Creating a culture shift: Life & Work Connections looks to support 8 dimensions of wellness

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This story is a follow-up to a three-part series highlighting new services being offered through Life & Work Connections, including financial [1], legal [2] and relocation [3] resources. This article examines the big picture: how the expanded services fit into the office’s overall vision, and how a new campuswide effort will take that vision to the next level.

Josephine Corder had only been in her position as the permanent director of Life & Work Connections for six months when the pandemic hit, requiring her team to pivot and rework [4] the office’s offerings based on a new public health reality.

More than two years later, as the office continues to expand its services to meet the evolving needs of the University’s workforce, Corder is looking for new ways to achieve her pre-pandemic vision of helping all employees achieve total wellness at work and at home.

When speaking about her vision, Corder often notes the eight dimensions of wellness: physical, emotional, professional, financial, environmental, intellectual, social and spiritual. For employees to effectively serve others in the campus community, she says, they must first make sure their own needs are met.

"When our cup is full, that's when we can serve others in our community," Corder said. "It's like oxygen masks on planes. You've got to put your own oxygen mask on first before you can assist someone else."

Corder says that sentiment goes for her office as well. Her team's plates were already full with providing child care [5], elder care [6] and other services to employees. So, she began looking for partners to help expand the office's offerings.


In addition to serving employees, Corder says expanding services is part of living three of the six University values [8]: compassion, in understanding that we all face challenges, and many of those challenges aren't visible inclusion, in offering a wide range of services in multiple modalities from multiple access points; and exploration, in recognizing that when we are well, our energy and creative side thrive.

The new and expanded services are only the beginning of what Life and Work Connections is hoping to accomplish, Corder says.

"Part of the work we're looking at is how do we start to have an impact on or influence University culture and the perception of wellness," Corder said. "The community of care isn't just one office. The community of care is all of us."

The key to creating the community of care is collaboration, Corder says, which is the goal of the Well-Being Task Force – a new campuswide effort being led by Natalie O'Farrell, associate director of programs and well-being initiatives for Campus Recreation.

"We're in the process of developing an initiative that will hopefully span the breadth of campus to provide a culture shift and a campuswide conversation about well-being for students, faculty and staff," O'Farrell said. "If our faculty, staff and community aren't well, that will trickle down to our students."

The 11-member task force, which has just been formed, aims to bring service-providing units together to improve communication, share resources and understand the well-being needs throughout campus. The group is made up of representatives from units including University Libraries, Housing and Residential Life, the Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning Affairs and others.

"We are just beginning our work, but there are a lot of smart people in the room with a lot of important ideas," O'Farrell said. "If I'm doing something one way, and the libraries are doing something another way, wouldn't it make more sense to work together to share information, collaborate and provide the biggest impact we can?"

O'Farrell says the group meets every three weeks to discuss priorities and goals, including giving employees and students the skills and the tools they need to manage their well-being proactively, before needing to turn to professional resources.

Corder and O'Farrell agree that outreach is one of the biggest challenges they face. Supervisors can't assume that members of their team know about the resources available to them, Corder says, adding that leaders can make a statement by making time to outline those services, either through their office's Wellness Ambassador [9] or by scheduling a presentation [10] from Life & Work Connections.
“People know the value of time,” Corder said. “So, when we carve out time, that’s a concrete demonstration that, as a leader, I value you and I want to make sure you know about these resources and have the support you need.”

O’Farrell adds that the task force also has ideas around strengthening outreach, including adding a well-being statement and resources to class syllabi and ensuring that those services are outlined during onboarding for new faculty and staff members.

Those interested in sharing feedback and ideas for the work of the task force can email O’Farrell at nfreeland@arizona.edu. 

The members of the task force are listed below.

- Lindsay Bingham, Senior Health Educator, Department of Health Promotion Sciences
- Leah Callovini, Undergraduate Research Coordinator, Office of Societal Impacts
- Josephine Corder, Director, Life & Work Connections
- Arezu Corella, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Programs, Operations and Systems, Enrollment Management
- Kristen Godfrey, Director, Office of LGBTQ Affairs
- Cassandra Hirdes, Assistant Director, Counseling and Psych Services
- Robyn Huff-Eibl, Access and Information Services Department Head, University Libraries
- Chrissy Lieberman, Associate Dean of Students
- Jacob Minnis, Assistant Director of Fitness and Wellness, Campus Recreation
- Natalie O’Farrell, Associate Director of Programs and Well-Being Initiatives, Campus Recreation
- Linda Scheu, Director of Organizational Assessment and Strategic Initiatives, Housing and Residential Life

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