



UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN CASE STUDY: MHEALTHY CREATING A CULTURE OF HEALTH



Purpose of Project

The Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO), in collaboration with workplace wellness experts, has selected companies from a variety of industries and business types to participate in a culture of health case-study project. These case studies focus on employers that have developed and fostered a healthy culture in their workforce—one that is intentionally designed with elements and indicators that support employee health and well-being. The case studies were based on HERO's **definition and elements** of a culture of health.

Company Overview and Health and Well-Being Program Background

The University of Michigan (U-M) is composed of about 46,000 benefit-eligible employees across three campuses, including its health system. Formally launched in 2009, MHealthy is the comprehensive health and well-being program for U-M employees and their family members. It includes wellness and risk reduction programs, employee assistance counseling services, occupational health clinical services, and healthy culture and environment efforts. Programs address physical activity, nutrition, weight management, alcohol management, tobacco cessation, back care, cancer prevention, ergonomics, mental and emotional health, and stress management. A variety of approaches are used (including in person, online and telephonic) and include both population-wide efforts as well as more targeted interventions to high-risk groups.

One of MHealthy's foundations is its mission statement, "support members of the U-M community to lead healthy and fulfilling lives and foster positive work cultures and environments that contribute to U-M being a great public university." To achieve this, MHealthy emphasizes peer support through a wellness champion network, comprehensive communication strategies and employee involvement, and well-developed organizational and executive leadership support.

These efforts have led to national recognition and awards, including the 2017 Governor's Healthy Workplace Award; 2014, 2015, and 2016 Healthiest 100 Workplaces in America Award; the 2014 Edington Next Practice Award; the 2014 WELCOA Well Workplace Gold Award; and honorable mention for the 2012 C. Everett Koop National Health Award. U-M has also been recognized for nine consecutive years as a top University Workplace by the Chronicle of Higher Education.

Culture of Health Elements



Peer Support

U-M has a strong MHealthy Champion Network that currently includes more than 585 faculty and staff members who volunteer their time to encourage healthy behaviors among their co-workers. They help spread the word about MHealthy programs and services, plan worksite activities like healthy potlucks and lunch time walking groups, and work with supervisors to help create a positive, energized work environment. MHealthy Champions have become a critical part in building and sustaining a culture of health at U-M and creating a sense of community one unit at a time.

When an employee applies to become a champion, MHealthy first seeks backing from supervisors to gain leadership support. Then, during the champion's two-year term, MHealthy uses a "triad" approach, in which MHealthy staff, the unit's champion, and the unit's supervisor work together to implement tailored programs to achieve the unit's health goals.

Once becoming a champion, the employee has access to a number of resources to learn how to communicate, engage, and energize their colleagues and influence healthy behaviors. Using lessons learned from the Social-ecological and Influencer models, which emphasize the importance that multiple factors play in influencing health behaviors (e.g., individual, social, organizational, environmental, policy, and community, factors), MHealthy holds regular meetings

and events (either in person or via webinar) where champions can learn best practices and talk with other champions. Throughout their appointment, champions also work directly with an MHealthy staff member on developing new ways to engage and motivate their work areas.

During their term, champions are asked to complete four tasks, known by the acronym **ACES** – **A**nnounce, **C**omplete, **E**xecute, **S**hare – to engage, connect, and build support with their colleagues:

- **Announce:** After becoming a champion, the employee announces their new role within their unit and attends an on-boarding retreat with MHealthy staff and other champions.
- **Complete:** After the retreat, the champion, the supervisor, the department's wellness committee (if one has been created), and an MHealthy Wellness Coordinator complete a checklist that informs the development of a health promotion plan for their department.
- **Execute:** Champions and their departments select and execute an action from their health promotion plan. Examples include hosting healthy potlucks, carrying out "random acts of kindness," holding walking meetings, offering lunchtime exercise classes, hosting "Take 10" breathing and mindfulness breaks, or creating health and well-being "vision boards."
- **Share:** Finally, champions share department success stories via a monthly university newsletter, the online champion portal, and social media, allowing other departments to see what's working well across work settings.

Champions who complete the ACES program can apply for wellness grants to use within their departments. The goal of these grants is to reward the amazing work that champions do and continue building the culture of health within each unit. Grants

also give champions an opportunity to bring fun, engaging, healthy activities to their work units that might otherwise be cost prohibitive. Grant funds have been used to purchase department water coolers, resources to create relaxation areas in their buildings (“Zen Dens”), raised vegetable gardens, and small refrigerators to promote packing healthy lunches. Between 2014 and 2016, U-M awarded 81 wellness grants.

