



Lobo Well-Being INSIGHT REPORT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of New Mexico’s commitment to advancing student well-being is deeply rooted in both the UNM 2040 Strategic Plan and the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) 2025–2030 Strategic Plan. These institutional priorities recognize that student success extends beyond academic achievement to domains which also influence academic success. Students require holistic support that addresses the emotional, physical, social, spiritual, financial, environmental, intellectual, and occupational dimensions of wellness. The Well-Being Insight Report brings together two major pathways for understanding student needs: an institution-wide inventory of programs and services aligned with SAMHSA’s Eight Dimensions of Wellness, and quantitative findings from the ACHA Well-Being Assessment administered to more than 4,700 UNM students. Together, these data sources offer the most comprehensive view to date of the strengths, gaps, and opportunities within UNM’s well-being ecosystem.

Interviews with 37 institutional entities including academic colleges, Student Affairs units, and partner organizations revealed a wide range of existing programs that contribute directly to student well-being. The inventory highlighted substantial strengths, such as SHAC’s leadership in emotional and physical wellness, strong career readiness infrastructure, culturally grounded programming, vibrant student organizations, and inclusive campus spaces. However, partners also identified recurring challenges, including uneven access to services, marketing gaps that inhibit student awareness, capacity constraints across departments, and difficulties sustaining preventative or proactive programming. For each dimension of wellness, the report outlines strengths, opportunities, and targeted recommendations to strengthen institutional coordination and expand meaningful support.

The ACHA Well-Being Assessment provided a parallel, student-centered view of campus needs. UNM students report overall well-being levels similar to national peers, yet important disparities emerged across student groups and campuses. Main campus students show lower belonging and activity engagement compared to branch students. Financial insecurity remains a strong predictor of students considering leaving UNM. Many students with mental health conditions have difficulty affording care or do not know where to find it. Historically marginalized populations, including LGBTQIA+ students, students with disabilities, and gender-diverse students reported consistently lower scores across many well-being dimensions. In contrast, some subpopulations, such as parenting students, report greater purpose and optimism, demonstrating potential protective factors. These findings reinforce the need for targeted, identity-informed interventions and consistent assessment efforts.

Basic needs insecurity remains a critical well-being driver at UNM. Food insecurity, housing instability, and financial strain continue to shape student experiences and influence retention. UNM is engaged in robust efforts through the Basic Needs Consortium, the Hope Impact Partnership, campus food security initiatives, emergency aid programs, SNAP navigation, and partnerships with housing providers. These efforts are promising but require expanded coordination, staffing, and awareness to reach full potential.

In conclusion, the insights in this report point toward a clear institutional priority: UNM must continue strengthening the infrastructure, assessment, marketing, and collaborative structures necessary to support the whole student. The report concludes with strategic recommendations that call for increased capacity to amplify well-being initiatives, expanded cross-unit collaboration, continued data collection, and consideration of long-term organizational structures to support campus-wide well-being. These recommendations present a roadmap for elevating well-being as a core component of student success and institutional effectiveness.



Big Picture

INTRODUCTION

Following the adoption of the University of New Mexico 2040 Strategic Plan, five broad goals were defined for the University. The University charged staff with devoting resources and energy to contribute to achievement of each these goals. In Student Affairs, the division chose to think comprehensively about how the work in the division contributed to the 2040 strategic plan as a whole. The result was a Division of Student Affairs (DSA) Strategic Plan, that firmly fits within the broader goals of the University. Well-being is a central tenant engrained in both the 2040 Strategic plan and the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) Strategic plan. This Well-Being Insight Report identifies several observations to improve well-being on campus and ties to the University and the Division of Student Affairs Strategic Goals.

How Well-Being Supports the DSA 2025-2030 Strategic Plan

The UNM DSA engaged in a collaborative process to identify strategic priorities which will be used to shape and structure the work and impact of the next five years. The DSA identified a goal to establish a collaborative, comprehensive, and accessible health and well-being network that attends to the holistic needs of UNM's diverse students. This Well-Being Insight Report is a direct continuation of the DSA's strategic initiatives directed towards health and well-being. The DSA's strategic recommendations for health and well-being are:

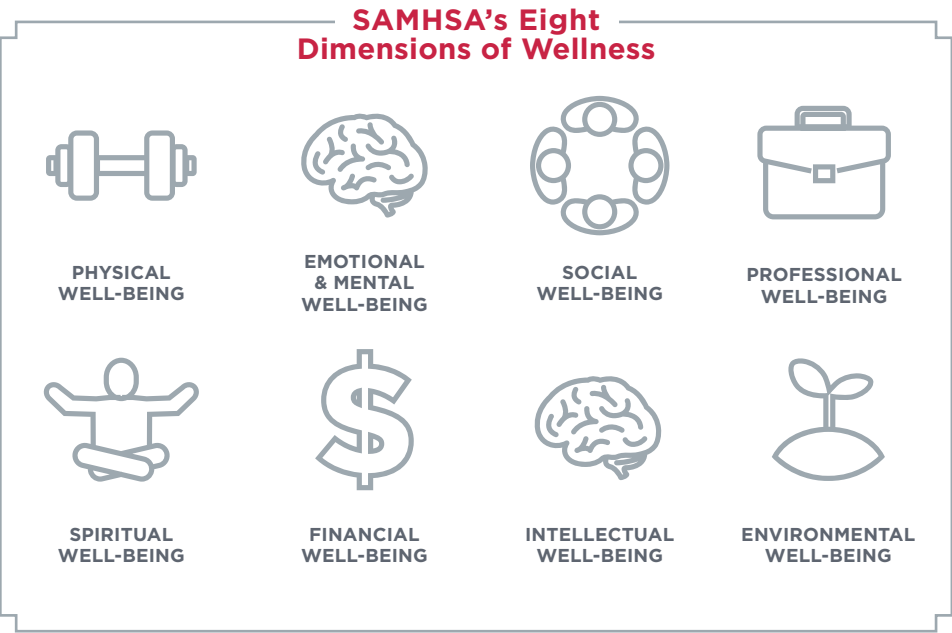
- 2.1 Integrate the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration's (SAMHSA) Eight Dimensions of Wellness as a core DSA philosophy in targeted student programming, events, and services, staff onboarding, and professional development opportunities. In connection to this strategic goal, the unit has leveraged the eight dimensions to help inventory programs and services, and identify strengths, opportunities, and recommendations for our future work. This is described in detail in this Well-Being Insight Report.
- 2.2 Develop a comprehensive plan to continuously assess well-being initiatives across DSA using both formative and summative measures. In connection to this strategic goal, the unit has participated in an IRB-approved institutional assessment of well-being and an inventory of well-being services at UNM.
- 2.3 Increase student awareness and use of well-being services through partnership mapping and enhanced collaboration among DSA units. In connection to this strategic goal, lobowellbeing.unm.edu was developed and the inventory was completed. Further, these efforts and this plan led to recommendations to advance the marketing of well-being work in and outside the division.
- 2.4 Amplify basic needs initiatives to further address food and housing insecurities via external partnership opportunities and multi-year resource planning with key collaborators. In connection to this strategic goal, the basic needs section below provides recommendations for enhanced marketing of well-being work in and outside the division.
- 2.5 Review, revise, and administer violence prevention and advocacy trainings, programs, and services that prioritize consent, survivor agency, and collective safety. In connection to this strategic goal, environmental wellness opportunities are presented, and considerations for campus safety are included.

The sections below address how the Well-Being Insight Report can support the DSA in achieving each goal within the strategic priorities above for health and well-being.

BACKGROUND OF SAMHSA'S EIGHT DIMENSIONS: WHAT ARE THEY?

As UNM began looking for a strategy to guide efforts to address student well-being, SAMHSA's Eight Dimensions of Wellness were adopted to help successfully frame wellness for campus constituents. Wellness and well-being can be difficult to describe, and, as a result, adopting this widely used model provides a framework for meeting the multifaceted demands of students and their well-being. This model is also easy to understand and lends itself to organizing an institutional approach for service evaluation.

Wellness has a personal meaning for everyone, so it can be defined in many ways. SAMHSA's Eight Dimensions of Wellness provide a framework to examine the University, student needs, and programmatic offerings along the following dimensions: emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, and spiritual.



In general, wellness refers to overall well-being. When placing a student at the center of this model, the eight dimensions can overlap and influence one another. For example, if a student is experiencing challenges paying their tuition or their housing costs in the middle of the semester, their financial wellness can be affected. Further, when that student experiences financial difficulty, it may also affect their emotional wellness and contribute to stress, anxiety, or other mental strain. Often a student's emotional health challenges may lead to physical symptoms which weaken their immune system or lead to other challenges, and the cascade of effects can continue.

From one central difficulty that a student may experience, other dimensions of their overall well-being can be affected, and the effect can be significant and create a spiral of negative consequences. Conversely, if we can address each dimension of wellness through a programmatic or service lens to support the student, we can reduce the likelihood of the spiral and ensure that there are adequate services and programs available to address the comprehensive picture of wellness.

In summary, SAMHSA's Eight Dimensions of Wellness provides a comprehensive way to look at services offered on campus in a digestible format that encourages expanded thinking around the questions "What is wellness?" and "What do student wellness needs look like at UNM?" From this, there is opportunity to cultivate a culture which understands the complexity of student well-being, and new programs, initiatives, and services can be generated to support the student body.





The Two Pathways to Information Discovery

DATA COLLECTION TO SUPPORT THE WELL-BEING INSIGHT REPORT

To inform this Well-Being Insight Report, the Associate Dean and several staff collaborators from the University utilized different strategies to collect perspectives and data.

Two primary methods, qualitative and quantitative data collection, were used. The qualitative method focused on collection of data from staff, faculty, and administrators of various departments through interviews and a well-being inventory. This collection method allowed for program-level data and an evaluation of available offerings at UNM. The quantitative method was a survey disseminated to college students at UNM central and branch campuses (see ACHA Well-being Assessment section below).



