



UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

2021 Student Affairs Virtual Case Study

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Committee Members

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Worthington College



LOCATION

Cedarloo, IA

CLASSIFICATION

Regional Comprehensive University

FORMAT

72% In-person

8% Hybrid

20% Online

ENROLLMENT

Total: 10,497

Undergraduate: 8,973

Graduate: 1,524

What is Social Engagement?

Social engagement is one type of student engagement often considered alongside academic engagement and co-curricular engagement.

Social engagement measures the quantity and quality of the interactions and relationships students have with their peers and other members of the campus community as well as their level of participation in campus life.

(National Survey of Student Engagement, 2013)

Social Engagement Research

Astin (1984/1999) defined *involvement* as the amount of “physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience.” (Astin, 1984/1999, p. 518)

- Involvement can be academic, social, or extracurricular
- High levels of involvement are associated with high levels of persistence
- Low levels of involvement are associated with low levels of persistence

(Astin, 1984/1999)

Hu (2011) found that the relationship between student engagement and student persistence is not linear.

- High-levels of social engagement are positively related to student persistence
- High-levels of academic engagement *without* high-levels of social engagement are negatively related to student persistence

What are the Benefits of Social Engagement?

- Encourages student growth and development
- Establishes a sense of belonging
- Increases persistence to graduation
- Exposes students to interactions with diverse peers

(Trowler & Trowler, 2010)

The Current Situation

Although WC has been fortunate enough to keep COVID-19 under control while bringing students back to campus, college life still looks and feels different.

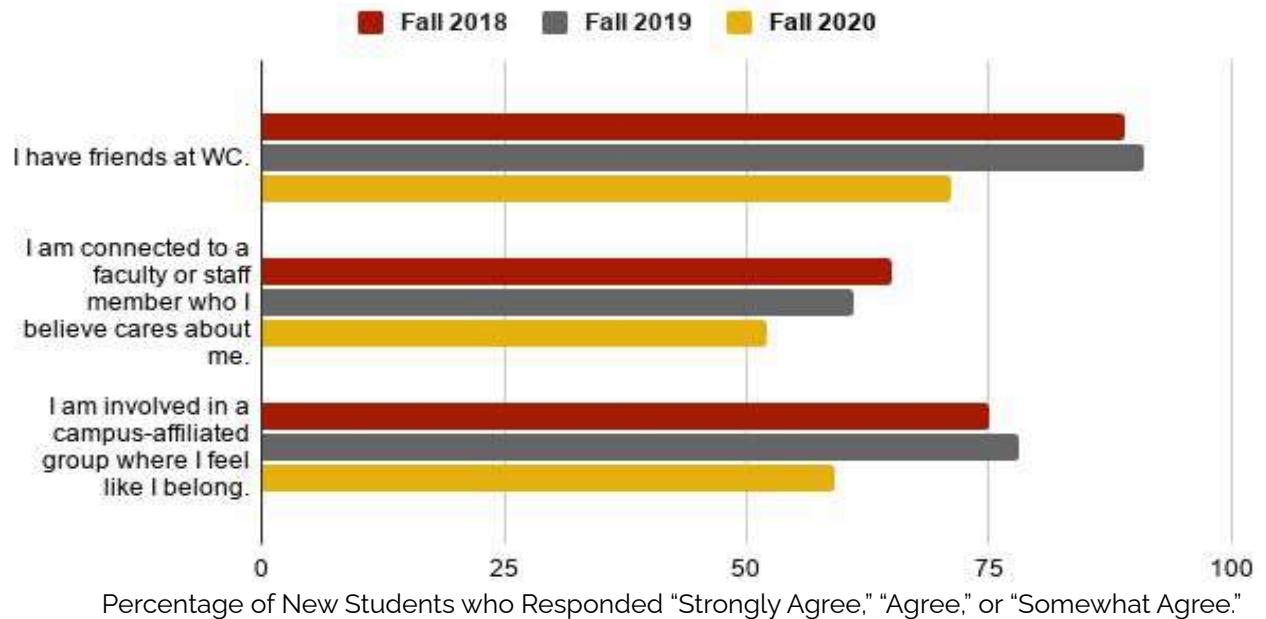
The vast majority of campus events and programming has been moved to a virtual setting to limit the spread of COVID-19. Attendance at these virtual settings is low compared to what would be expected in a typical year and engagement is minimal. Students may log in, but there is little discussion or interaction.



The Current Situation

The Fall 2020 cohort indicated significantly lower levels of social engagement than previous cohorts on the annual new student survey.

Annual New Student Survey



Wildcat Wednesdays

Name of the program: Wildcat Wednesdays

Mission of the program: To enhance social engagement at Worthington College by using the 8 dimensions of wellness as a guide

Overall goal: To enhance interaction among students, faculty and staff

Foundation of the Program

- ◉ We set the 8 dimensions of wellness as the foundation of our program at Worthington University, because we believe in approaching things in a Holistic way. We want to ensure that our students are being engaged while taking care of their physical, spiritual and mental health.
- ◉ A single event may focus on more than one of the 8 Dimensions of Wellness as they are interconnected. This will provide a holistic approach to our program.
- ◉ Research by Hu (2011) shows that, “There is the need to have the high levels of social engagement to be successful in college.” Our program strives to incorporate social engagement into a wide variety of situations in student's life.

