

ABSTRACT: 2019 ELAM Institutional Action Project

Project Title: A Pilot Program in Mindfulness-Based Life Coaching (MBLC) for Learners

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Topic Category: Education

Background, Significance of project: Anxiety, stress and burnout are prevalent in medical students and can have profound effects on academic performance. These issues are magnified by the unique challenges of training and practice in healthcare, where the stresses of patient loss and suffering, healthcare systems issues, and provider fatigue can all take their toll. Medical students begin their studies with energy, vision and confidence, yet many medical students enter residency programs manifesting symptoms of burnout, unprepared to face the emotional and personal challenges of practice in the health professions. A variety of factors may contribute to these challenges, and accordingly, we need a toolkit of solutions, beyond our existing support services. We will increase the breadth of our toolkit, with the addition of mindfulness training and life coaching, based on the prevalent issues that we have observed in our community, and building on the interests of our learners.

Purpose/Objectives: To develop a learner-centered mindfulness-based coaching program in order to:

1. empower learners to effectively respond to situational challenges in the healthcare environment,
2. build skills early during training, to support optimal personal and professional development, and
3. positively impact the challenge of burnout in the health professions.

Methods: Coaching program development process

1. *Conduct comprehensive review* of existing resources
2. *Lead Design Thinking Session* with graduate program learners to understand their needs
3. *Conduct focus group and post-program survey* with medical students who completed MBSR
4. *Conduct program development sessions* with certified life coach and MBSR educators
5. *Develop pilot model* for the coaching program.

Process Outcomes:

Through our development process, we have gained valuable insight into the needs of our learners. Notably, our graduate students report significant stress and anxiety, at both predictable and unpredictable timepoints. They are eager to learn new ways to address the stress and to build skills to help manage these challenges and develop their resiliency and grit. They seek a “Mindfulness Informed Curriculum” and training in emotional intelligence to enhance their professional development.

Discussion and Potential Impact:

We have created a learner-centered pilot coaching program called **Mindfulness-Based Life Coaching (MBLC)**. Learners are first referred to a multi-disciplinary assessment team, to determine which components of the coaching program may be most useful for the individual student, specifically coaching alone, MBSR, counseling, or sessions with an academic learning specialist. A personal development plan will be provided for the learner, with monthly team meetings to track their success in the program. Initially the program will be targeted to learners in our three graduate schools who are struggling in the learning environment and at risk for withdrawal or dismissal. The pilot program will be evaluated, studied, and refined, and eventually, we will offer this resource to all interested students in our three schools. Long term, we hope to see improvement over time in measures of well-being through our MBLC program surveys and annual institutional surveys. We will comprehensively review these survey results in 5 years, through a structured review of the program.