Pathway of Interviews for Inventory of Services

UNM WELL-BEING SERVICES INVENTORY OF DEPARTMENTS, COLLEGES, AND OFFICES

Service Inventory Methodology and Findings along the Eight Dimensions of Wellness

The primary avenue for collecting feedback from UNM programs was via informal qualitative interviews. In these interviews using SAMHSA's Eight Dimensions as a guide, the UNM Associate Dean of Student Well-being defined each dimension of wellness and asked participants to recall or name related programs, initiatives, and services from their respective area. This provided a robust collection of the variety of wellness-oriented offerings that are available to students at UNM. A detailed explanation the various themes and findings from those interviews is shared below.

Participation from every academic college, every Student Affairs department, and some selective organizations with frequent touchpoints with students were solicited to provide responses. In all, 37 interviews were conducted, which provided a broad set of data describing trends about UNM wellness initiatives, programs, and services.

Resources gathered in this process were organized and shared publicly on the website lobowellbeing.unm.edu.

Below are UNM programming Strengths, Opportunities, and Recommendations for each of the eight dimensions based on findings from these 37 interviews.



Emotional Wellness

Strengths, Opportunities, and Recommendations

Emotional Wellness Strengths:

Student Health and Counseling (SHAC): SHAC is a clear leader in our efforts to improve the emotional wellness of our students. When UNM units look to deliver programming for emotional and mental health, SHAC is almost always considered a resource to present, collaborate, or refer. The University can apply their expertise even further.

Access to Connection: Implementation of a new counseling intake model, the One-at-a-time (OAAT) within the Stepped Care 2.0 Model at SHAC, has helped improve the mental health of students by decreasing wait times for appointments with counseling providers. Further, adoption of technologies like TimelyCARE, Student Hub, and CARE have helped strengthen referrals for services. Finally, our responsiveness to the needs of unique populations via resource centers makes their presence a strength as well. Students can access on-demand mental health professionals and crisis intervention services for immediate support. Peer mentoring programs and embedded counselors in community spaces enhance access and approachability for connection to services.

Diverse Offerings: UNM has multiple clear leaders in providing emotional wellness services, but overall, there are diverse offerings across the university that transcend traditional mental health resources. Numerous workshops address a broad spectrum of emotional wellness topics (stress and anxiety, boundaries, surviving mid-terms, yoga) and ensure that students' varying needs are met. Impromptu (pop-up) programming is used as a response to environmental stressors and difficult transitional periods like midterms and finals including support animals, therapy dogs, and pop-up craft programs.

Culturally Responsive Programming: Existing culturally responsive programming focuses on the unique needs of key demographic populations on campus through spaces like the ethnic resource centers and special mentorship programs.

Integrated Approaches: Professionals reported an integration of emotional wellness with other areas such as career development, academic coaching, and social connection. The impression is that emotional wellness is thoroughly embedded in multiple functions of the university. In academia, some programs embed emotional wellness content into curriculum (self-care, emotional intelligence). In particular, first-year-experience courses or seminars make efforts to acknowledge emotional wellness in their curriculum.

Collaboration: Collaboration is an essential strength in our emotional wellness programming. Some of the most noteworthy emotional wellness support programs from campus involve multiple key constituents in the delivery, implementation, and promotion of emotional wellness services. To further build and incentivize this theme of collaboration, DSA launched an initiative to increase collaboration on wellness programming among campus partners. Although it is a newer initiative, the concept of Lobo Well-Being is a strength that will continue to reinforce the importance of continuing collaboration around wellness programs and services.

Emotional Wellness Opportunities:

Substance Misuse and Prevention of Behavioral Addictions: Substance misuse can be a common and harmful response to unmet emotional wellness needs. There are limited targeted interventions available for students unless they are seeking clinical assistance for a substance misuse issue. The Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention of College Students (BASICS) and Alcohol Skills Training Program (ASTP) are offered through UNM Center on Alcohol, Substance Use And Addictions (CASAA) and are evidence-based. Most of our current interventions, marketing, and social norms tools are



Emotional Wellness

targeted toward alcohol or tobacco. There are few options to address cannabis and other drugs. The Collegiate Recovery Center (CRC) was reestablished after interviews for this project were complete and may have a critical role in the ongoing support and community for students struggling with substance misuse and emotional wellness needs that are co-occurring. UNM has an opportunity to lead the nation in gambling prevention work after securing a gift from the Responsible Online Gaming Association (ROGA) to determine prevalence and then address behavioral addictions related to gambling.

Inconsistent Integration across Campus Units: When staff see an emotional wellness need for their student population, they are diligent about addressing the need via a presentation or an initiative. It is unclear if units can easily sustain these efforts, which causes some lack of depth and inconsistency in their use. Further, basic triage and referral systems may leave gaps in support if follow-ups are insufficient.

Limited Scope for Certain Populations: While mentorship programs target specific groups, broader inclusivity across more demographic groups may be needed. For example, meeting the unique needs of international students in a culturally responsive way is hard to scale and difficult to create. The same is true for marginalized identities that may have culturally unique needs when it comes to emotional wellness.

Marketing and Visibility: Despite considerable effort in promoting these services, a need for increased marketing and awareness is a significant and recurring theme that emerged for this dimension and most others.

Stigma: Although reduced, there is still stigma associated with getting treatment and support for emotional wellness. Of all the generations that came prior, Gen Z is perhaps the most open generation when it comes to discussing mental health, but this population still experiences stigma around receiving emotional wellness treatment.

Potential Over-Reliance on Reactive Measures: With some exceptions, certain areas like SHAC, for example, proactively create programming to directly address the emotional wellness needs of our students, but more often reactionary programming comes from the University based on a presented issue. Treatment and crisis support are abundant but over-reliance on them is not the solution. A more preventative and holistic environmental approach is called for and should be a central component of evolving wellbeing initiatives.. Collected data will inform our programming as an alternative to reactionary programming decisions moving forward.

Capacity Concerns: The call for more programming, more therapy, and more interventions puts a strain on staff and professionals who are experts or specialize in these services.



Emotional Wellness Recommendations:

- Expand preventative programming by increasing workshops and training in emotional regulation, mindfulness, and resilience specifically tailored to first-year students and vulnerable populations.
- Build faculty and staff capacity via the Question Persuade Refer (QPR) method. If this is not possible, more peer support programs with training and incentives could be initiated to ensure sustainability and effectiveness. Further, better training among faculty and staff to refer students with emotional wellness needs.
- Increase overall marketing and promotion of emotional wellness programming, highlighting less well-known initiatives and emphasizing those offerings on lobowellbeing.unm.edu.
- Strengthen cultural capacity to include more diverse cultural programs and ensure emotional wellness programming is culturally resonant.
- Consider alternate technology that might allow expansion of offerings.
- Promote CARE referrals or the Customer Relationship Management platform to connect students to resources.

Environmental Wellness

Strengths, Opportunities, and Recommendations

Environmental Wellness Strengths:

Third Places: Most people have a place where they live and a second place where they work, and students also come to school. UNM hosts many commuter students and provides places to relax, study, or spend time between classes and is a key provider of “third places” for students. Facilities play a critical role in providing a third place, and UNM can openly encourage and invite students to use the campus to that end. Many departments described their versatile spaces that meet the diverse needs of students for things like studying, relaxation, eating, and decompressing.

Accessible and Inclusive Spaces: UNM culture has embraced an understanding that celebrates and recognizes the diverse needs of students, including gender-neutral restrooms, ADA-compliant open spaces and renovations (Zimmerman plaza and the education courtyard were specifically noted), and inclusive art and symbols. These representations send a message that the campus is working toward the creation of environments that feel welcoming and accessible to all. Lactation stations, family rooms, and accommodations for student parents showcase attention to diverse student needs. Further, adaptable sports and accessible recreational opportunities encourage inclusive participation. There is still more room for growth in this area despite considerable gains over time.

Safety-Aware and Safety-Considerate Modifications: Across the University numerous public-facing efforts have been made to consider environmental design like prominent lighting, proxy access to buildings, campus escorts, police, and security presence to enhance students sense of security and safety.

Student-Centered Improvements: Generally, the University is responsive to the feedback of students, faculty, and staff when it comes to aesthetic updates and new, ecologically safe buildings. Overall, this reflects a commitment to student satisfaction.

Office of Sustainability: The Office of Sustainability added new staff and has launched various initiatives to make sustainability a highly visible effort at UNM. A strategic plan for sustainability has been completed and tells the story about how sustainability will be moved forward at UNM.

Environmental Wellness Opportunities:

Building Nomenclature: Having student identities reflected in the overall look and feel of the institution speaks directly to students’ sense of belonging in their environment. The University continues to have buildings with nomenclature that memorializes controversial historical figures. Consideration of how symbols, names, and imagery around the University affect students is a worthwhile effort.

Underuse of Green and Outdoor Spaces: Despite the efforts of the Office of Sustainability to improve highlight initiatives that emphasize the community makes use of gardens and green spaces, and our trees, their role in programming and student engagement is somewhat limited. Opportunities for integrating environmental sustainability more directly into wellness initiatives remain underdeveloped, and the majority of reported sustainability efforts are limited to recycling programs that are less consequential. The Office of Sustainability can lead in some of these areas but needs buy-in among many campus constituents



Environmental Wellness



to truly impact the overall well-being of campus. The Strategic Plan will be impactful in helping the University chart a course for enhanced environmental wellness through a sustainability lens.

Infrastructure, Facility, and Spatial Challenges: Throughout the interviews, facility issues across the University were mentioned, which suggests potential barriers to maintaining high-quality environments consistently. Concerns about how students must use shuttles to park and the elimination of close-proximity parking lots were shared. Aging buildings with limited money to renovate and limited additional locations to build without giving up green spaces or parking were listed concerns.

Accessibility: While there have been considerable gains to overall accessibility of campus, there is still room for improvement and universal design. Design of new spaces and renovations should center needs of students with disabilities by embracing principles of universal design. The recent hiring of a new Director of the Accessibility Resource Center presents an opportunity to catalyze the prioritization of universal design.