Goals of Wildcat Wednesdays

Goals of the program:

- Promote social engagement through the Wildcat Wednesday Program.
- Encourage students to take care of their mental, physical and spiritual health.
- Give students the opportunity to engage with other students and members of the community through this program.

8 Dimensions of Wellness

- Physical Wellness
 - Physical activity, nutrition, sleep
- Intellectual Wellness
 - Building on knowledge and skills
- Occupational Wellness
 - Finding satisfaction in one's work
- Spiritual Wellness
 - Cultivating one's sense of purpose and meaning in life
- Environmental Wellness
 - Environmental sustainability
- Financial Wellness
 - Taking control of your financial situation
- Social Wellness
 - a sense of connection and belonging
- Emotional Wellness
 - Having a positive attitude, continued self-care



The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administrations (2016)

Events

Social: Wildcat Luncheon

- **Month:** September
- **Description of event:** The theme for this luncheon is favorite childhood food. Participants will be encouraged to make their favorite childhood food/snacks. Participants will be divided into breakout groups on zoom and be able to have the discussion on what their favorite snack/lunch is and what memories they had associated with it.

Physical: Wildcat Bootcamp

- **Month:** October
- **Description of event:** Participants will be able to choose which breakout room they would like to participate in.
 - Breakout room 1: Zumba
 - Breakout room 2: Yoga
 - Breakout room 3: Sweatin to the Oldies - Throwback Dance Party
 - Breakout room 4: Tik Tok Dance Battle



Events

Intellectual: Worthington Jeopardy

- **Month:** November
- **Description of event:** Students are encouraged to attend this event to learn more about the institution that they are attending and the resources that are available on campus.
- To promote social engagement students will be divided into teams and will work collaboratively.

Emotional: Guided Check-In

- **Month:** December
- **Description of event:** Our activity for this session will be based on the positive self-talk journal. Students will receive a copy of the journal to use for guidance for this activity. Everyone will have 5 minutes independently to work on the sheet. We then will go into breakout rooms where everyone will have time to discuss the different topics based on the journal.

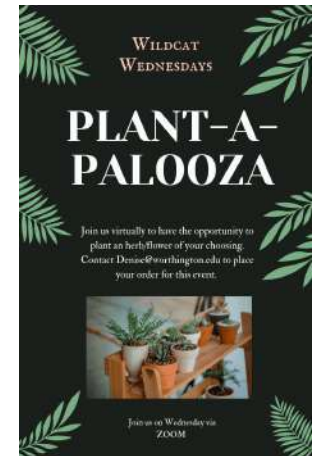
Events

Spiritual: Virtual Labyrinth Event

- **Month:** January
- **Description of event:** For this event, students will choose which their breakout room of their choice. Breakout activity rooms will include setting intentions, virtual walk around, among other activities. A discussion prompt will be provided for each breakout room for the students to come together to reflect on their experience.

Environmental: Plant-A-Palooza

- **Month:** February
- **Description of event:** For this event, students will get mailed a seed/herb of their choice and a small pot to plant virtually.
 - Students will be split into breakout groups based on the seed/plant that they chose. This will promote engagement and inspiring students to be environmentally friendly.



Events

Financial: Wildcat Financial Wellness

- **Month:** March
- **Description of event:** For this event, students will have the opportunity to learn more about financial wellness and engage in discussion with their peers. There will be three different breakout rooms to choose from.
 - Breakout room 1: Debt
 - Breakout room 2: Budgeting
 - Breakout room 3: Smart Money Moves

Occupational: Wildcats at Work

- **Month:** April
- **Description of event:** This event will be an opportunity for students who have completed internships, volunteer work, or employment with a company or industry sit at a table while interested students approach them if they are interested in learning more.



Social Event

The first event to promote and kickoff Wildcat Wednesdays will be a Social event. This event will occur on the first Wednesday in September. The first social event will be virtual themed lunch. The theme for the lunch will be favorite food as a kid. During the breakout rooms of the event, everyone will be encouraged to share the meal/snack they brought, memories associated with it and learn about everyone's different cuisine.

Wildcat Wednesdays & Social Engagement

Wildcat Wednesdays will increase social engagement among students by:

- Bringing the campus community members together to engage in a common activity and related discussion
- Fostering a sense of community and relationship-building among program participants
- Offering designated time for both structured and unstructured discussion and conversation

Publication Plan

- The event will be shared at the beginning of each month through the university's event newspaper; Worthington Monthly.
- The committee members will be working closely with Orientation team and the First-Year committee to publicize this event to first-year students.
- The program will be shared on all the university's platforms social media accounts. Make sure to follow our pages on social media to keep up to date.
 - Instagram: Worthington_College
 - Facebook: Worthington College Public Page
 - Twitter: @WorthingtonCollege

Incentive

At the end of the semester, the Student Life Office will host an event to award the student who has the most pictures or proof of events that they participated in as part of the 'Wildcat Wednesdays'.

At the minimum, students are expected to participate in at least one event every week. This is realistic since we have activities offered through various platforms.

If the student was to complete all 16 events, they would receive a traditional cord that they would be able to wear on graduation.

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