fundamental to positive social and academic outcomes and healthy communities.” – Toronto Metropolitan University

“We nurture the health, safety and well-being of our people and community.” – Queen’s University

DISCUSSION

This study mapped Canadian post-secondary institutions’ espoused values and further analyzed their health-related content. We broadly identified frequently reported values, such as mentioning “service to society,” “community,” “students,” “diversity,” “respect,” “integrity,” and “academic excellence.” The sections below discuss infrequently espoused institutional values, value framing and development, and its implications for health and well-being.

Current Criticisms and Framing Values for Institutional Development

There now exist contemporary pressures from top-down administration, institutional rankings, and performance-based funding from governments to go beyond the campus and address economic objectives, social objectives, demonstrate public service, and establish community partnerships (McCartney & Metcalfe, 2018; Meyer & Evans, 2005; Mills, 2012). These competitive pressures may have led many post-secondary institutions to adopt the business-like practice of espousing values (Lamal, 2001). However, espousing values may not necessarily reflect the shared values of an organization’s members, and values are only one component of a larger strategic plan (Elwick, 2020; Rowley & Sherman, 2002). Moreover, some researchers argue that stating values is insufficient and value statements are susceptible to being mere platitudes (Elwick, 2019; Gurley et al., 2015). We found nearly one-third of the institutions eligible for inclusion in our study did not list any espoused values. Although there is a possibility that institutions are driven by branding and marketing to list values (Elwick, 2019), or opt out of publicly listing their values, the evidence does not justify a dismissal of espoused values (Suárez-Reyes & Van den Broucke, 2016; Williams, 2002). Existing frameworks and research contend that espoused organizational values are important elements of strategic planning, shape culture, can predict the core shared beliefs of an organization’s members, and complement the mission, vision, and goal statements of an institution (Guldenmund, 2010; Gurley et al., 2015; Williams, 2002). The conferred advantages related to institutional identity, desired conduct, and institutional development provide support for going beyond shared values toward espousing values.

Organizational values vary widely, and can emphasize character, capability, interpersonal relations, and community (Bourne et al., 2019; Elwick, 2020). Our findings show substantial variation in how values were presented (e.g., length, descriptions), the number of values,

the types of values, where they were displayed, and the languages used. Unsurprisingly, many institutional values emphasized “academic performance,” “research,” “knowledge,” and “community”—a finding previously shown through an investigation of espoused values of the United Kingdom’s post-secondary institutions (Elwick, 2020). We reported the median institution listed five values that were 87 words in length. There has been some research suggesting that more values, unique values, and changing values over time are associated with better profitability of organizations (Jonsen et al., 2015). Value statements articulate the shared beliefs of an institution and must include clear statements of observable behaviours (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Gurley et al., 2015). For instance, an institution which values well-being may state “We prioritize student well-being,” but is advised to add behavioural statements such as “Because we prioritize student well-being, we will regularly organize campus-wide health promotion events and continue to strengthen wellness programs and services.” These behavioural statements can provide further direction to how an institution seeks to achieve its vision, reduce the risk of performative platitudes, and allow leadership to determine whether espoused values are in action (Gurley et al., 2015). Based on this understanding, values must be articulated clearly and contain behavioural statements.

Articulating Health and Well-Being in Value Statements

Increasing mental health concerns among Canadian post-secondary students and growing calls from international and national organizations to adopt Health Promoting University (HPU) frameworks have led to institutions seeking to embed health within the post-secondary structure, campus culture, and administration (American College Health Association, 2020, 2022; Canadian Association of College & University Student Services & Canadian Mental Health Association, 2013; Okanagan Charter, 2015; Taylor et al., 2019). HPU frameworks were introduced in the 1990s and broadly emphasize healthy public policies, healthy learning environments,

health-promoting culture, and healthy development (Suárez-Reyes & Van den Broucke, 2016). Implementation of these frameworks can address areas such as: development of students’ skills related to well-being, integration of health into curricula, early identification of students at risk, supporting research in health promotion, and reorienting campus health care services (Suárez-Reyes et al., 2019). For instance, the American College Health Association’s healthy campus framework states that institutions successful in embedding health and well-being into their campus culture had “cultivate[d] health and wellbeing as a core value.” (American College Health Association, 2020, p. 5). Similarly, the international Okanagan Charter for health promoting universities and colleges was developed in 2015 in collaboration with 45 countries to move post-secondary institutions toward being health-promoting campuses (Canadian Health Promoting Universities and Colleges Network, 2021). One of the main calls to action within this charter are to embed health into all aspects of campus culture (Canadian Health Promoting Universities and Colleges Network, 2021). According to one website, 42 Canadian campuses have adopted the Okanagan Charter (Canadian Health Promoting Universities and Colleges Network, 2021), yet our findings show most institutions did not espouse health or well-being in their value statements. This suggests adopting the Charter may not result in the changing of espoused institutional values. If espousing values helps position an institution’s culture and identity (Bourne & Jenkins, 2013), then existing HPU frameworks may need to make more explicit the need to update value statements as part of their commitment to embed health within campus culture. It can be argued that post-secondary institutions have an obligation to student well-being since they have also oriented their priorities toward aspects such as leadership, service to society, and community (Breznik & Law, 2019; Taylor et al., 2019). In addition to the benefits to student well-being, institutions that foster a culture of health and well-being can experience reduced absenteeism, increased profits, and greater productivity (Grossmeier et al., 2016; Kottke et al., 2016). Further, espous-

ing values can help prospective students align their personal and social values with those of the host institution (Williams, 2002). Therefore, post-secondary institutions that have already committed to campus-wide health promotion, at the very minimum, should also integrate value statements centred on health and well-being as part of their ongoing institutional commitments.