Perceptions of the Safety of Campus: Generally, there are common perceptions by students and staff that our metropolitan campus environment is one that has safety challenges. The prevalence of Clery alerts received by students and their frequency leads to students feeling unsafe on campus. Meanwhile the promotion of positive steps taken to helps students feel safe are less promoted.

Unhoused Students and Commuter Needs: The unmet needs that students who commute to campus or students who lack financial and shelter stability merit further consideration. This includes lounge spaces, spaces to prepare food, and programming to meet the unique needs of these populations. Further information in a later section discusses additional considerations for unhoused students and basic needs, in particular.

Environmental Wellness Recommendations:

- Acknowledge LEED-certified building listings to help students better associate their understanding of positive environments and identify buildings that are sustainable and stimulating for them.
- Optimize safety measures around campus and promote these efforts widely to offset some of the negative perceptions that students hold about their physical safety and security on campus. This includes expansion of campus escort service and visibility of campus security and police force outside of crisis response.
- Acknowledge how physical environments might influence feelings of well-being for students with disabilities on campus.
- Formulate intentional partnerships with the recently established Director of Sustainability and the Sustainability Strategic Plan to improve the environmental wellness of students.
- Take efforts to evaluate improvements to third-place environments. Consider places where students can sleep with reduced stigma, heat food, store food and personal items, build a sense of community, and decompress away from home.
- Campaign to help students get outside to experience the outdoor campus environment, connect with nature and their sense of self.
- Acquire infrastructure to assist students who are unhoused or commuting (nap pods, lounge spaces).
- Explore collaborations, funding and infrastructure to pursue permanent physical space devoted to the needs of unhoused students or emergency, short-term housing for students. This is discussed in further detail in the Housing and Shelter” section later in this report.
- Review outdoor space and ways to make our outdoor spaces more inviting and stimulating for college student needs

Financial Wellness

Strengths, Opportunities, and Recommendations

Financial Wellness Strengths:

Emergency Financial Supports: Numerous programs help students access money to help them in an emergency. The University has multiple academic college/departmental, Student Affairs, and resource center options to meet unexpected financial needs for students. Financial aid takes proactive measures to keep students enrolled through pack assistance grants. The Dean of Students Office offers an emergency short-term loan and an emergency scholarship, and many resource centers also offer emergency scholarships.

Financial Literacy Trainings and Supports: Abundant opportunities on campus help students better understand personal finance and collegiate financial literacy challenges like FAFSA completion and how to pay for school.

Cost-Reduction Strategies: There are significant efforts to keep student fees, tuition, service fees, and other expenses low for students. The University has explored avenues to expand open educational resources and retain excellent value to maintain low-cost education for students.

Career and Academic Integration: Not only are there academic scholarships at UNM, but there are also monetary resources that are leveraged to connect students to entrepreneurial ideas, professional conferences, and research innovations. Intentional efforts to infuse financial capability into first-year experience courses are being pursued to foster student success in relation to money.

Collaboration with Departments: When students struggle with financial issues, if they can find a support person to assist, multiple partnerships provide a support network among accounts payable, financial aid, resource centers, advisement, and Student Affairs partners. Students usually need a facilitator or an effective first point of contact.

Large State Support and Aversion to Borrowing: Students are attending UNM in great number supported by considerable financial supports from the State of New Mexico. State-sponsored scholarships and generational attitudes mean that students are conscientious about borrowing to finance their education. Although loans are an effective tool to finance education, traditional students are reluctant to borrow and view borrowing as a last resort.

Financial Wellness Opportunities:

Difficulty to Calculate Costs in Advance: Student financial stressors are augmented by the inability to reliably predict the cost of their education, tuition, and other University-related expenses. There seems to be a disconnect between the financial costs for students (tuition, fees, books, housing, and meal plans) and how much money they will receive via financial aid. This disconnect speaks to unexpected and emergent difficulties.

Manual Actions and Staff Dependency: Success of financial support programs depends significantly on staff support and time, which creates variability in services and massive capacity constraints to assist students with considerable financial challenges. Many of the challenges that students face are created by automation errors and require considerable staff time to address, review, correct, or support.



Financial Wellness

Reliance on Referrals: Heavy reliance on referrals for financial resources leads to gaps in service accessibility for students who are unaware of available options or who don't have the college-going literacy to know who to ask or that they can ask for help. When a student who is not connected encounters a challenge, they may not know where to go for a financial referral.

Limited Resources for a Massive Need: Emergency aid options are insufficient to serve the total need of all students. While the financial supports currently available are generous, they are not sufficient to cover above-average costs that a student may need assistance with outside of tuition and fees. Graduate students and international students appear to be among the most vulnerable with the fewest emergency aid and scholarship options.

Financial Wellness Recommendations:

- Expand emergency aid offerings. Boost fundraising; identify additional resources that can be used to support emergencies and financial difficulties students face. Explore special partnerships to increase funding for emergency funds and service to special populations with unique needs. This might include eviction prevention programming, additional direct monetary awards, and gift cards. While there is a robust Nusenda Center for Financial Capability, there is an opportunity for expansion of financial literacy education into more university courses, programs, and services.
- Provide a reliable tuition calculator tool that is dynamic to calculate and accurately predict costs before bills are charged to student accounts or prior to the start of the semester.
- Create a one-stop portal to consolidate all financial wellness resources, scholarships, and workshops. Integrate financial capability and financial management referrals to either a CRM system or an easy reference portal to streamline referrals and spread the distribution of financial challenges among appropriate staff.



Intellectual Wellness

Strengths, Opportunities, and Recommendations

Intellectual Wellness Strengths:

Diverse Learning Opportunities: Programs in and out of academia offer intellectually enriching experiences that embrace diversity and cultural awareness. These offerings are robust and ubiquitous.

Student-Centered Approach: Many programs focus on stimulating students' intellectual curiosity, but also more soft-skill-building through tutoring services, time management workshops, and leadership development programs tailored for just and kind leadership. There are many decentralized supports for intellectual growth through initiatives like research opportunities, peer mentorship, and integrated academic lectures and workshops.

Cultural Responsiveness and Inclusion: Considerable programming exists for underrepresented populations through colleges and affinity space leaders which reflect an inclusive intellectual environment. Interviewees regularly spoke about how their areas try to be culturally responsive in their pedagogy and engage all students while addressing key social issues.

Critical Thinking and Advocacy: Activities like controversial speaker series, dialogue on protests and change, and restorative justice workshops foster critical thinking and intellectual discourse, and there are many of these opportunities across campus.

Collaboration Across Units: Cross-campus partnerships (e.g., FYEX courses, collaborations with housing teams, and student-led initiatives) ensure intellectual wellness is integrated across the student experience.

Accessible Resources: Embedded services like math tutors, specialized librarians, and ARC specialists are a great demonstration of our commitment to accessible intellectual wellness.

Intellectual Wellness Opportunities:

Limited Integration with Occupational Wellness: It isn't clear that all programming has a clear connection to career readiness or occupational wellness at the University. In some ways, there may be gaps in aligning intellectual growth back to professional goals (Occupational wellness). When courses offer a direct articulation about how content and lessons are applicable to a student career, these are most impactful. All courses need to intentionally articulate how this course content builds both soft skills and knowledge about the topic.

Resource Constraints: Many programs that are occurring outside traditional classrooms are usually cohort-based and serve a small number of target students or marginalized students. These are terrific models but are limited in scope and scale by design. Scaling these for the larger student population is costly and difficult. When non-academic departments tie research and professional efforts to mission, a larger number of students can be served and additional connections can be made to intellectual wellness and career goals (McNair, El Puente, Ubuntu, URAD, etc.).

Disparities in Support across Academic Colleges and Academic Disciplines: Some colleges have considerable grants and in-house services that aid in intellectual



Intellectual Wellness



advancement that other colleges do not (tutors, mentors, staff or faculty advisors, funding, cohort programs, and robust student organizations).

Freedom of Expression: Considerable efforts of a First Amendment Task Force sought to create resources to assist the public in understanding their first amendment rights on campus. In fact, a comprehensive website was developed called <https://freespeech.unm.edu/>. As a public research institution, UNM holds a fundamental responsibility to foster an environment that encourages growth, self-expression, and engagement with diverse, even conflicting, viewpoints. The practice of critical thinking challenges students to use these interactions as opportunities to learn and enhance understanding of the world and themselves. The student body, staff, and faculty need a more robust and advanced understanding of these tenants. With valuable resources like the <https://freespeech.unm.edu/> site, the University must continue to promote these resources to enhance the awareness of students, staff and faculty. [ES2.1][GG2.2]

Scattered Programming and Workshops: Because intellectual wellness and gathering of new knowledge is ubiquitous in University life, intellectual wellness efforts are almost entirely decentralized, making it difficult for students to routinely access content outside their colleges or specializations and majors.

Intellectual Wellness Recommendations:

- Integrate occupational and intellectual wellness in the lobowellbeing.unm.edu website because of the considerable relationship between them where students' learning and intellectual curiosity informs career choices and preparation for the work force.
- Expand paraprofessional research, innovation, and entrepreneurial co-curricular experiences. Encourage nonacademic and Student Affairs departments to explore advancing research efforts and innovation or co-curricular experiences with their students.
- Expand access to applied skills and entrepreneurship/innovation opportunities. Students across all colleges should be assisted in making more direct ties to innovation academy efforts, and professionals should explore avenues to help them make direct ties to professional opportunities.
- Continue to host a variety of diverse speakers and presentations and give researchers platforms to share and expand their ideas.
- Help students thoughtfully contemplate how they can grow their intellectual wellness and continue to be exposed to new ideas and new content. This should extend beyond the simple scope of their major or specialization.



Occupational Wellness

Strengths, Opportunities, and Recommendations

Occupational Wellness Strengths:

Career Services: The Career Services unit is a clear leader in University efforts to improve the occupational wellness of students. When other units look to deliver programming, Career Services is almost always considered for presentations, collaborations, or referral. The University can use this expertise even further.

