

Award Title

NYU's Health Center Without Walls

Awards Categories

Student Health, Wellness, Counseling, and related

Executive Summary

With over 50,000 students New York University is the world's largest private university. NYU is large, complex, and urban. The city of New York itself serves as the campus for the University. For these and other reasons, engaging the student body around health issues remains an on-going challenge. Consistent with its strong commitment to the health and safety of its student population, NYU has developed a comprehensive, innovative, university-wide Strategic Plan, "Health Center Without Walls," to address barriers to accessing healthcare information and services. Based on historical data from the years prior to 2006 we knew that only 35-37% of all eligible students accessed care from the NYU Student Health Center in any given year.

NYU considers itself to be "a private university in the public service." Consistent with this vision, the NYU Division of Student Affairs exists to "enhance the quality of life for students both in and outside the classroom." Data from the ACHA-NCHA survey suggests that health issues have a significant impact not only on a student's well-being but also on their ability to succeed academically. It was clear that with only a penetration of 37% among the student population even the best programs and services would have a somewhat limited impact. The Strategic Plan that was developed and implemented sought to deliver a more community based approach to healthcare and increase the impact of programs and services. Specifically, "Health Center Without Walls" had several explicit goals including:

- Increasing the delivery of healthcare information to students.
- Increasing the utilization of health and wellness programs and services.
- Improve health outcomes and reduce their impacts on academics.

The major mechanisms employed to achieve the goals included:

- The removal of financial and structural barriers to care.
- Increasing outreach and collaborations with other University offices.
- Utilizing technology in more strategic ways.

An initial major element of the Strategic Plan was a restructuring of both student health fees and the student insurance plan to allow for a set of core services to be provided to all NYU students, with no out of pocket expenses, regardless of their insurance coverage. We then improved the delivery of evidence based services and programs targeting HIV testing, mental health counseling, flu vaccination, nutrition education, sexuality education and stress management by offering these services to the greater NYU student community through outreach to dining and residence halls, student centers, commuter lounges, athletic facilities and in academic buildings.

Finally, information technology has been used to deliver health information, provide easier access to appointments through web-booking, provide discrete services, allow for access to records and better continuity of care at off-site events, and improve patient-provider communication through secure messaging.

The Strategic Plan, over the course of four years, from the Fall of 2006 through Summer 2010 was highly successful. **Utilization of health services rose from 37% of students using SHC services in 2005-2006 to over 62% in 2009-2010, a 25% percent increase.** Based on the Spring 2009 ACHA-NCHA survey the percentage of students receiving information on various health topics rose anywhere from 15% to 60%. Also, specific outcome measures such as binge drinking and students feeling overwhelmed decreased, while immunization rates, vaccination rates and overall student well-being improved.

Award Description

Background/institutional context

With over 50,000 students, more than 16,000 employees, and study abroad programs in more than 25 countries, New York University is the world's largest private university. There are no campus gates enclosing the campus. NYU is large, complex, and urban. The city of New York itself serves as the campus for the University.

New York City also has one of the highest numbers of physicians on a per capita basis. Student diversity and medical service availability results in challenges in engaging the student body around health and wellness. Consistent with its strong commitment to the health and safety of its student population, NYU has developed a comprehensive, innovative, university-wide strategic plan, "Health Center Without Walls" (HCWOW) to help improve student access to health and wellness services and help students to achieve academic success.

Positive impact on student learning, transitions, retention, and/or success

ACHA-NCHA national and NYU specific data have shown that health and mental health issues can have a significant impact on academic performance. Health issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, and colds and flu are those which have the greatest impact on academic performance. Data also suggests that mental health issues are a leading cause of students taking medical leaves and dropping out of school and thus improving access to health related programs and services can only improve retention rates.

Relevance to institutional mission

NYU considers itself to be "a private university in the public service." Consistent with this vision, the NYU Division of Student Affairs exists to "enhance the quality of life for students both in and outside the classroom." University health and wellness efforts contribute to these same goals and are essential to maintaining a healthy living and learning environment.

In order for student health centers to follow a true community health model and improve population health outcomes it is critical to engage the highest percent of the student body as possible using new and innovative models of healthcare delivery.

