

Evaluation of Archway: A Personalized Program for First-Year Student Success and Mental Health and Wellbeing

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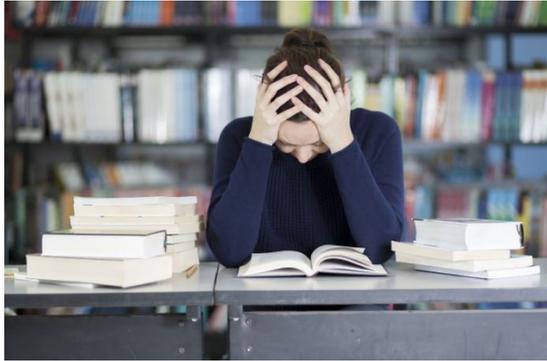
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Context



- First-year students entering postsecondary must navigate a new and complex academic and social environment.
- Research indicates that this transition is challenging - academically, emotionally and socially - and can have negative impacts on mental health and wellbeing during what is an important developmental period (Linden et al., 2021).
- Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the incoming 2020 group of first-year students represents a unique cohort that will be faced with heightened/new challenges.

Context



- In response to COVID-19 and the potential effects on mental health and well-being, McMaster University developed an innovative program to support students, entitled [Archway](#).

Goals of Archway



Three main goals for Archway:

1. Create a sense of belonging in incoming students before they commit, through the summer and once they begin classes
2. Provide individualized support to students; help them navigate McMaster's resources and systems in order to be successful
3. Support Campus Partners in ensuring that students are receiving important and pertinent information in a timely and personalized manner

Structure of Archway



Every incoming McMaster student was automatically “enrolled” in Archway



Students were invited to complete a short survey in order to place them in themed OR general communities

Interest-based themes, e.g. Innovation, Leadership, Travel and Culture, Creative Arts, Sustainability, Gaming, Community Engagement, Health and Wellbeing
Over 5500 responses (out of 8018)



Each community assigned a Mentor and a Coach



All community activity takes place on Microsoft Teams



For a video outlining the structure, check out <https://youtu.be/TAQeqm3-AY>

Mentors & Coaches



Coaches

- 18 Coaches from Housing and Conference Services (Residence Life) and Athletics and Recreation
- Coach's are assigned to between 5 and 18 Mentors (and communities)
- Coach role is to provide support to Mentors
 - Bi-weekly check-ins and team meetings
 - Provide support, resources and personal referrals directly to students with specific needs



Mentors

- 200 upper-year students hired as Mentors
- Paid position - 12.5 hrs/week
- Each Mentor assigned to a community and run community events and conduct 1:1 conversations

Evaluation of Archway

This study is aimed to understand the impact of Archway on **student connectedness** (i.e. a sense of belonging within the McMaster community), **student support** (i.e. opportunities and programs to promote academic success, social-emotional learning and positive health and wellbeing, and connections to appropriate services), and **student retention** (i.e. academic success and continuing in their courses).

Two inter-related studies

- (1) Quantitative Study - Survey administered in Fall & Spring
- (2) Qualitative Study - Interviews with regular, infrequent, and non-users



CIHR IRSC

Canadian Institutes of Health Research
Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada

Brock
University

Quantitative Study

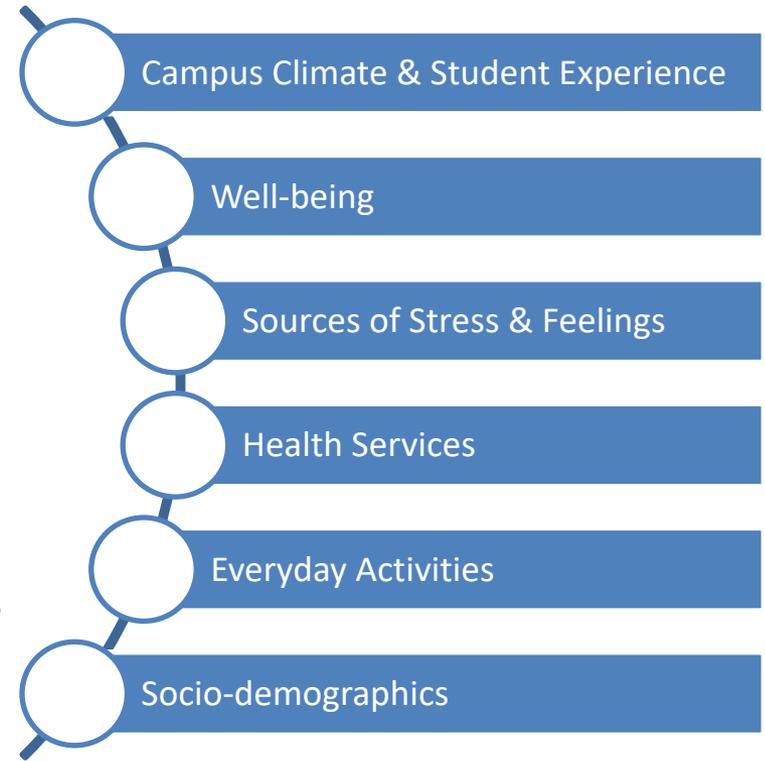


Canadian Campus
Wellbeing Survey

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- Online Platform
 - 94-item tool across different domains
- Est. 20-25 minutes to complete
- CCWS Survey administered - September (Baseline) and March (Follow-up)
- Linked to Institutional Research & Analysis