Hybrid Centralized and Decentralized Structure: Some colleges have intentionally supplemented career readiness and career service advisors in their colleges, offering specialized expertise and access to career preparation conversations. Similarly, some have mentors and advisers that serve in this capacity. When students don't have access to decentralized services in the college, students, staff and alumni can access centralized professional and occupational advisement from Career Services. Faculty and staff often serve via informal capacities to advise students on career opportunities, act as references, and in many cases, coach them on job searches, resumes, and other occupational wellness coaching.

Robust Employment and Professional Opportunities on Campus: Interviewees shared the plentiful opportunities for students to gain work experience. There are hundreds of job opportunities for students that are work-study and non-work-study eligible. These include career fairs that bring employers searching for UNM students to fill employment positions and internships.

Partnerships: Rather than needing to be the leader and subject matter expert in professional development or career readiness, interviewees regularly spoke to how they partner with Career Services teams in the decentralized and centralized teams to bring practical job searching skills to their students.

Life-Work Integration: There is a clear emphasis on life-comes-before-work priority—meaning that participants' perspectives are that, when it comes to students, school and family should come before their work, not the opposite.

Networking: There are numerous events within colleges, departments, programs, student organizations, and Student Affairs units that facilitate networking, which can lead to better occupational outcomes and benefits.

Funding for Professional Pursuits: Numerous resources at the college, department, student government, and Student Affairs levels support student professional pursuits for research, conferences, and other occupational needs.

Occupational Wellness Opportunities:

Consistency Across Departments: Most interviewees spoke of programs in their area, college, or department. Overall, most programs operate primarily at the department level, which could lead to inconsistent access to opportunities for students. For example, some departments hire 100 students, while others perhaps only have one student employee. The emphasis and responsibility in employee development for a large unit with different goals and differing employee needs is more time intensive and requires more contemplation than a small unit.



Occupational Wellness

Expansion of Funding for Professional Pursuits: As with emergency aid resources, while the financial supports available are generous for professional development, they are still limited in amount. Further, not all students are aware of these resources and don't know to seek them.

Unpaid Internships: With limited resources, unpaid internships build capacity and are a productive way to help prepare people in gaining workforce skills. However, students will do many things to get ahead including unpaid internships which raise an ethics question about unpaid labor. Economic justice is social justice, and these types of internships are not ideal, though sometimes a budgetary necessity. Similarly, entry-level positions often require two or even three years of experience, creating many barriers for students seeking to gain professional experience, and forcing them into unpaid opportunities.



Occupational Wellness Recommendations:

- Adopt universal professional standards and soft skills we expect students to leave the University with upon graduation. It is the role of all professionals at the University to help students develop occupational wellness. To better establish professional standards, skills, and knowledge that all students optimally obtain (UNM 5, Lobo Grow), UNM supplies substantial student employment, coursework, research, and other forms of professional and intellectual engagement.
- Leverage the expertise of our occupational wellness professionals. While occupational wellness is the role of all professionals who work with students, there are subject matter experts who can be engaged to provide critical expertise. All units should be generalists, but don't have to be experts. This emphasizes the need to continue to partner and build a network for referrals to both centralized and decentralized career service professionals.
- Incentivize co-curricular efforts where faculty infuse occupational wellness, skills development, reflection, and outcomes directly into their courses.
- Develop programs tailored to non-traditional career paths, including freelancing, creative arts, or even community organizing.
- Increase the awareness and confidence of departments in existing career and occupational wellness experts. Generally, we need more outreach to Academic Affairs and academic colleges about the vast expertise that Student Affairs has to provide services to students. Academic units may not need to create these services in-house but can enlist the community of experts to provide workshops, training, and interventions to support students.
- Combine the intellectual and occupational wellness to interconnect the intention of how both dimensions serve long-term career readiness and intellectual growth. As mentioned, there is considerable overlap between intellectual wellness services and resources and occupational wellness resources.

Physical Wellness

Strengths, Opportunities, and Recommendations

Physical Wellness Strengths:

Recreational Services and Student Health and Counseling: Physical wellness is a key driver of the mission of both UNM Rec Services and SHAC. They are leaders in programming, facilities, and services to support physical wellness. When interviewees mentioned physical wellness efforts, they associate these two departments, refer to them, or partner with them.

Comprehensive Sexual Health Programming: The University has testing and awareness programming and campaigns along with education on sexual health and the provision of prophylactics in nearly 30 locations on campus. There is treatment for sexually transmitted infections on site. There are leading emotional supports embedded in advocacy centers for sexual violence.

Sexual Wellness

Sexual Wellness is the ability to understand, respect, and care for one's sexual health, identity, and relationships in a way that is safe, consensual, informed, and aligned with personal values. It includes access to accurate information and healthcare, the capacity to communicate boundaries and needs, and the freedom to experience sexuality without coercion, shame, or discrimination, recognizing that sexual well-being is interconnected with emotional, physical, social, and mental health.

Access to Menstrual Equity: The Lobo Food Pantry, LGBTQ Resource Center, Women's Resource Center, El Centro De La Raza, African American Student Services, UNM Libraries, and certain residence hall communities have worked to provide free menstrual products to students.

Referral network: Faculty, staff, and students are well aware of facilities on campus that support physical wellness needs.

Positive Help-Seeking Behaviors: There are limited stigmas about receiving treatment and support for physical health. There are programmatic efforts underway to continue to combat any lingering stigma. For example, Student Health and Counseling facilitates programming targeting nutrition and exercise intimidation ("Gym-timidation"). Further, the Health Promotions team often collaborates on awareness events related to eating disorders, HIV testing, and other physical health conditions with cultural centers and other campus partners as needed. The visibility and availability of sleep pods on campus are also an important way to destigmatize getting rest while on campus.

Wide Range of Physical Activities and Programming: There is an abundance of different activities to support physical wellness. Teams around the university feel equipped and



Physical Wellness

comfortable supporting programming in their spaces and take initiative to host programs in their space on less common topics based on the needs of students including nutrition, sleep, and others.

Modern Facilities and Spaces: With the improvements to the recreation services spaces and Student Health and Counseling, participants agreed that we have desirable places to seek treatment and engage in physical wellness activities.

Physical Wellness Opportunities:

Consistency Across Departments: Data: Recent well-being survey efforts don't speak to physical wellness measures as effectively. There is limited information to truly indicate the physical wellness of our students.

Menstrual Equity: There is an appetite for the University of New Mexico to remove barriers and provide access to menstrual products universally for the University community. This may include campaigns and training to shift culture, but it also may include the capacity to manage and provide supply of these products. To advance menstrual equity, the University may be called to assist students in identifying where they can gain access menstrual products to meet their physiological needs.

High-Risk Behaviors: There are limited programming efforts underway to combat high-risk behaviors that impact physical wellness. There are limited targeted interventions available for students unless they are seeking clinical assistance for a high-risk behavior.



Physical Wellness Recommendations:

- Consider a task force to identify, intervene in, and educate about high-risk behaviors. These might include excessive gaming, gambling, pornography, eating disorders, substance use, and others. These efforts could collaborate with the Collegiate Recovery Center or provide an expansion of recovery communities and support groups for these high-risk and addictive behaviors.
- Coordinate with physical wellness programming and service providers to consider measures for physical wellness of students.
- Consider highlighting sexual health resources to better reflect the comprehensive services offered to students on campus, particularly for LoboWell-being.unm.edu. Further, in the University's overall adoption of SAMHSA's Eight Dimensions of Wellness, focus on sexual wellness as its own dimension to elevate the importance of existing resources at the University. This will enable the University to continue to demonstrate this as a priority, independent of the other physical wellness needs of our campus.
- Increase the number of sleep pods as they are both a physical wellness consideration and an environmental wellness improvement. Sleep pods must be an important addition to our wellness service portfolio. Sleep pods facilitate restful sleep on campus, normalize sleeping on campus, and support improved health. They would additionally help with selective enforcement of public sleeping on campus (such as sleeping on a table, in a chair, or on the ground).

Spiritual Wellness

Strengths, Opportunities, and Recommendations

Spiritual Wellness Strengths:

Student Organizations: Numerous student clubs and groups with spiritual purpose and intention are available to students. These also create vibrant stages for students to test leadership boundaries, sense of purpose, and ethical decisions.

Leadership, Values Discovery, and Ethics: There are varied ways that departments help student spiritual identity through leadership development and finding a sense of purpose and guiding principles for their lives. These opportunities are not uniform and occur through mentorship, activities, and personal experiences. Many are intentionally designed to achieve specific outcomes, but many occur less deliberately and happen naturally.

Cultural and Spiritual Awareness in Academia: Academic programs in Religious Studies, Curanderismo, and courses addressing traditional healing practices and world religions ensure students are exposed to diverse spiritual frameworks and practices. Not all students take these courses and not all are required to take these courses, but they are a unique position of strength for our New Mexico Institution, given the rich history and connection to culture.

Spiritual Wellness Opportunities:

Limited Access for Spiritual Programming for All Students: In many Eastern traditions yoga is rooted in a spiritual practice with philosophical reflection. Thus, some practitioners view yoga as a spiritual endeavor connected to mindfulness and inner awareness. There are recurring yoga programs facilitated by Student Health and Counseling on a regular basis. Aside from these, specific spiritual programs are inconsistently available and sporadically offered. Many are either specifically offered to cohorts or sub-populations of students, and still fewer are widely available for general use by the student body.

Leadership, Ethics, and Values-Centric Courses: Participants didn't speak much about courses with these tenants at the center of the academic process. If there are courses of this kind, they may be limited or only accessible to specific majors and disciplines.

Lobo Oasis: This physical location has not yet become a widely known resource to support spiritual wellness yet. With increased marketing and promotion, the program has an opportunity to normalize spiritual wellness practice on campus or provide a quiet space for reflection or meditation.