Connecting Health to Socially Engaged Values

There may be some implications for broader socially engaged values connected to health and well-being. For instance, diversity and inclusion have been a part of federal legislation in Canada since the 1980s (Tamtik & Guenter, 2019); however, its more contemporary equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives appeared in 2005 (Wolbring & Lillywhite, 2021). Since then, Canadian post-secondary institutions have steadily increased their EDI involvement through changing policy priorities, action plans, research supports, and administrative positions focused on EDI (Tamtik & Guenter, 2019). Moreover, North American institutions are experiencing greater socio-economic, gender, ethnic, and disability diversity among their student populations (Clauson & McKnight, 2018; Momani & Stirk, 2017). Despite our results showing most institutions with espoused values had some form of EDI and accessibility, word counts associated with “access” and “equity” were substantially lower compared to “diversity” and “inclusion,” suggesting that value statements may be outdated as language and social responsibilities evolve. This also indicates value statements may need to be reviewed more frequently to keep up with changes in language. Furthermore, some researchers state that institutions have different meanings and interpretations of “diversity” and “equity,” which lead to different policy response (Merino, 2019; Savage et al., 2013; Tamtik & Guenter, 2019). To effectively reduce health inequities and support equitable access across student populations, EDI is central to the consideration of well-being and operationalizing the social determinants of health (Kelly et al., 2022; Tam, 2021; Wolbring & Lillywhite, 2021; Wolbring

& Nguyen, 2023). Values related to sustainability; Indigenous traditions, decolonization, reconciliation, and ways of knowing; and anti-racism were also less frequently espoused. An analysis of Canadian post-secondary institutions’ strategic plans found that most had discussed sustainability (Bieler & McKenzie, 2017), suggesting it is considered in planning but not a core espoused value. The autonomy of Canadian post-secondary institutions from their provincial and territorial governments, within-institution academic autonomy (i.e., academic freedom), changing governance, and marketization are believed to result in a decentralization of priorities (Bieler & McKenzie, 2017; Eastman et al., 2018; Fisher et al., 2016), making organizational planning a challenging sphere with increasing discourse. Regardless of whether core values espouse the above socially engaged values, advancing health within post-secondary settings involves identifying systems of oppression, inequities, exclusionary practices, and sustainability (e.g., climate change, environmental concerns; El Zoghbi & El Ansari, 2014; Kelly et al., 2022; Merino, 2019). The findings suggest institutions must clearly define articulated health-related values, review statements periodically to keep up with evolving language, and determine how best to support their existing core commitments if or when implementing newer, socially engaged values (Meyer & Evans, 2005).

Strengths and Limitations

To our knowledge, this is the first study of its kind to examine espoused values of Canada’s post-secondary institutions. The use of a mixed methods design allowed the topic to be approached from multiple perspectives, overcome methodological limitations from using one method alone, and expand on the set of results from the quantitative results to support our discourse around health (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In contrast, limited literature from Canada and internationally that explores institutional values limited our discussion. Furthermore, there are no set rules on the criteria for value statements, and thus, they vary widely in format and structure. Espoused values do not necessarily offer

comprehensive insights into the shared values and institutional actions, and these findings must be viewed as such. Nonetheless, this investigation provides a glimpse into Canadian institutions' current priorities, and our findings reveal a need to refresh post-secondary institutional values and embed health and well-being within them.

Future Directions

Future research in this area can analyze institutional values alongside mission statements and strategic visions to determine whether the statements are complementary. Exploring students' shared and aspirational values, and comparing them with an institution's espoused values could also serve as an important contribution in this area. One study investigated organizational values and its statistical associations with profitability of top-performing corporations in the United States (Jonsen et al., 2015); a similar investigation within the post-secondary context with outcome indicators such as graduation rates and student satisfaction may provide unique insights into value development between institutions that espouse health-related values and those that do not. Additionally, exploration of institutional values of other types of post-secondary institutions not included in this study, such as technical and vocational schools, junior colleges, and private institutions, are needed. Lastly, organizational strategic plans are subject to change, and thus, an update to this content analysis in a few years may also be needed to identify changing values over time.

CONCLUSION

This study applied an explanatory sequential mixed methods design to quantitatively map Canadian post-secondary institutions' value statements to determine how frequently health and well-being are mentioned, and qualitatively analyze the health-related content of the universities' values. Overall, most institutions emphasized traditional academic values, were community-oriented, and prioritized service to society. In contrast, health and well-being were

espoused less frequently by institutions. These findings are novel to the Canadian context as this is the first study to map espoused values of post-secondary institutions, and the first to focus on health and well-being. Broadly, the implications for value development and amendment suggest that values need to be descriptive with behavioural statements, revisit statements periodically, and integrate health as a core value to demonstrate top-down institutional commitment to well-being. Further exploration into whether espousing health-related values correspond with the shared and aspirational values of students is recommended.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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