www.ccws-becc.ca

Quantitative Study

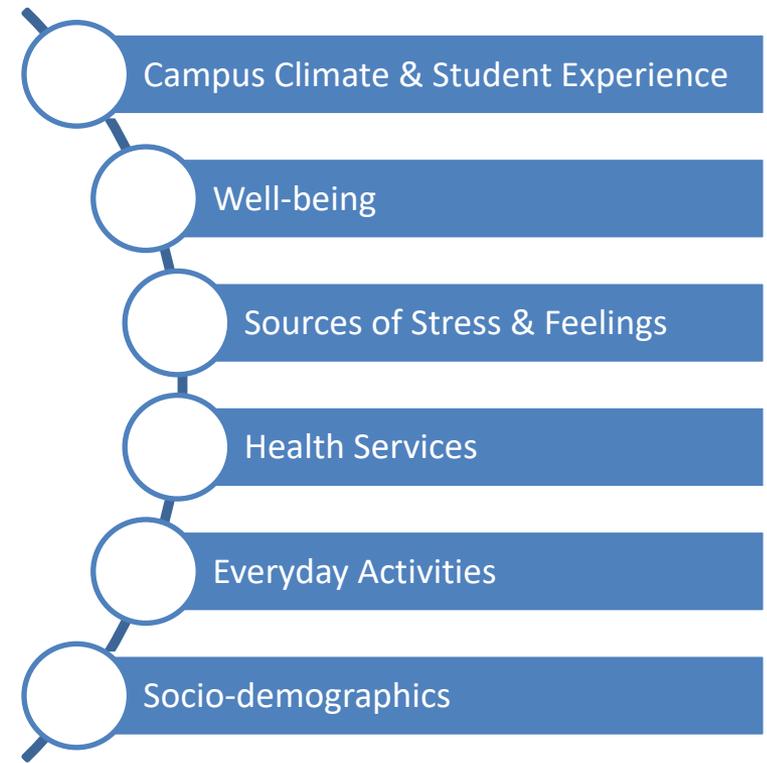


Canadian Campus
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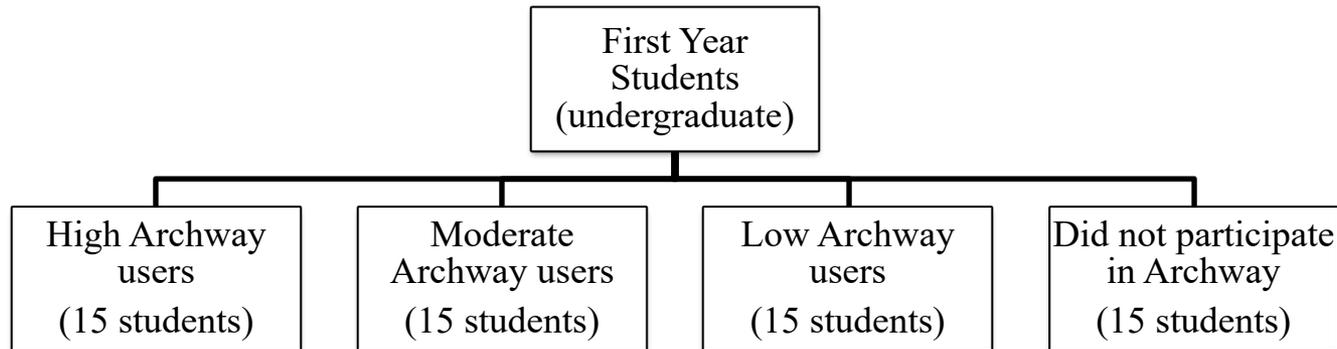
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- **Baseline (September)**
 - Partial Respondents: 2290 = 32%
 - Complete Respondents: 2290 = 27%
- **Follow-up (March)**
 - Partial Respondents: 1887 = 23.5%
 - Complete Respondents: 1677 = 21%



Qualitative Study



- To begin in May
- Aimed to explore: (1) barriers and facilitators to engagement; (2) perceived impact of the Archway program; (3) how the Archway program can be improved; and (4) the roles of coaches and mentors.
- Expected to have 12-15 in each group.
- Will use an inductive thematic analysis approach to analyze data.

Summary

- Archway is an example of a unique program aimed to address the mental health needs for first-year students entering university
 - A program that will continue as a blend of virtual and in-person support
- This CIHR-funded project will examine the impact of Archway as it relates to student support, and indicators of mental health and wellbeing
- CCWS has been specifically designed as an evaluation tool for postsecondary students across Canada; aligning with National Standard of Canada for Mental Health and Wellbeing for Post-Secondary Students - opportunities also exist for data access to 60+ institutions participating

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