Developing a Holistic Coaching Program for Learners - Design Thinking Approach



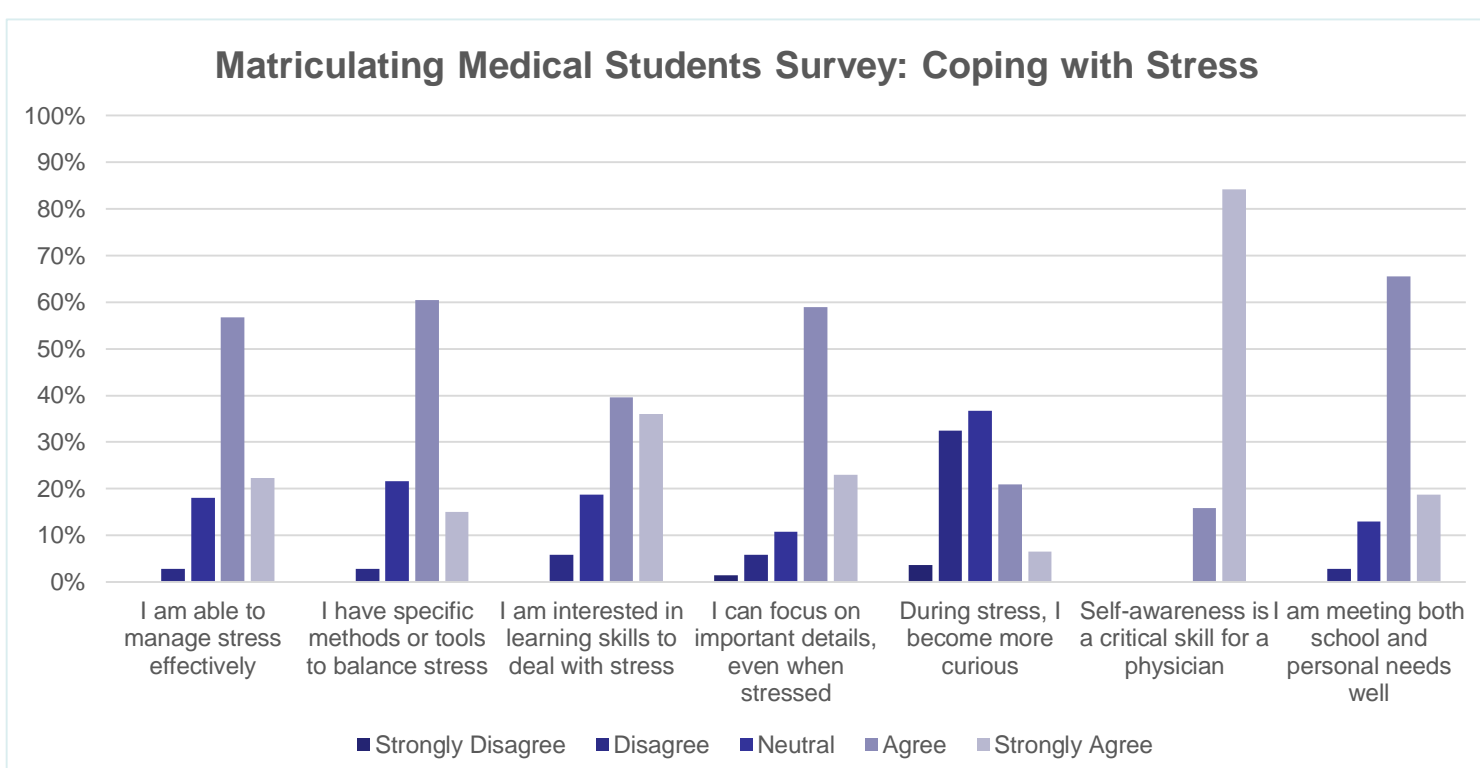
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Background

- A. Anxiety, stress and burnout are prevalent in medical students and can have profound effects on academic performance.**
- magnified by the unique challenges of training in healthcare, including stresses of patient loss and suffering and provider fatigue
 - depressive symptoms are prevalent and increase during training; up to 26.7% of medical students exhibit signs and symptoms of depression¹
 - rates of burnout are as high as 55.9% in some studies²
 - cross-sectional study of medical students in Brazil (n= 265) utilizing the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey (MBI-SS) 70.6% reported high levels of emotional exhaustion, 52.8% had high cynicism, and 48.7% had low academic efficacy³
- B. UMMS survey of newly matriculated students in the Class of 2022: opportunity to increase skill development to manage stress**
- almost 20% are not confident in their ability to balance stress
 - more than 30% appreciate that they are less curious when stressed
 - more than 80% recognize the importance of self-awareness as a critical skill for physicians and are interested in learning skills to manage stress.