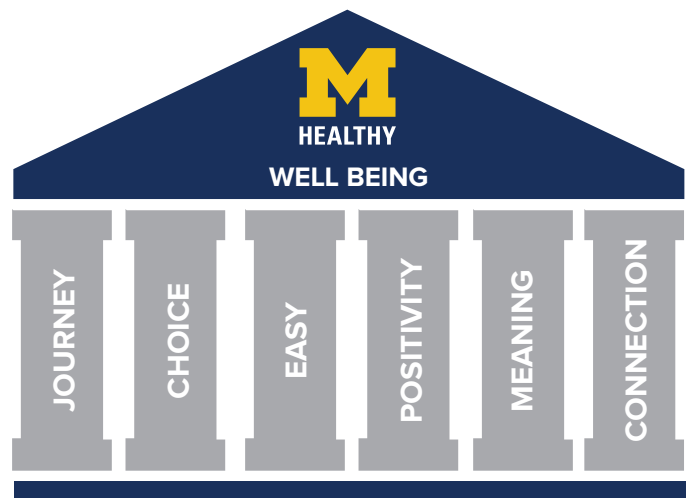


Communication Strategies and Employee Involvement

Along with communicating through wellness champions, MHealthy works with its communication partners throughout the organization to reach employees in different locations and jobs. As part of the value placed on achieving broad and ongoing engagement of U-M employees in MHealthy goals, programs, and services, U-M has developed a comprehensive communications strategy, using a wide variety of channels and methods, including email, articles in employee publications and newsletters, video, social media, print materials, digital signage, presentations, and more.

Communication focuses on increasing participation in programs and activities and promoting a culture that values employee health and well-being. Over the years, communication has consistently promoted the university’s commitment to employee health and well-being and led to high participation – more than 20,000 annual participants – in key programs.

For its marketing materials, MHealthy regularly features spokespersons from across the University, personal testimonials, authentic photography, and messaging that aligns with six pillars for communicating about well-being: journey, choice, easy, positivity, meaning, and connection. These evidence-based communication pillars were developed when university faculty were tapped to advise on incentives and engagement strategies.



SIX COMMUNICATION PILLARS

- 1. Journey: The road to well-being is on-going**
- 2. Choice: Give people autonomy to seek what fits them best**
- 3. Easy: Emphasize that everyone can do something, no matter how small**
- 4. Positivity: Activities or decisions provide immediate rewards**
- 5. Meaning: Motivate people to pursue meaningful goals**
- 6. Connection: Foster relationships and connections to others**

Employee Involvement and Empowerment

U-M sustains its culture of health and well-being by using an inclusive approach, taking into account the voices of leadership, various stakeholders, and employees throughout the organization. To be successful in reaching such a large employee population, U-M relies on staff engagement, advice, and feedback through numerous committees, including the MHealthy Advisory Committee, a university representative advisory council of health

experts, partners and key stakeholders. In addition, MHealthy regularly seeks guidance from “Voices of the Staff.” Voices is comprised of approximately 200 staff members who represent a microcosm of the university’s staff population. Employees chosen to participate in Voices are divided into eight teams that meet monthly to share concerns and interests of staff in areas of health and well-being, work/life integration, diversity, equity and inclusion, climate, parking and transportation, etc. Voices members provide ideas and valuable feedback on health and well-being topics.



“As a result of this workshop I plan to make some changes to the ways I encourage particular staff to manage their stress, especially around email. I also plan to be more aware of my own healthy (or unhealthy) habits and strive to model health and work/life balance.”

- 2016 Leadership Workshop participant

MHealthy also regularly seeks opinions and feedback from employees through surveys, focus groups, and social media conversations. Employee ideas have been valuable in structuring employee incentives to participate in health and well-being activities, improving programs, strengthening communications, and reviewing new initiatives such as the university’s philosophy of well-being.

