This is a summary report of the observations and assessments regarding the operation of the Institute for Holistic Health Studies (IHHS) which is in its Eighteenth year at Western Connecticut State University.

In the 2017-20178 academic year, the IHHS was directed by Christel Autuori RDH RYT MA MBC-HWC , adjunct faculty member in the Health Promotion and Exercise Sciences (HPX) department. Ms. Autuori contributed approximately 350 hours for the academic year planning and coordinating IHHS activities. There is a high level of interest in the holistic and integrative approach and many students have chosen the concentration/option in Holistic and Integrative Health within the HPS major course of study. Many other students in various majors have chosen to pursue a minor in Holistic and Integrative Health.

Students

We continue to have student groups interested in Holistic and Integrative Health for the service learning component of the HPS core courses. The student group created interventions to better manage stress for the student body. They created an educational display for the annual health fair including a trifold display which identified the negative effects of stress contrasted with the beneficial effects of meditation, breathwork, and sound which therapeutically altered brain waves. The students offered a workshop creatively utilizing an obstacle course to combat stress, which involved guided imagery, mindful physical activity, and guided meditation to promote stress relief. The students organized a weight lifting event which was an exercise in mindfulness, and demonstrated how being mindful during exercise can not only better reduce stress, but improve physical form during exercise. The students also utilized social media (Instagram and Twitter) to share easy to use tips to handle daily stress, created a Facebook page and even designed and produced QR codes by which students could access recordings of mini meditations.

The Wellness Center in Berkshire Hall is open to all students, faculty and staff on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10 am -1 pm, and on Thursdays from 3 pm – 5pm, as well as by appointment. The Wellness Center is available for anyone to come in and meditate in a variety of ways including breath work, guided imagery, coloring meditation, one pointed meditation, and mindfulness meditation, chair yoga, and reiki. Those individuals who just want to sit and “take a breather” out of the stresses of life are invited to come in. During the fall semester, Dr. Housemann’s students in her Energy Healing Therapies class used the treatment rooms in the Wellness Center to practice and hone their skills giving reiki. Some of these students offered reiki in the Wellness Center during the hours it was open. We have worked with the University Publications and Design office to create signage and to upgrade the bulletin board outside the Wellness Center in order to bring more attention and foot traffic to the IHHS and the Wellness
Center. Information about the Wellness center and services offered has been added to the events page of the WCSU website, as well as to the “What’s on at Western “(WOW) messages sent to the university community.

One student shared his thoughts about the IHHS and the Wellness Center:

“I first learned about the Institute for Holistic Health studies last semester by stumbling upon the Wellness center one day on my way to the gym, and I’m glad I did. Since meeting with you that day, I’ve attended varies programs and instructions given by the IHHS including a reiki session, mudra meditations, the stressbuster event, and a mindfulness study skills workshop. These opportunities have provided me with the chance to learn and incorporate ideas and skills that have brought much benefit to my daily life, some of which include: the power of compassion, gratitude, and positive thinking, along with meditation and study skill practices.

In addition to the programs offered by the IHHS, the Wellness center has also been of much benefit, and I consider it to be one of my favorite places to visit on campus. It is a comforting place where I can relax and recharge. While at the Wellness center I’ve had the opportunity to meditate, experience aromatherapy, peruse the bookshelf, enjoy a variety of teas, and engage with others in pleasant and oftentimes meaningful conversation.

I am very grateful for this resource, and my time at WestConn has been all the better for it”

This year, there were over 150 visits to the Wellness center this academic year for people seeking meditation, guided imagery, reiki, chocolate and coloring meditations, yoga off the mat, and more. Many prospective students (and their parents) on the WCSU tours (organized through the admissions office) visited the Wellness center.

The IHHS presents annual awards to two students who demonstrate interest and leadership in the holistic healing arts and community service. Recipients of the 2018 IHHS awards are Michelle Campbell and Ryan Grenier.

Special events and offerings

The IHHS sponsored a series of special events during the Fall semester beginning with Meditatio: Multictural Perspectives which was presented in partnership with the Center for Compassion, Creativity and Innovation, and the WCSU Office of Diversity and Equity. Nine workshops were held including “The Wisdom in Walking”, “Mantras: A Meditation Tool”, “Yoga Salutation Meditation”, “Heal Yourself with Inner Music”, “Moving, Mindfulness & Meditation”, “Find your Power Animal”, “Energy Based Meditations”, and “Drumming for Meditation” There was a great response from the public, with many from the greater Danbury area in attendance.
The IHHS collaborated with the (Health Promotion Studies and Exercise Science (HPX) club to present a workshop in Forest Bathing, a practice that had its beginnings in Japan. Current research in Japan and the United States has shown that spending time in the forest has many health benefits. This workshop was held at the Westside Nature Preserve on the WCSU Westside campus.