- C. A variety of factors contribute to the development of stress, anxiety, burnout and academic struggles. These are complex challenges, and accordingly, we need a holistic approach and a toolkit of solutions to proactively support the academic development of our learners.**
- D. Early identification of struggling learners is key to success and improvement in academic performance. Differences between successful learners and struggling learners include⁴:**
- Self-awareness regarding successful learning habits/practices
 - Ability to cope with difficulty
 - Ability to reflect on understanding and identify gaps in knowledge
 - Positive engagement with a peer group in some capacity
 - Willingness to seek out/accept assistance⁵

Purpose/Goal:

To design a holistic coaching program for learners that will provide learners with a *comprehensive individualized development plan* to help them succeed and be the best possible version of themselves.

Process: Design Thinking

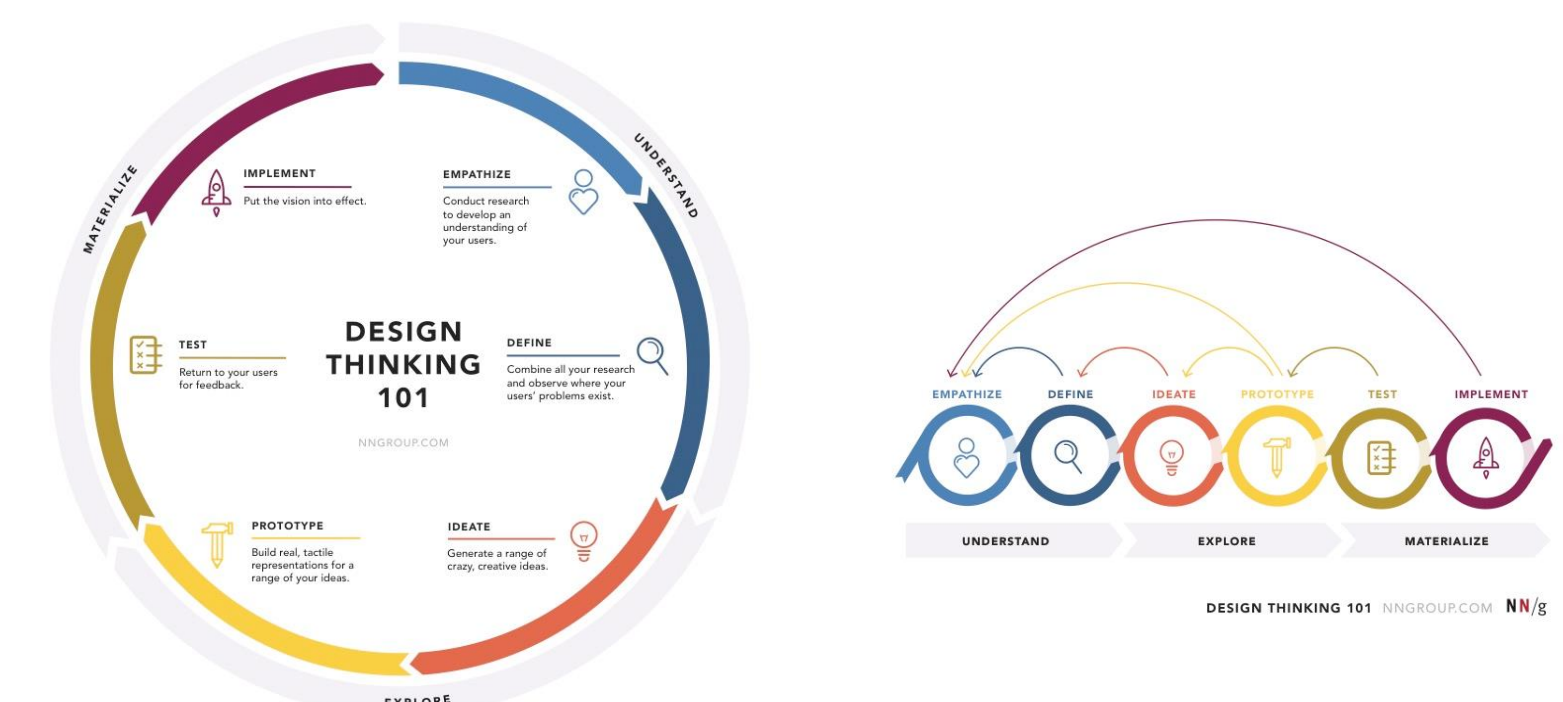
Objectives:

To develop a learner-centered life skills coaching program in order to:

- empower learners to effectively respond to situational challenges
- help learners to build skills early during training, to support optimal personal and professional development, and
- positively impact the challenge of burnout by building these skills early during training.