Organizational and Executive Leadership

As a presidential initiative, MHealthy has enjoyed strong executive leadership support since its

beginning. An integrated organizational structure was established under the vice president of Human Resources in 2007, with a sustainable funding model. The business case for employee health and well-being has been integrated into leadership development programs throughout the university, and the leader’s role in supporting employee health and well-being has been incorporated into leadership expectations and employee engagement surveys. In August 2016, U-M began offering a four-hour workshop for supervisors titled, “Leaders Creating a Culture at its Best.” These workshops provide supervisors with the information and tools they need to create workplace cultures where health and wellbeing are a foundation from which success is driven. One of the resources used in this supervisor training is Dr. Judd Allen’s “5 Dimensions of a Healthy Workplace Culture”, which include: shared values, norms, policies and practices, peer support and climate. More about Judd Allen’s work on building healthy cultures can be found in his book “Wellness Leadership”.

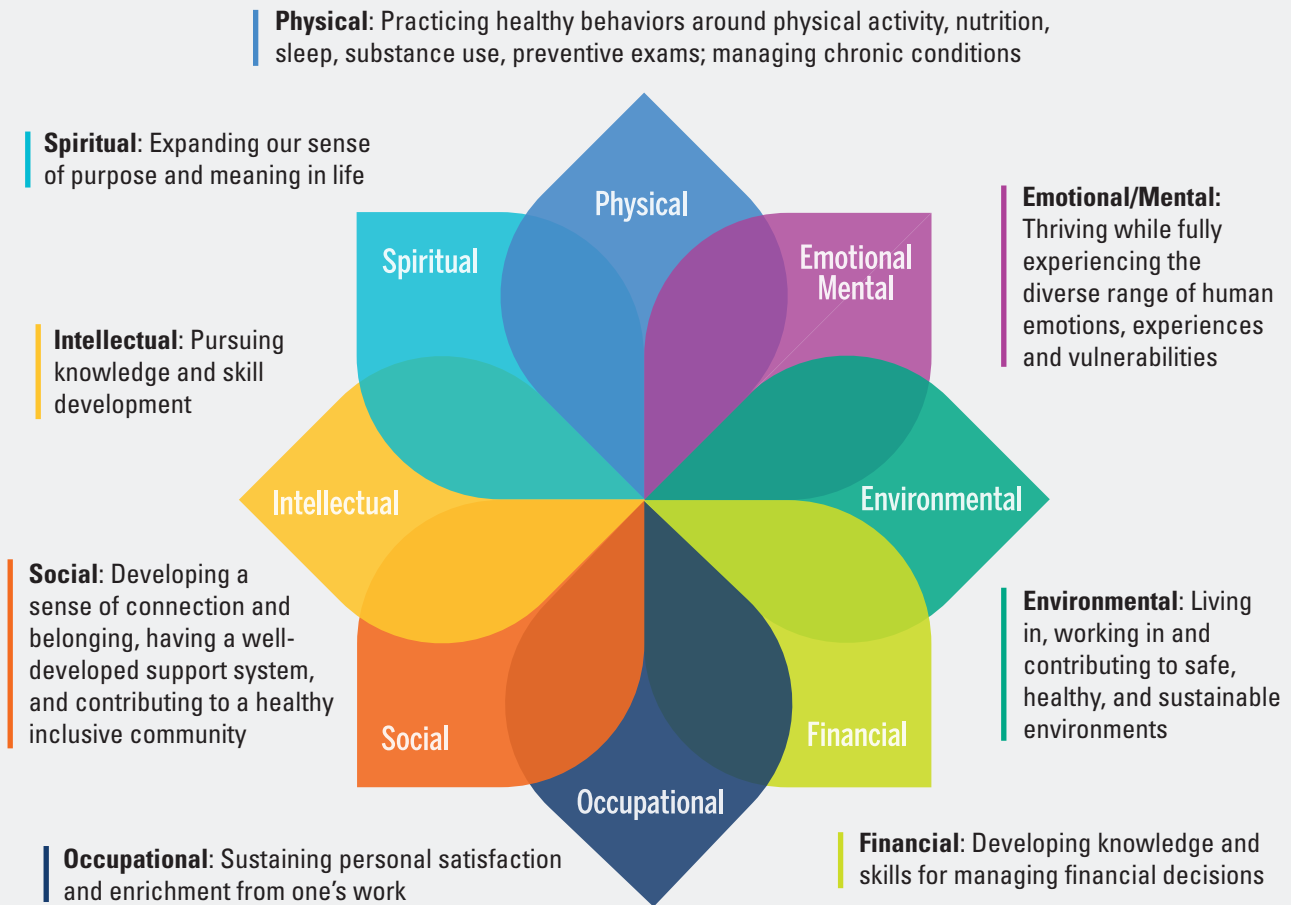
As a result of attending the “Leaders Creating a Culture at its Best” workshop, supervisors will:

- Understand the importance of their role and how they contribute to the university’s success in becoming a community of health where people thrive.
- Go beyond nutrition and physical activity to better understand all of the dimensions of well-being and the resources available to them.
- Understand the structural and personal barriers that individuals and teams often face when creating healthy work environments.
- Determine actions that support health and wellbeing in the workplace.
- Set a health and well-being goal and identify milestones.