Underrepresentation of Certain Faiths or Spiritual Practices: Although engagement with faith communities exists, programming does not appear to equally represent or support the full range of faith traditions and spiritual identities on campus. While some options are present, many international students with underrepresented faiths don't always see their spiritual practices reflected in University traditions, spaces, and programming.



Spiritual Wellness



Fragmented Spiritual Initiatives: While spiritual wellness is addressed through various programs, the efforts appear to lack a cohesive, centralized framework for consistent implementation and promotion. Further, it is unclear who the leads for this type of program should be.

Interreligious Council (IRC): While the IRC is established and maintained well by Student Activities, there is mixed participation and limited scope of the advisors for the various student groups. There might be an opportunity to incorporate students' needs into the current structure and focus.

Leverage University Chapel: The Alumni chapel regularly sits unused and many students might identify with the symbols and iconography of the Alumni Chapel in spiritual and religious faith practices. It would benefit the community to open the space for quiet reflection and even prayer times.



Spiritual Wellness Recommendations:

- Identify a hub that can be a leader in centralizing and broadening spiritual programming for the general student population. There is no standalone leader who clearly has this a central driver of mission.
- Develop Nature-Based Spiritual Programming. Such efforts could either expand outdoor retreats or intentionally design spaces with spiritual and environmental wellness intentions. The spaces could additionally be used for regular workshops or activities that encourage a spiritual connection to nature. The Lobo Oasis is intended for individual personal use and a more collaborative space would resonate with environmental clubs or perhaps indigenous groups who integrate cultural spirituality into their activities.
- Integrate leadership development into the first-year experience or core curriculum. Leadership development through understanding and awareness of personal beliefs and values are a central tenant of many spiritual wellness practices.
- Create online resources such as recorded meditations or mindfulness workshops to ensure accessibility for all students, including those who are remote. Tools like TimelyCare have modules that are available to all students that focus on mindfulness and meditation.
- Continue to work with student organizations and the IRC for potential group prayer and spiritual practice spaces on campus.
- Strengthen collaborations with interfaith organizations, local spiritual leaders, and cultural groups to offer broader and more diverse spiritual programming. Efforts to ensure underrepresented faiths and spiritual practices are included in partnerships and events would be optimal.
- Identify professionals on campus with spiritual expertise or experience.

Social Wellness

Strengths, Opportunities, and Recommendations

Social Wellness Strengths:

Diverse Range of Activities: There are numerous opportunities for students to engage socially, such as mentor programs, volunteer activities, cohort-based programs, mixers, themed events, and many more. Most departments and colleges are working to help students connect to peers in creative ways.

Community and Cultural Inclusion: For students needing to connect through culture, there are various cultural celebrations that foster belonging on campus. Further, there are additional cohort-based programs that promote social connection through common culture. Resource centers are actively co-sponsoring inclusive events and fostering relationships with faculty and staff of underrepresented groups.

Student Organization Engagement: There are 350+ student organizations, spanning all dimensions of well-being. These organizations offer abundant avenues for social connection and community building. Offerings can be promoted by academic colleges, Student Affairs departments, and other units but require strong student involvement to be most effective.

Supportive Physical and Social Spaces: There are many available gathering spaces like residence halls, commons, student organization offices, meeting rooms, and academic departments that naturally facilitate social interaction and casual or informal opportunities for connection.

Integration with Academics and Professional Development: Some of the most successful social wellness activities within academic departments are closely tied to the academic mission and professional development. The most successful seem to feature intentional opportunities to network, or they feature cohorts that integrate social wellness and connectivity into academic and career contexts. Career networking and mentorship are consistent features of some of the most successful social opportunities in academic spaces.

Social Wellness Opportunities:

Inconsistent Participation: Some departments, despite having student organizations supported from their spaces or tied to their mission, report low levels of engagement. Despite extensive support, students must lead and want to participate in student organizations and engagement opportunities. Building a culture of participation can take time and be challenging for departments and students alike. There can be variability in programming quality and attendance when creating social engagement opportunities.

Lack of Depth in Relationships: While there are many opportunities, many students may struggle to build deeper, meaningful relationships or identify the right mix of social opportunities. Some of these themes were reinforced in the ACHA well-being assessment, where



Social Wellness



some students with high levels of activity engagement were also reported to be some of the most lonely on campus.

Graduate Students and International Students: Older, more experienced or more advanced graduate students and international students may experience gaps in programming tailored to their unique needs. Most social activities focus primarily on undergraduate students; the unique needs and cultures of international students create challenges to program for them directly. Student Activities responded to this need in an inaugural year of having a graduate student plan a program specifically for graduate students. This effort has been successful in stimulating graduate student social engagement.

Organic Socialization is Limited: Programs and events often assume students will naturally connect. Perhaps more structured support is needed for building connections at social programs, including icebreakers and conversation starters. This is why networking and social-focused events may be advantageous as the emphasis is on relationship-building first.

Lack of Social Skills and Over-Reliance on Technology: Students have hundreds of friends on social media and applications, but in many cases may not say hi to those same “friends” when they organically bump into them. Students may lack social skills to move technology-based relationships into friendly and social in-person spaces and engagements.

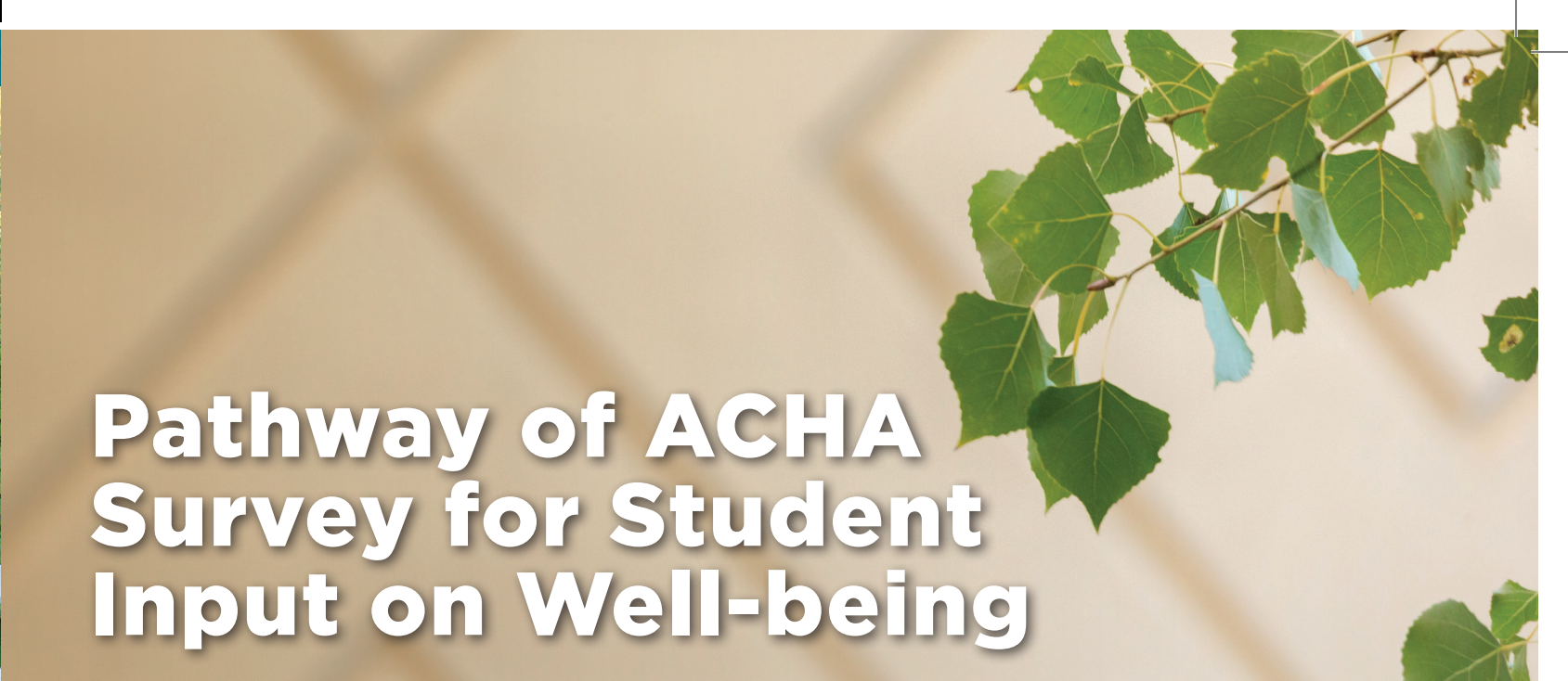
Social Wellness Recommendations:

- Expand outreach and targeted programming for veterans, international students, students with disabilities, and graduate students to foster stronger engagement. Ensure that events accessible in terms of time, location, and inclusivity.
- Optimize underused spaces as hubs for regular, recurring informal gatherings to help build community. Encourage academic departments to host more frequent community-building events that tie in with students' professional and academic pursuits.
- Foster or develop new or existing collaborations between academic, cultural, and social organizations to create interdisciplinary and multicultural social opportunities. Continue to partner with local community organizations for broader social outreach and advance the themes of networking and long-term connections beyond the University.
- Integrating social connection strategies into general courses or, more specifically, student leadership and professional development courses. When courses build more intentional connections between academic programs and co-curricular activities, social wellness is reinforced.
- Use surveys, focus groups, or peer discussions to assess the impact of social programs and gather input on unmet needs.
- Create programming that addresses moving beyond internet connection for in-person interactions.



Summary & Conclusion of Eight Dimensions of Wellness Inventory

This full list of strengths, opportunities, and recommendations highlights insights into the community and may inform valuable strategies that will be presented to a collective of professionals who are devoted to the advancement of well-being work at the University. When examined in totality, there seems to be a broad reaching theme that is true of most dimensions of wellness. Student Affairs must increase outreach to partners outside of Student Affairs, namely academic colleges who also serve students to expand awareness about the vast expertise that Student Affairs departments and other wellness providers have to offer students. Academic units may not need to create well-being programming, or professional services in-house to serve their students, rather they may engage the community of experts to provide workshops, training, and interventions to support their students. This theme was particularly relevant in the emotional, financial, intellectual, physical, spiritual and social dimensions of wellness. [ES3.1][GG4.1]After extensive data collection via qualitative interviews and the analysis in the inventory above, the next section focuses on other forms of data collection that lead to additional insights about the well-being of our students and the University community through quantitative methods.



