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Pilot project aims to boost mental and physical health

Edmonton – Some people strive on stress - it can be the ultimate motivator - but for others, especially students who are vulnerable when it comes to their mental health status, stress can be more of a foe than friend.

That's why MacEwan University has introduced a pilot project called Physical Activity for Student Success (PASS). It’s to make it easier for students to integrate physical wellness – and ultimately mental wellness – into their lives.

“Stress can aggravate the symptoms of mental health and cause them to flare up,” said Craig Gnauck, counsellor with Wellness and Psychological Services. “Often taking care of the stress helps take care of the symptoms.” It sounds simple but it’s not. “When students are hunkered down, it can feel like nothing else exists, including sleep, meals and exercise.”

Depending on the student’s situation, counsellors and case managers in Wellness and Psychological Services and learning specialists in Services to Students with Disabilities can suggest students head to the university’s Sport and Wellness centre to take advantage of the facility access included in their student fees. Any student can stop by for an orientation, or pair up with a “Fit Buddy” to mentor them during three workouts.

Students can also sign up for a “prescription” for the PASS program that includes another level of services that includes a series of scheduled sessions with a certified personal trainer or exercise physiologist.

“This pilot project sends a message to students that their lives and experiences aren’t compartmentalized,” says Gnauck. “It reinforces that taking care of their mental health also involves taking care of their physical health.” With PASS, it starts with a regular, formal program and we hope it becomes part of their lifestyle on an ongoing basis.

Founded in 1971, MacEwan University inspires its students with a powerful combination of academic excellence and personal learning experiences. Offering more than 65 programs including undergraduate degrees, applied degrees, diplomas, certificates, continuing education and corporate training, the university provides a transformative education in a creative, collaborative and supportive learning environment where creativity and innovation thrive. Located in Edmonton, Alberta Canada, MacEwan University offers a unique student experience that opens up diverse pathways for achievement and growth.

For further information, please contact:
David Beharry, Media Relations Advisor
780-497-5586
Cell: 780-231-5954
Email: beharryd@macewan.ca

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