The IHHS sponsored “Stressed is Desserts Spelled Backwards” by internationally known author, speaker, and expert in stress management, Brian Luke Seaward, PhD. Dr. Seaward also presented “Life in Balance”, a program, especially designed for the students of the School of Professional Studies an evening workshop. The IHHS partnered with the Goldstone Caregivers Center at Danbury Hospital to sponsor a third presentation by Dr. Seaward, “Filling Your Cup: Caring for the Caregiver.”

The third annual Stressbusters event presented by the IHHS took place at the end of the Fall semester, just before final exams. Guest practitioners offered reiki, reflexology, drumming, hand massages, aromatherapy, finding one's power animal, chair massages, restorative yoga, EFT (“tapping”), compassionate heart exercises, chocolate and coloring meditations, and the healing effects of therapy dogs. This program was well received and we will present it again late in the fall semester, 2018. Nearly two hundred members of the university community participated in this much needed and timely event.

The ever popular Wellness Wednesday Workshop series was presented in both Fall and Spring semesters and included: “The Integrative Approach to Health and Wellness” by Michael Finkelstein, MD, “Acupuncture for Better Health” by Laura Shahinian Kara, “Decoding Food Labels” by Debra Oria, MS, “Poetry and Journaling for Health” by Rebecca Schoenewolf, MA, LMHT, RMT, “Drumming for the Health of It” by Herman Olivera, and “Pilates for You” by Marion Cooper, PMA-CPT, “Health Myths: Busted” by Kenneth Hoffman, DACM, “The Medicinal Benefits of Tea” by Andrew Cummins, NP and Mara Davidson, NP, and “Introduction to Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture” by Sarah Poulin, DACM, LAc, Dipl OM. The Wellness Wednesday Workshops are well received and attended by many members of the public, as well as the WCSU community.

The IHHS collaborated with the Office of Student Affairs to sponsor “Pack Time: Out of the Crate” with Helaine Fischer.

The IHHS sponsored the workshop, “Mindfulness and Positive Study Skills” presented by Marcia Kendall, MA, adjunct faculty member in the English and Communications departments at WCSU.

The third annual Health, Fitness, and Wellness Fair, a collaborative effort by University Health Service, Campus Recreation, HPX, and the IHHS, was held on Tuesday, April 10, 2018. The Bill Williams gym was filled with faculty, students, staff, and members of the public. The HPX Spring Internship Fair was held within this event, and the students were proud to share and
explain their internship experiences. Many vendors and attendees expressed an interest in working more closely with the IHHS in the future, offering Wellness Wednesday workshops and/or offering longer workshops and/or programs on various topics.

**Ongoing events**

The IHHS sponsors a monthly **Mudras for Meditation** series which is held on the WCSU Midtown campus the second Tuesday of the month and is presented by Jesse Rovero. This series will continue through December, 2018. Jesse is a good friend to the Institute and publicizes Wellness Wednesday workshops and other IHHS events. Attendance at the meditation events averages ten to twelve people each month and continues to grow.

**Collaborations, Community Connections**

The IHHS is a member of the Wellness at Western Committee on campus. This committee consists of the Dean of Student Affairs, and representatives from the Counselling Center, the Womens’ Center, Choices, University Health Services, and Campus Recreation, and meets twice a month. Wellness at Western publicizes health and wellness events on campus and seeks to work together to promote a healthy lifestyle in the campus community.

Ms. Autuori presented “Meditation in a Moment” to the students in the Western Connection program here on the WCSU campus.

In November Ms. Autuori was invited to speak at the quarterly medical staff meeting at the Danbury Hospital and presented “Introducing the Institute for Holistic Health Studies”

**Publicity and Outreach to the Greater Danbury Community**

The Institute for Holistic Health Studies page of the WCSU website has been revised, and includes the mechanism to receive donations via the webpage. The IHHS has a Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/IHHSatWCSU](http://www.facebook.com/IHHSatWCSU)) which is linked to the WCSU Facebook page. We continue to with the University Relations department to better publicize the IHHS programs and events. Members of the public as well as the university community are drawn to our programs and events as a result of the news and information found online.

The IHHS has a monthly presence in the Fairfield county edition of the Natural Awakenings magazine, publicizing IHHS offerings and programs, including lectures, special events, the Wellness Wednesday workshop series, and the annual Health Fitness and Wellness Fair. Readers of Natural Awakenings include physicians, healthcare professionals and members of the public interested in complementary healing modalities and the holistic and integrative approach. We
receive inquires weekly from practitioners and members of the public interested in the IHHS and its offerings.