Demonstration of success in addressing student needs and/or critical campus issues

Based on the Spring 2009 ACHA-NCHA survey, 60% of NYU students rate their health as good or excellent. This perception of good health may impact students' engagement in preventive services. The Health Center Without Walls Strategic Plan focused on preventive services provided outside the health center to reduce any perceived barriers to care.

Understanding that financial barriers may prevent from students from seeking services the SHC undertook a strategic plan to reduce barriers to healthcare and improve student well-being and success. The first step was to restructure student fees and the student health insurance plan to allow for a core of primary care, women's health, and mental health services to be provided with no out of pocket expenses.

Importance to one or more program areas included in this category

Health Center Without Walls laid a strong foundation for the Student Health Center to address campus-wide health and wellness issues. The efforts were focused on preventive services and health issues which have an immediate and direct impact on student health, safety, and academic performance.

Areas targeted included sexual health issues through a dedicated sexual health educator, "our sexpert," who answers questions related to sexual health and distributes condoms near the main cafeteria. HIV testing is provided in residence halls, academic buildings, and student affairs offices (such as the LGBT office). A women's health "contraceptive clinic" provides birth control refills and education in a residence hall.

Stress management is addressed through outreach using our Stressbusters program as well as a web-based relaxation oasis which gives students discrete actionable advice on how to deal with stress. Substance use is also a focus of our initiative with AlcoholEdu, Reality Show, and more systematic screening of students in primary care and counseling services.

Increased utilization of the SHC also has allowed us to systematically screen over 18,000 students for depression - nearly 45% of the entire student body annually.

Collaboration with academic affairs and other departments

The Student Health Advisory Committee gathers a broad constituency from the NYU campus to address health and wellness. Committee membership includes faculty, students, school deans, and staff from Residence Life, Athletics, the Center for Student Activities, SHC, NYU Medical Center, and Public Safety. This committee engages in and promotes continual dialogue about health and policy issues across University department and interest groups, and provides a forum for review of broader community-based efforts, as well as campus-wide communications.

Originality and creativity

Our Master Chef competition, which seeks to improve knowledge of healthy eating habits, is a joint venture of our campus dining services, nutrition department, and our own SHC dietician. The competition "brands" nutrition services and allows us to market nutrition related programs and services including information on the SHC website as well as cooking workshops in the residence halls.

The women's health service provides education and contraceptive refills in a weekly "clinic" at a designated residence hall. This unique initiative engages a significant number of students who had never visited the SHC and allows for additional screening and services (such as blood pressure checks, depression and binge drinking screening and administration of flu shots) to be delivered during the course of their contraceptive visit.

Effective use of technology and other resources

With practically all students utilizing the internet, online resources for both the delivery of information as well as facilitating access to services is critical. Web-based resources such AlcoholEdu (an alcohol educational module given to all incoming freshman), Monday Matters (a weekly health tip), Student Health 101 (a monthly health newsletter) the Relaxation Oasis and social media help reach student who don't access the health center.

We have implemented technology to facilitate access to, and continuity of, services with online appointment availability, secure messaging between health staff and students, and remote access to our electronic health record to allow for full assessments and documentation during outreach.

Innovative practical use of research and/or assessment and linking to learning outcomes

Data is a major driver in assessing effectiveness of existing programs and developing targeted programming. In 2006 we surveyed students who never used Student Health Center services to better understand how and where they accessed care and barriers to seeking services at the SHC. This data supported the need to allow students without the NYU SHIP plan access to the SHC and to collaborate with our academic and student affairs partners to create health and wellness outreach events outside of the SHC.

We use the ACHA-NCHA survey, conducted every 1-2 years, to track population outcomes and determine the health issues most affecting our students, especially in regards to issues negatively impacting academic success. We can better target interventions and programming based on this data.

Evidence of sustainability

The elements of the Strategic Plan have been implemented to manage the growth of patient engagement over time. The growth in the utilization of services has been incremental and has slowed just as targets have been reached. Each element of the plan is evaluated to ensure that it is contributing to the overall goals so that if it is not resources can be allocated to other programs and services.