Empathize → Understand → Ideate!

- Conduct a review of coaching and MBSR in education
- Conduct a post-program survey of students who completed MBSR
- Conduct program development sessions with a certified life coach and MBSR educators (expert input into program development)
- Lead a Design Thinking Session with learners who have struggled
- Develop a pilot model for the coaching program
- Implement, test, evaluate and refine the program



Nielson Norman Group, Image utilized with permission, <https://media.nngroup.com/media/articles/attachments/Design-thinking-101-NNG.pdf>

Why Consider Coaching?

	Teaching	Mentoring	Coaching ⁶
Focus	Many individuals	One individual	One individual
Goal	Acquire knowledge	Advise/guide	Address defined areas of improvement
Timing	Structured period	No limits	Specific time period
Assessment	Formative & summative	No observation of ability	Observation of skills and behaviors with feedback and formative assessment (cycle)
Techniques	Pedagogical techniques to increase learner knowledge	Advice and guidance	Encourage critical self-reflection; exploration of self-improvement
Approach	Varied: didactic, PBL, simulation	Discussions	Collaborative
Outcomes	Predefined learning outcomes and objectives	+/- individual goals	Individualized goal setting
Purpose	Achieve predefined minimum knowledge or skills	Use experience to motivate and guide learners	Constantly push for improved performance, personal best

Table adapted from. Lovell B. Medical Education 2017;1-15.

Process Outcomes

What does the literature tell us?

Mindfulness in the learning environment can mitigate stress

- longstanding positive impact on well-being in medical students^{7,8}
- MBSR for medical students can positively impact student satisfaction and engagement in the curriculum⁸
- Mindfulness in the learning environment can decrease reactivity, promote curiosity, improve patience, and self-acceptance^{9,10}

Coaching in the learning environment can help to build skills

- Coaching in physicians and medical students can decrease stress, increase resilience, identify/leverage strengths, improve time and task management, help set priorities, decrease burnout^{6,11}
- “Coaching with compassion” (coaching to the positive emotional attractor) can activate big picture thinking, improve engagement, motivate, regulate stress and inspire.¹²
- Medical students may have improved measures of emotional intelligence (adaptability/proactivity) after 6-weeks of coaching¹³

What did the Design Session/Survey tell us?