Pathway of ACHA Survey for Student Input on Well-being

ACHA WELL-BEING ASSESSMENT SURVEY - WHAT IS IT?

The American College Health Association (ACHA) Well-being Assessment is a standardized tool designed to evaluate the holistic well-being of college students across a range of dimensions, including physical health, mental health, social connectedness, academic satisfaction, and more. This survey provides universities with valuable data to inform and enhance wellness programs that support the diverse needs of their campus communities and is designed to capture a comprehensive picture of the factors influencing students' overall well-being. By exploring multiple dimensions of student life, it goes beyond specific health issues to address the interconnected nature of wellness. Use of this survey reinforced the overall objectives for the Well-Being Insight Report and reinforced the notion that well-being includes multiple interconnected factors.

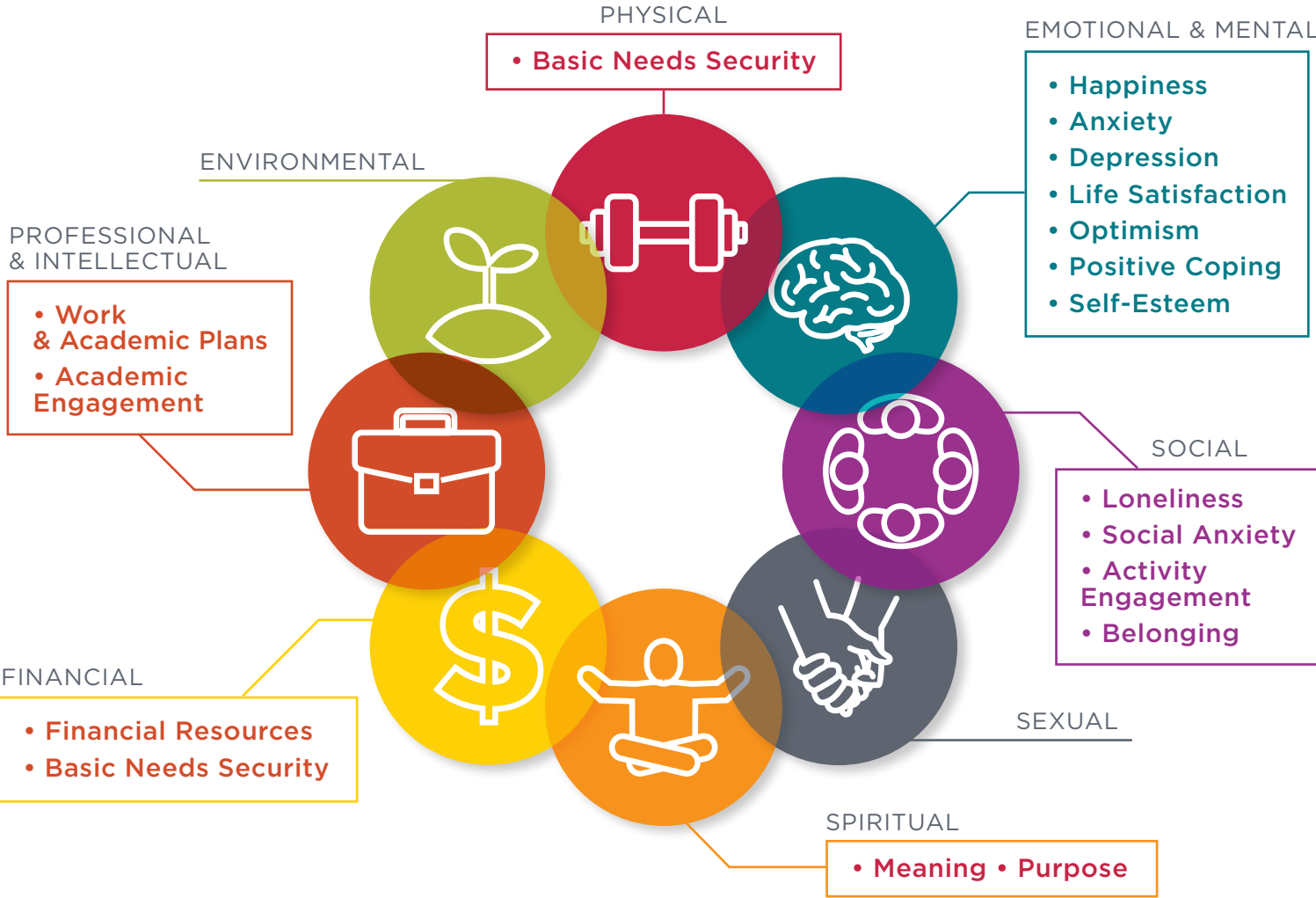
The tool is widely accepted as a valid and reliable tool in measuring student well-being along 14 dimensions among the national collegiate well-being community. Although there is significant overlap between the ACHA Well-being Assessment and the SAMHSA's Eight Dimension of Wellness, there is no direct relationship or affiliation. While a needs assessment using SAMHSA's Eight Dimension would have been beneficial, no such survey tool exists for measuring the eight-dimension adopted for the well-being inventory of a campus. Creating our own tool was not possible with acceptable reliability and validity. Using the ACHA Well-being assessment alleviated these concerns as it has been adopted by experts in the collegiate health field to assess student well-being comprehensively.

UNM students responded to 14 dimensions of well-being that are key to their success in college:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| ➤ HAPPINESS | ➤ OPTIMISM |
| ➤ ANXIETY | ➤ POSITIVE COPING |
| ➤ DEPRESSION | ➤ BELONGING |
| ➤ LONELINESS | ➤ MEANING |
| ➤ SOCIAL ANXIETY | ➤ PURPOSE |
| ➤ LIFE SATISFACTION | ➤ ACTIVITY ENGAGEMENT |
| ➤ SELF-ESTEEM | ➤ ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT |



For visual illustration, the following graphic depicts the research team's efforts to map the ACHA Well-being Assessments dimensions to SAMHSA's Eight Dimensions of Wellness framework:



THE ACHA WELL-BEING ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY, RESULTS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Methodology

The UNM research team consisted of members from Institutional Analytics, Student Health and Counseling, the Dean of Students Office, Taos branch, Valencia branch, and the Vice President for Students Affairs. The team submitted the assessment tool to the UNM Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the research and was approved.

The American College Health Association (ACHA) research staff provided the validated assessment instrument to assess student well-being via a paid contract. The ACHA Research department used the Qualtrics, LLC, Research Suite to design and distribute the ACHA Well-Being Assessment and to manage the online data collection. The Assessment was administered CONFIDENTIALLY (not anonymously) via student email addresses provided by UNM for the sole purpose of requesting participation. ACHA was responsible for soliciting the study and collecting/synthesizing data. Data analysis was facilitated further by the UNM research team. Data reporting offered various dimension scores across various subgroups of student demographics (e.g., students from BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and first-generation backgrounds), and informed the Division of Student Affairs findings which translated into plans for strategic and targeted interventions aimed at intentionally improving well-being at UNM.

The survey was administered October 14 through November 4, 2024, and generated over 4708 UNM student responses. This was more than enough to generate a 95% confidence level with a confidence interval of +/- 3%. The goal was to receive at least 900 completed responses to the ACHA Well-Being Assessment, which was exceeded. Recruitment efforts were carried out in collaboration with the UNM Office of Institutional Analytics and Enrollment

Management Reporting. ACHA contacted eligible students directly through their UNM email addresses, providing a personalized survey link and using the initial email as informed consent. Non-responders received up to five reminder emails during the survey window.

To complement these efforts, the Dean of Students office and Student Health and Counseling spearheaded a promotional campaign to raise awareness about the assessment with outreach including visits to residence hall floor meetings, student government meetings for both graduate and undergraduate students, and distribution of nearly 500 fliers throughout campus. Social media graphics highlighting the survey and an accompanying gift card drawing were shared on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. These materials were also distributed to other UNM departments on request. Additionally, the UNM All-Student Listserv was used to send up to two reminder emails during the survey period.



Results

A complete report of the ACHA Well-Being Assessment, including a summary one page report, and Branch campus sub reports were generated by the research team and are available on [Lobowellbeing.unm.edu](https://lobowellbeing.unm.edu). Below are additional insights from the data as presented by the research team. For the completed reports and expanded insights, please visit <https://lobowellbeing.unm.edu/well-being-assessment/index.html>.

Well-Being Parity with National Peers – with Notable Campus Variance

- On average, UNM students scored similarly to the ACHA national reference group across most well-being dimensions. This information has been posted on the Lobo Well-being webpage and will be shared widely with University colleagues and leaders to identify programmatic goals and topics requiring further research and exploration.
- Branch campus students reported the highest levels of well-being, especially in mood-related measures (happiness, low anxiety, low depression).
- North campus students, largely composed of professional and health sciences students, also showed stronger scores in life satisfaction and academic engagement.
- Main Central campus students scored lower in areas like activity engagement and sense of belonging.

Mental Health Conditions and Barriers to Care

- More than 40% of main campus students report a psychological or mental health condition, yet up to 32% cannot afford care, and 22% don't know where to access services.
- Access disparities are especially acute at branch campuses where 38% of students report being unable to afford mental health care.

Sub-Populations Experiencing Disproportionate Struggles and Successes

- Transgender/gender non-conforming students, students with disabilities or conditions, and queer-spectrum students scored significantly lower across nearly every well-being domain.
- Parenting students, in contrast, consistently reported higher levels of meaning, purpose, and optimism, suggesting a potential protective effect of purpose-driven roles.