Assessment Data

The Health Center Without Walls had several explicit goals including:

- Increasing the delivery of healthcare information to students.
- Increasing the utilization of health and wellness programs and services.
- Improve health outcomes and reduce their impacts on academics.

The baseline year was the 2005-2006 academic year (unless otherwise noted). Through the ongoing collection of data, primarily relying on the American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment survey instrument, it has been demonstrated that there has been significant success in achieving the above forementioned goals.

Increased delivery of healthcare information to students

For the ACHA-NCHA, "Have you received information on the following topics from your college or university? Percent of students responding "yes."

	Spring 2006 (Baseline)	Spring 2009	Percent Increase
Alcohol and Other Drugs	67.2	81.4	21.1
Sexually Transmitted Infections	57.8	76.9	32.8
Pregnancy Prevention	35.1	63.1	79.7
Suicide Prevention	48.3	56.2	16.3
Tobacco	21.3	27.6	29.6
Nutrition	33.0	56.2	70.3
Physical Activity	22.4	49.5	121.0

Increased utilization of health and wellness programs and services

	2005-2006	2009-2010	% Increase
Unique Users	15,787	24,898	51
Total Visits	98,535	130,427	32

This increase in overall utilization has allowed for a broader reach of specific clinical initiatives such as screening for depression and alcohol, both of which have which increased over the past several years. Below is the number of depression and alcohol screens performed over each academic year.

	2006-2007	2009-2010	% Increase
Depression Screening (PHQ-2)	35,429	53,812	52
Alcohol Screening	0	10,667	

Influenza vaccine

Outreach efforts also succeeded in increasing the number of student receiving influenza vaccine. Students reporting receiving influenza vaccine increased from 25.5% in 2006 to 33.7% in 2009, a 32% increase.

From 2009, when 4000 vaccines were administered additional outreach efforts due to the H1N1 outbreak, resulted in over 10,000 influenza vaccines being administered.

Use of technology

Secondary measures looked at the growth of appointments made online and the use of secure messaging, both of which help facilitate and reduce barriers to care.

	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Web booked appointments	193	5011	17,646	19,962
Secure messages	499	6304	11,232	15,828

Improve health outcomes and their impact on academics

Academic Impact

In response to the ACHA-NCHA question, "within the last school year which of the following affected academic performance."

	2005-2006	2009-2010	% Decrease
Colds/Flu	29.2	17.0	41.7
Stress	37.6	31.3	16.7
Sleep difficulties	28.9	22.0	23.9

Overall health

In response to the ACHA-NCHA question on "how would you describe your health, those responding "excellent" or "very good" increased from 60.4% in 2005 to 65.5% in 2009, an increase of 8%.

Binge Drinking

In response to the ACHA-NCHA question, "over the last two weeks, how many times have you had five or more drinks of alcohol at a sitting?"

NYU students demonstrated a decrease from 41% in 2004 to 34% in 2009, a 17% decrease, while the national reference group was at 37% in 2009, unchanged from 2004.

Student Quotes

Comments on the new fee/insurance model

- A Tisch School of the Arts freshman, who does not have a university insurance plan, went to the health center, fearing that she had been bitten by bedbugs. She said she was impressed by the quality of the expanded free services. "I wasn't expecting to see a doctor," she said. "I wouldn't have gone if it wasn't free."
- Expanding no-cost health service is almost always a good thing, and we applaud NYU's decision to offer all matriculated students access to the Student Health Center

Comments on StressBusters

- "You've made my day!"
- "It was totally worth stopping for."
- "That was fabulous!"
- "This was the best part of my day."
- "This program is an AWESOME idea."

Comments on Women's Health Outreach

"I think this is a great idea - fast, easy and non-intimidating. Thank you!"

"This is a revolutionary way of helping female students with more flexible access to medical help. I really appreciate your effort to outreach this service."

"I barely had any wait and the staff at outreach were extremely relatable and friendly. I think the program is an excellent service."

"I thought this was a wonderful service and very easy."

"I liked that we could simply drop in, the wait wasn't long, it felt more personal than a normal hospital visit. I liked that it wasn't in an actual hospital, it gives another location option for people who live a little bit farther from campus."