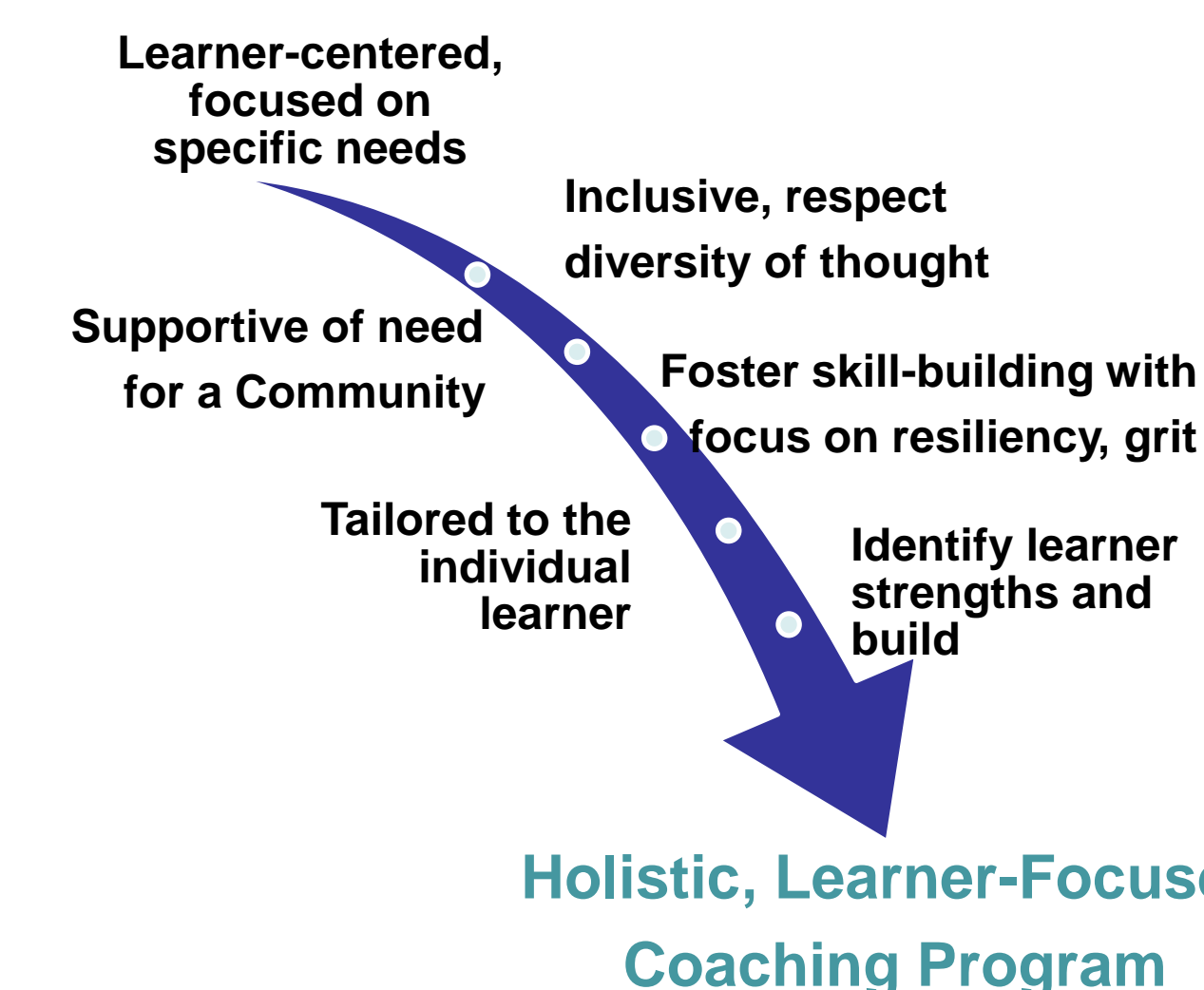
Empathizing with our learners: what do they feel?

- Fear of failure causes significant anxiety and stress
- Information overload can be debilitating
- The expectation of being a future leader and not knowing how to develop and acquire those skills causes stress
- Imposter syndrome starts early and is difficult to shake

Understanding our learners: what do they seek/need?

- To find, build and be part of a broader community, a “tribe”
- Skill development in resilience and grit
- To normalize failure as a learning experience
- A “mindfulness-informed curriculum”
- Coaching that meets them where they are

