University of Florida to host National Consortium for Building Healthy Academic Communities

Third National Summit focuses on comprehensive, evidence-based approaches to wellness

On April 6 and 7, the University of Florida will host the National Consortium for Building Healthy Academic Communities’ (BHAC) third summit on best practices in promoting and sustaining wellness in academic settings. The biannual conference, launched in 2013 at The Ohio State University, brings together transdisciplinary leaders, faculty, students and staff from academic institutions of all sizes, as well as policy makers from professional organizations and academia who are committed to improving health and wellness outcomes in institutions of higher learning and their surrounding communities.

BHAC is a rapidly growing organization for academic institutions that facilitates and supports optimal health and wellness in faculty, staff and students through innovation, collaboration and evidence-based programming. Multiple studies show that strong wellness cultures and programs in organizations lead to reductions in healthcare costs and health insurance premiums and, most importantly, healthier and more engaged faculty, staff and students.

“UF is excited to partner with BHAC and to serve as the host for this conference,” said Jodi Gentry, Vice President for UF Human Resources. “We all benefit from a healthy environment, and exploring evidence-based practices helps us better understand the
impact of programs and approaches on our university community, culture and climate. As a preeminent university, we are proud to take a leadership role in furthering these efforts."

Among the program will be a presentation on UF’s Field and Fork Program, which creates awareness about food insecurity and sustainable food practices and educates the UF community on how to make balanced food choices. The Field and Fork Campus Food Program Pantry supports students, faculty and staff who need help finding healthy food for themselves and their families.

Other presentations by academics from about a dozen universities will cover topics such as implementing a cost-effective, comprehensive wellness programs in a university setting; combining mental health treatment and exercise is medicine; healing with arts; managing stress in the classroom to improve learning; collecting mental health data on campus; and using data to build a healthier academic community.

Keynote speakers include:

Behavior change expert Kathy Dempsey, RN, MED CSP, President, Keep Shedding! Inc.

Global physician executive Ray Fabius, M.D., Co-Founder of HealthNEXT, Harvard Shool of Public Health

Neuroscientist Amishi Jha, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Psychology, Director, Contemplative Neuroscience, UMindfulness Initiative, University of Miami

Raj Patel, Ph.D., Professor, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas, author of “Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System”

Bernadette Melnyk, Ph.D., RN, FAANP, FNAP, FAAN, Associate Vice President for Health Promotion, University Chief Wellness Officer and Dean, College of Nursing, The Ohio State University
Additionally, “Dancing With the Stars” pro Louis van Amstel will lead the group in a LaBlast wellness activity.


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