Financial Insecurity and Basic Needs Affecting Student Success

- In congruence with previous research conducted state-wide regarding basic needs insecurity among college students in New Mexico, the assessment demonstrated similar patterns. Approximately 35% of students at each campus frequently worry about paying for educational expenses.

Food insecurity is prevalent with 26% of branch campus students reporting food insecurity in the past 30 days due to financial constraints.

Nearly 60% of students considering leaving UNM cited financial reasons; half reported mental or physical health concerns as a factor in their potential departure.

UNM central campus and branch students continue to face notable challenges related to basic needs and financial stability, including food insecurity and concerns about paying for educational costs. Survey data show that many students regularly worry about finances, with some skipping meals or going hungry due to lack of money. These financial pressures are compounded for certain groups, such as Branch students who also support family members. Among central campus students considering leaving school, financial strain, health issues, and shifts in academic or career goals were the most common reasons, underscoring the need for sustained efforts to support students' basic needs, affordability, and overall well-being.

Recommendations

Expand and Destigmatize Access to Mental Health Care

- Enhance communication and outreach campaigns on how and where to access mental health resources. Expand health literacy campaigns and interventions.

Strengthen Support for Marginalized Sub-Populations

- Present data to leaders who are charged with supporting vulnerable populations to identify strategies to improve their overall well-being along the dimensions.
- Collaborate with the Arcoíris Resource Center, Accessibility Resource Center, and Division for Equity and Inclusion to develop targeted programming and focus groups.

Incorporate inclusive design practices in wellness programming that reflect intersectional identities and needs.

Institutionalize Well-Being as a Campus Priority

- Proceed with efforts to implement Student Affairs Strategic Plan to integrate SAMHSA's Eight Dimensions framework, enhance assessment of well-being, and amplify basic needs initiatives.

As discussed, there were many important takeaways from the ACHA Well-Being Assessment. Among these insights included cursory data to validate previous research done in the state of New Mexico which highlight concerns about basic needs issues impacting students. This remains a salient issue for the University and the state. The following section places deeper emphasis on basic needs issues impacting student well-being across the University and campuses nation-wide. While these themes were touched upon in the eight dimensions inventory earlier, the following section places direct emphasis on basic needs insecurity that touches, physical, emotional, environmental and other dimensions of wellness.

Other Well-being Areas of Service

BASIC NEEDS ISSUES IMPACTING STUDENTS

Given the considerable evidence of basic needs insecurity as demonstrated by both the Basic Needs Consortium's 2023–2024 assessment and the ACHA Well-Being Assessment, there is a standalone section which further elaborates on the systemic challenges students face in securing food, housing, financial stability, and other essential resources. This section outlines how national research and UNM-specific data show that basic needs insecurity directly affects student well-being. It summarizes UNM's ongoing efforts, including direct services, policy development, and cross-campus partnerships, to address these concerns. It also highlights the University's involvement in nationwide initiatives such as the Hope Impact Partnership and statewide collaboration through the Basic Needs Consortium, which provide research, training, and collaborative strategies to strengthen UNM's basic needs infrastructure and guide future improvements.

Higher education institutions are increasingly addressing students' basic needs insecurities, including housing, food, and financial instability because these challenges affect student well-being, learning, and success. Research supports creating an environment that fosters student well-being, defined as an optimal state for achieving one's potential. Basic needs insecurity is a systemic issue, not an individual failing, driven by rising college costs, changes in financial aid, and inadequate support structures.

To address these challenges, UNM has developed basic needs programs ranging from direct support (e.g., food pantries, emergency aid, case management) to systemic policy changes (e.g., financial aid disbursement policies, public benefits enrollment). While the field is expanding, terminology varies, and a broad definition of basic needs is encouraged, including mental health, caregiving, transportation, and technology access.

Institutions differ in how they structure basic needs efforts. Some have dedicated centers, and others have distributed services across multiple offices areas. UNM's efforts are semi-centralized but work to assist students with basic needs is occurring in numerous academic colleges and advisement centers, Student Affairs, and even enrollment management. Effective support depends on leadership, resources, and partnerships.



BASIC NEEDS CONSORTIUM (BNC)

The Basic Needs Project began in 2019 with two years of quantitative and qualitative data from UNM in 2020 and 2021 by researchers who defined their effort as the Basic Needs Consortium (BNC). The research reports gained the attention of the NMHED which asked for a statewide assessment of basic needs security. In 2023, Consortium researchers conducted a survey with 27 participating institutions, including 17 two-year institutions, seven four-year institutions, and three tribal institutions.

Currently the BNC is working on some of the following efforts:

Asynchronous training on SNAP Assistance: In an effort to bolster the number of people trained in SNAP, the BNC is working with the DoS social work intern supervisor, the Health Care Authority, and local community organizations to consider strategies to make training more accessible while keeping the impact high through asynchronous modules.

Surveys and assessment: The team continues to explore ways to assess the needs of students and the impact of targeted interventions so that they create scalable models that offer frameworks to help colleges address student basic needs. The BNC anticipates creating a food scholarship assessment that would follow the impact that a food scholarship has on student outcomes. Research will inform future direct supports offered to students in improving their stability and their educational outcomes and attainment.

BNC meeting in October at CNM: The BNC continues to host monthly meetings with all consortium members in virtual modalities but gathers the entire group in-person a few times per year. This year, the consortium met at CNM in October. Each time the consortium meets, they break into small working groups to tackle ideas and to discuss expanded efforts to build resources and best practices for food pantries, SNAP assistance, and housing. The team has organized to write briefs for legislators and to advocate for more research on these phenomena.

Legislative efforts and priorities: BNC is advocating for funds to be allocated from the legislature to create consistent programming and financial support for basic needs services. In addition, the BNC is advocating on a policy level to change or hopefully eliminate work requirement for SNAP eligibility (a significant barrier for college students getting SNAP in some cases), as well as progressive work to allow for SNAP benefits to be used to purchase hot meals or meal plans. This would create considerable food security for college students who are SNAP-eligible.

Documentarian: The Basic Needs Consortium in collaboration with the Vice President for Community health is contracted with a documentarian to tell the story of college students who are struggling with their basic needs.

Hope Impact Partnership

The Dean of Students Office and UNM were selected to participate in a cohort of the Hope Impact Partnership, a collection of universities that have the opportunity to receive training and strategic insights to advance basic needs work for our campus. The cohort program has focused on policy, research, and best practices to position services in the best way possible.

One of the key findings is that students often don't seek basic needs services because of stigma. However, the most common reason that students don't seek basic needs services is instead a lack of awareness about the availability of basic needs services. This underscores a definitive need for more resources for marketing services to the broader campus audience so that use of basic needs services can increase. This might include administration of tabling efforts and events, e-mail newsletters, social media and fliers, but also social norms campaigns to shift attitudes around basic needs efforts. While food pantry use is at an all-time high, reaching students about the broader services at UNM is a goal once appropriate scale and referral mechanisms for these services are determined. Such services include:

- Social work services through the Dean of Students Office, including SNAP assistance, housing information, transportation, childcare, legal resources, and general system navigation.
- Tax services and financial literacy in the Dean of Students office.
- Insurance Navigation through Student Health and Counseling.
- General medical care, health promotions, and health literacy initiatives through Student Health and Counseling.
- Accessing mental health services in SHAC, TimelyCARE, the Mental Health Collaborative, and Manzanita.
- Emergency fund expansion including direct scholarships and loans for students.

Through the HOPE Impact Partnership, the UNM team received training from the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education. UNM intends to participate in the Self-Assessment of Basic Needs through CAS. Engaging with an interdisciplinary team will help UNM assess an appropriate basic needs response. The CAS standards provide guidance for both practical implementation and aspirational goals for addressing student basic needs.



FOOD INSECURITY

Previously, partnerships that continue to help the University learn and develop plans to address basic needs insecurity were introduced. The following section includes existing strategies that are actively deployed to address food insecurity.

Food Scholarships: The University has a solidified partnership with UNM Food Service and Aramark to sustain a steady meal plan scholarship to assist needy students with food security. Students apply through the LoboRESPECT Advocacy Center in the Dean of Students Office. To qualify, students must be able to demonstrate financial hardship. The average benefit varies between half the cost of a meal plan, and, in extreme cases, students may qualify to have their meal plan completely covered for a semester. Further research that follows students who receive food scholarships will help to solidify and codify the impact.

Meal Swipe Donations: In conjunction with UNM Food and Aramark, the LoboRESPECT Advocacy Center is reinstituting a program that provides meal swipes to students in need. This serves as a short-term solution for food insecurity where students may be awarded between 5 and 10 meal swipes at a time through an application process. Students will be able to reapply more than one time during the semester. Further marketing and promotion of this effort should be underway as the University looks to expand and scale this service and resource.

Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Access on Campus: UNM Food has worked closely with Aramark to enable a rollout of EBT acceptance in the SUB Mercado and SRC Commons Market. These enable students who are receiving food stamps to access their benefits on campus. We hope to strengthen partnerships between SNAP referrals with awareness that benefits will be accessible on campus. UNM Food plans to continue to partner with basic needs researchers to explore the benefits of giving students free meal plans and possibly allowing for EBT to be used to purchase a meal plan.

Lobo Food Pantry: The UNM central campus Lobo Food Pantry in the SUB is sustaining record use and community support. One continuing issue is uneven access to nutritious food; while healthy options are available sometimes, many foods tend to be calorie dense. The Lobo Food Pantry acquired PantrySoft, an enterprise software solution that will track inventory and enhance reporting and tracking for student outcomes. UNM has one of the premiere food pantry sites in the State among higher education partners and is a campus leader in pantry funding, inventory, and access. The University should continue to invest in this highly successful endeavor.

SNAP Benefits Assistance: The DoS Social Work Internship program assists students who are seeking stability for food access long-term. The program helps students apply for SNAP and WIC.

Lobo Eats: The LoboEats application at UNM is a digital tool designed to help students, faculty, and staff locate free and low-cost food resources on campus. It connects users to campus dining options, food pantries, meal discounts, and sustainable food initiatives, supporting food security and reducing waste. The platform aligns with UNM's commitment to sustainability and student well-being by making nutritious food more accessible. This effort can be grown and expanded.