U-M PHILOSOPHY OF WELL-BEING

U-M's commitment to the well-being of its community was expressed in the following visual in 2016. Through a collaboration between MHealthy and Student Life, eight key dimensions of personal well-being were identified, embracing the concept that well-being encompasses the whole person,

with many factors affecting the quality of life and playing a part in achieving balance, purpose, and vitality in one's career and at home. Resources to support each of this philosophy's dimensions are found at mhealthy.umich.edu/wellbeing.



In just a few months, more than 500 supervisors have been trained in this interactive workshop, with more workshops scheduled and waitlists through the next year. One of U-M's largest unions has also requested this training.

A large component of the "Leaders Creating a Culture at its Best" workshop is "The U-M Philosophy of Well-being." This philosophy is an all-encompassing view of health and well-being, which includes mental and emotional, environmental, occupational, social, intellectual, spiritual, and physical dimensions. The philosophy, developed in partnership with other U-M

departments, focuses on both employee and student health and well-being, and reveals that any one of these dimensions can affect one's success with the other dimensions.

As a result of this workshop, leaders are having honest conversations with their teams about workplace culture and ways they can make improvements. Leaders are encouraged to discuss MHealthy initiatives in annual work plans, to model healthy behaviors, and remind colleagues of the importance of taking care of their well-being.

Supervisors can help build a supportive culture by removing barriers to employee participation in healthy activities. Examples of employees who typically have significant barriers include low-wage earners who might have a financial hardship or transportation issues, and nurses and other health care providers who have difficulty taking time for their own needs due to the demands of their jobs. To address such barriers, U-M has worked with facilities managers to create designated spaces in buildings where employees can go to relax or exercise. Other strategies to reduce barriers include subsidizing vendor costs for programming (e.g., Weight Watchers or exercise classes), providing healthy snack baskets to units, and providing brief programs as part of the work day such as “MHealthy Vacations” and “MHealthy Core Conditioning.” “MHealthy Vacations” encourage employees to support each other in taking five minutes away from their work for personal needs and “MHealthy Core Conditioning” provides nurses with quick exercises they can do in their units.

As demonstrated in the “triad” approach used in the MHealthy Champion program and the supervisor training workshops, leadership development at U-M is key to the overall success of the MHealthy program.

Summary and Results

The University of Michigan’s MHealthy program is successful in creating and promoting a system-wide community of health and well-being through its MHealthy Champion Network, communication strategies, supervisory training workshops, and focus on leadership development. The success of MHealthy’s efforts has been recognized through the various awards it has won as well as in the program evaluation feedback it receives every year. As seen in results from the 2016 Culture of Health Survey, employees can attest to the success of MHealthy’s program initiatives. When asked about perceived supervisory support in areas of workplace health and well-being, about two-

thirds of employees agreed or strongly agreed. When asked if U-M health and well-being initiatives contribute to it being a great place to work, again nearly two-thirds of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. With emphasis and value placed on employee involvement and empowerment, peer support, and organizational leadership, U-M is achieving their mission to create a culture where healthy living is truly welcomed and supported.



Contributors to this Case Study

This case study is a product of the HERO Culture of Health (CoH) Study Committee and its Values of Culture Work Group. The CoH Study Committee was created to establish a widely accepted definition of a healthy culture to build consensus and understanding of its value when supporting the health and well-being of a population. Case study interviews and development of this report was led by HERO staff and members of the CoH Study Committee. HERO would like to extend a special thank you to the Centers for Disease Control for additional support during the editing process.

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The Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO) is a national non-profit dedicated to identifying and sharing best practices in the field of

workplace health and wellbeing that improves the health and well-being of workers, their spouses, dependents and retirees. HERO was established over 20 years ago and is a member driven organization where learning opportunities and research are led by committees. HERO's work focuses on sharing best practices, advocating for improvements in the field, and providing practical solutions for employers who share HERO's commitment to health and well-being for employees, families and communities.