Coaching Program Core Concepts



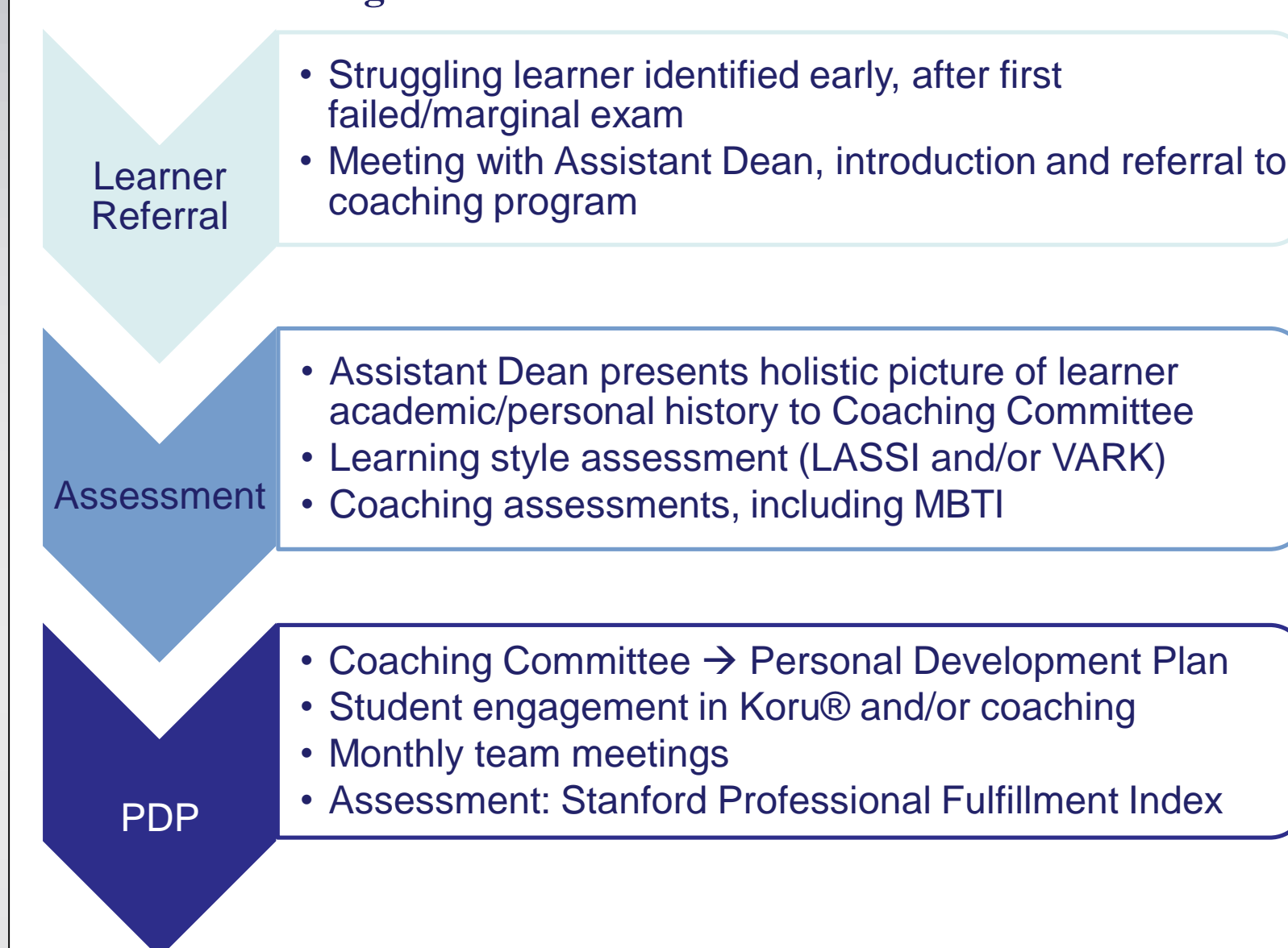
Discussion and Potential Impact

Mindfulness-Based Life Coaching (MBLC)

Core Elements of the Program:

- Learning style assessment and integration with CAA
- Mindfulness and meditation: modeled on Koru@ program
- Coaching and skill building for professional development

Access to the Program and Structure:



Coaching Program Committee:

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Certified life coach | Mindfulness/Koru@ program leader |
| Learning Specialist | Psychologist/psychiatrist |
| ADA Director | Social Work/Case Management |

Opportunities:

- Innovative development of holistic, individualized support program
- Improvement in learner burnout and academic success
- Research in the field
- Collaborative relationships with outside institutions
- Train the trainers model, retreats, conferences

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