Food and Hygiene Cupboards: Various entities across campus have established food pantries or hygiene stations to meet the need of their sub-populations. These supplement existing Lobo Food pantry initiatives and supplies. Some of the existing food cupboards that are trying to work to meet a smaller need are located in the Honors College, Anderson School of Management, African American Student Services, Biology, and Speech and Hearing Sciences. The Women's Resource Center is currently collaborating with the Dean of Students Office to host a Personal Hygiene closet in their space as well. More of these pop-up programs are helpful in meeting demand for food and hygiene products.

HOUSING AND SHELTER

As housing instability emerges as one of the most significant basic needs challenges facing UNM students, the following section outlines key considerations and recommendations to better support students who are unhoused or at risk of losing stable housing. Unfortunately, housing is expensive and in high demand but continues to be one of the most challenging basic needs considerations to address for students.

The State of New Mexico and the University have done an exceptional job of making college more attainable for the community. In many cases, the cost of tuition is something that prospective students have covered via the NM Opportunity Scholarship. Unfortunately, many students are enrolled who can pay for tuition and fees but lack the means to afford housing and basic necessities. As more students enroll who are lacking in basic needs resources, especially housing, the following are tangible recommendations that may lead to improved support for unsheltered students at UNM:

- Upgrade or redevelop current housing with an emphasis on accessibility, affordability, and possible expansion. This is a challenging proposition but necessary given the massive financial investment required to build new facilities, create more beds, and have space for emergencies when the demand for on campus housing is already very high.
- Consider creating a tier for housing that enables easier placement of unhoused students. The freshmen residency requirement has created considerable demand and need for on-campus housing, so many upperclassmen hoping to live on campus must be limited to certain styles of housing and many are not able to live on campus all four years. Meanwhile, when students enroll at UNM who are unhoused, one of the most accessible housing situations for them may be UNM housing, but there are often no available spaces to meet their demand. The implementation of an emergency tier might help address this for students, but limits are needed for students in such an emergency tier. For example, perhaps students in this tier must not be first-semester students—they must demonstrate that they have been able to succeed academically and establish a long-term persistence toward academic goals. Further, students in this tier must not have any prior disciplinary history and must be in good standing with the University.
- Explore partnerships with local community real estate operators and especially American Campus Communities to remove barriers to renting. The University should advocate for removal of first and last months’ rent requirements, removal of income requirements, employment requirements, and other barriers to renting. If removal of these requirements is not tenable, perhaps implementation of an exception or petition process would enable students to garner access to housing if they don’t meet minimum income requirements etc.
- Seek opportunities for building or retaining spaces devoted to emergency housing on campus. Although these options are expensive, they have propensity to lead to more sustainable circumstances that may lead to long-term housing stability for students.
- Embrace and install nap pods or appropriate nap stations in addition to those already on campus. Students who are unsheltered don’t often get quality sleep and, consequently, need safe and secure places to be able to rest between classes. However, the optics of having students sleeping in hallways, on floors, or sprawled out on couches in University buildings is something that is difficult to permit. The establishment of normalized nap spaces would give these students safe places to catch up on sleep and would create safe circumstances to destigmatize sleeping on campus without enabling every office and every building to grapple between supporting unsheltered students and balancing the image and business needs of their spaces. The reality is that students sleeping on the floor in a building, although harmless, is not considered a normal, allowable occurrence. Not only would unsheltered students benefit from this, but busy commuter students in need of rest could also leverage these spaces in high demand. There will be considerations around cleaning and monitoring their use prior to implementation.

Taken together, these insights highlight clear opportunities to strengthen UNM’s well-being infrastructure through basic needs.



RECOMMENDATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

As the final conclusion to this report, the following recommendations outline practical steps the University may take to build capacity, enhance collaboration, and improve the overall impact of our well-being efforts.

- Increase capacity to share awareness of programming and the branding of the well-being message. To take the UNM Well-being programming to the next level, the program needs additional staff. One of the most pressing needs for effectiveness is a marketing presence to increase awareness about programming efforts to support basic needs and student well-being. Students at UNM need education around prevention, but for students experiencing challenges with their overall well-being, ideally staff are ready to support them. This marketing could drive broader outreach efforts of all Student Affairs programs that promote well-being, but especially the work of Student Health and Counseling, the Dean of Students Office, Recreational Services, and other well-being program leaders.
- Create a marketing asset library. In conjunction with the UNM strategic plan, the University needs access to branded assets that can help students, staff, and faculty label programming as supportive of well-being using the Eight Dimensions of Wellness.
- Commence an educational campaign to spread awareness of the University adoption of the Eight Dimensions of Wellness. This will include making a one-page summary document available to the public and education on where to find branded assets and how to use them in marketing and promotion of programming related to well-being.
- Establish a steering committee for Lobo Well-Being (Lobo Well-Being Collective). This would give and create direction for the mission of the division’s well-being efforts. The theme of Lobo Well-Being is Wellness through Collaboration, and a collaborative steering committee could enhance the efficacy of these partnerships and collaborations on wellness initiatives and programming. This committee would serve to consider opportunities to collaborate on programming, how to leverage SAMHSA’s Eight Dimensions more broadly, and how to implement the DSA’s Well-being Strategic Plan goals outcomes and tactics.
- UNM should consider establishing individual well-being consultations, where Health Promotion and Well-Being staff can meet with students one-on-one to gather information, provide guidance, and discuss health education topics. These consultations could be offered both in-person and virtually to ensure accessibility. Sessions might focus on identifying student needs, informing program development, and offering support for well-being-related concerns in relation to SAMHSA’s Eight Dimensions of Wellness. Ideally, these consultations would remain private and be facilitated by trained health educators, social workers (or interns), or some concept of a well-being coach. This initiative would provide a non-judgmental space where students can explore their relationship with substances, personal well-being, and how these factors align with their goals and values (Motivational Interviewing principles). While not a replacement for counseling, these sessions could complement existing mental health

services by helping students develop practical strategies for sustainable change. These sessions could be offered both in-person and virtually to maximize accessibility and support students across different campus locations. A pilot of this effort is underway utilizing social work interns in the Dean of Students Office. A possible future direction envisions well-being coaches or social workers to help students navigate these difficult moments, make referrals to appropriate services, and scale them largely. Current efforts are working to build capacity based on small resources, but additional full-time capacity is optimal.

- Conduct a review of where well-being efforts should be housed long-term. For example, a review of the best reporting structure for well-being coaching and well-being promotional programming may be better positioned to achieve desired outcomes if the University contemplates how they are organized within the organizational chart in Student Affairs. There are benefits to organizing these in the Dean of Students, and Student Health and Counseling, but it may be necessary to contemplate other structures to best accommodate the vision for well-being. Regardless, to maximize the effectiveness of well-being efforts, programming and services, collaboration between both Student Health and Counseling and the Dean of Students Office is pivotal. Finally, as the University reflects on the structure for our Well-being programs and services, it should also consider the overall objectives of the University at large. For example, in many institutions, all well-being programs are organized under one central division rather than decentralized as they are at the University of New Mexico. Centralized well-being organizational charts may also include staff and faculty well-being. Such a model may also be worthy of consideration.
- Continue to implement the ACHA well-being assessment to assess how we are advancing the well-being work and improving metrics associated with student well-being. Alternatively, we could look to implement the National Collegiate Health Assessment or WISHES: A New measurement approach to support systemic change in student well-being. These alternate assessments may be implemented to further gauge additional areas for improvement in programming and services to advance student outcomes.
- Continue to add resources to lobowellbeing.unm.edu and promote its use among staff, students, and faculty to help broaden awareness of well-being programs, initiatives, and services.
- Expand partnerships to maximize impact and continue to explore new pathways in alignment with the DSA strategic plan.
- In the formation of the Lobo Well-Being collective, expand membership to a diverse body of partners that encompass all eight dimensions of wellness, assessment, and basic needs specifically.

Conclusion

This Well-Being Insight Report demonstrates that UNM possesses a broad and dedicated network of departments, professionals, and programs committed to supporting the holistic needs of students. Across academic colleges, Student Affairs units, and campus partners, there is a shared recognition that well-being is inseparable from learning, persistence, and long-term success. At the same time, the findings make clear that the University must continue evolving its practices, structures, and strategies to keep pace with student needs and the expanding national landscape of well-being and basic needs work.

Several themes emerged across the data. First, students benefit from a deep and growing portfolio of programs, yet many initiatives remain decentralized, inconsistently resourced, or limited in scale. Second, despite strong offerings, many students are unaware of available support due to limited marketing capacity and the absence of a unified campus-wide approach to promoting well-being. Third, disparities in well-being outcomes, particularly for LGBTQIA+ students, disabled students, international students, and those struggling with financial instability, underscore the need for more targeted, identity-affirming interventions and greater coordination across units. Fourth, basic needs concerns remain a foundational barrier to success, requiring sustained institutional investment and strategic partnerships.

The recommendations outlined in this report provide a path forward. Strengthening well-being at UNM will require intentional collaboration, expanded staffing and marketing resources, and ongoing assessment to ensure that initiatives are responsive and effective. Establishing a Lobo Well-Being Collective, growing the visibility of SAMHSA's Eight Dimensions, and exploring long-term organizational structures for well-being will help unify efforts across campus. Continued implementation of tools like the ACHA Well-Being Assessment, along with increased use of LoboWellbeing.unm.edu, will ensure that decisions remain data-driven and student-centered.

UNM has the opportunity to become a national leader in holistic student well-being by building on the strong foundation already in place. By embracing a collaborative model that integrates assessment, basic needs support, targeted interventions, and coordinated messaging, the University can shape a campus environment where all students have the resources, support, and sense of belonging necessary to thrive. The insights and recommendations from this report will inform vision and will strengthen the well-being of the Lobo community for years to come.