In December, 2017, Ms. Autuori was interviewed by Phil Hall, a reporter from the Fairfield County Business Journal, who wanted to write a feature article about the IHHS at WCSU. This article appeared in the January, 2018 issue of the Fairfield County Business Journal. Read it following the link below:

https://westfaironline.com/97484/holistic-health-coach-promotes-the-big-picture-on-danbury-campus/

This article was seen by Michele Blanchard, host of the public access Comcast cable tv show, “30 Minutes”, Ms. Blanchard interviewed Ms. Autuori about the field of holistic and integrative health and the IHHS. The show can be viewed online using the following link:

https://www.publicaccesssstudios.com/30-mins episode 31

The IHHS would like to thank the offices and staff of WCSU: University Relations, University Events, University IT, University Media Services, University Publications & Design, and all who assisted and contributed to the success of the programs offered by the IHHS.

Donations to the IHHS

This year the IHHS received cash donations of $1500. from Embody the Sacred, Lotus Gardens Yoga School, Filosa, Wellness Wednesday Workshop and the Mudra Meditation series We received the donation of a diffuser and two bottle of essential oils (Rosemary and Peppermint) a from Wayne Leiss LMT, and the donation of a book. The Tapping Solution, from Marian Edvardsen..

Leadership, Management, Operations

Christel Autuori  RDH  RYT  MA NBC-HWC, Certified Integrative Health Coach and consultant, Certified Holistic Stress Management Instructor, Certified AcuYoga Instructor, Certified Reiki Master, and HPX adjunct faculty member is responsible for the management and day to day operations of the IHHS, for which she receives two teaching credit hours per semester.

Ms. Autuori, in addition to organizing educational programs and events (lectures, workshops, special events) sponsored by the IHHS, was present and available in the Wellness Center an average of 10 hours per week (hours well in excess of those corresponding to two teaching credits per semester) to provide services and education about the holistic and integrative approach to health and wellness. Some visit the Wellness Center for meditation, guided imagery, or reiki, others visit out of curiosity, and still others seek information about the holistic and integrative perspective to health, Ms. Autuori provides information and resources about this multidimensional nature of health and wellness and the opportunity to study this
approach at WCSU Students may choose the holistic and integrative health option within the health promotion studies major, and students pursuing a major in other disciplines may minor in holistic and integrative health studies. Ms. Autuori provides resources and education about careers in acupuncture, chiropractic, naturopathy, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Ayurveda, and other practices with a holistic and integrative approach to health and healing. Many students are interested in careers with the holistic and integrative approach.

The advisory board for the Institute for Holistic Health Studies met once in the fall semester and will meet again at the end of the Spring semester. The IHHS advisory board meets at least once each semester. The advisory board is in favor of bringing nationally known speakers to campus, and the IHHS is working to bring Roland Comtois, noted author and speaker, to campus in November, 2018.

In summary, the Institute for Holistic Health Studies at Western Connecticut State University continues to grow and expand rapidly. Publicizing the Institute and its programs on and off campus, networking, building and nurturing relationships with local practitioners, seeking donations and sponsorships, and providing space, resources, education and supervision for students interested in the holistic and integrative approach to health and wellness requires many more hours than is consistent with the time and compensation commensurate with two teaching credits per semester.

As a result of our efforts to better publicize our events, local practitioners and the public have heard about the Institute and its programs on campus, and we receive inquiries from interested individuals and organizations seeking additional information and asking how they can become involved. Ms. Autuori spends several hours each week networking and speaking with holistic health practitioners in the area. The diverse and well-rounded programs offered in the Wellness Wednesday workshops are the result of the time spent interviewing, securing, and promoting these speakers and their programs both on campus and in the greater Danbury community. Spending time to answer questions, provide information, interview potential speakers, secure space and promote programs, as well as seek donations and sponsorships is time consuming but critical for the Institute to grow, expand, and provide programs and resources for the university and greater Danbury community. Strong relationships with local practitioners and wellness centers are to be developed and nurtured, not only for the purposes of presenting programs and workshops, but to provide experiential work skills and become internship sites for the HPX students who have chosen the Holistic and Integrative Health curriculum option.

The interest in the holistic and integrative approach to health and wellness has increased among students and the public, and the demand for such programs is growing. The IHHS enjoys this unique position to provide resources, programs, workshops, and lectures in this field. In order to encourage, sustain, and advance this expanding interest and growth, additional time and resources must be allocated to the IHHS.

The Institute for Holistic Health Studies remains committed to not only the HPX students, but to the entire WCSU university community, and strives to provide programs and resources for the
university community, the greater Danbury community, and for the community of healthcare professionals in the area..

Respectfully submitted,

Christel Autuori

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May, 2018