

# Peer Wellness Coaching: A Promising Practice to Enhance Student Mental Health and Resiliency

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

As at other North American institutions, UBC students often feel so stressed and overwhelmed that their academic success is at risk (NCHA, 2009, 2013; NSSE, 2014). UBC, along with many higher education institutions, recognizes they have a role to play in supporting students' health and wellbeing not only to enhance academic performance but also support their livelihood off-campus as active and capable citizens.

Health and wellbeing encompasses, among other things, social connection, a sense of belonging, physical health, stress and anxiety, and nutrition. The Peer Wellness Coaching pilot was developed to fill a gap in current student support programming, offering students with individualized, non-clinical peer support to improve their self-management skills.

### Pilot Program Objectives

- Fill gaps in current resources by providing individualized assistance for students needing assistance developing self-management capacities to enhance their ability to cope effectively with demands and prevent negative impact on learning and wellbeing.
- Strengthen resources available for students in need of skill development but who do not require professional mental health services. These services can then be more effectively leveraged to support students in need of mental health intervention.
- Facilitate connection to campus resources through peer wellness coaching for students who may need professional care but who may be initially reluctant to seek counselling services.
- Provide enriched training and peer coaching opportunities for senior undergraduate and graduate students.
- Enhance the peer coaching programs at UBC through the ongoing development of a coaching community of practice for professional staff coordinators of peer wellness, career and academic coaching programs.

### Wellness Coaches

#### Coaches 2014-15

- 13 undergrad students from various faculties

#### Coaches 2015-16

- 12 undergrad students, 1 graduate student from various faculties

#### Training

- Comprehensive 36 hour training program
- One-on-one supervision with program coordinator
- Topics include:
  - Helping skills (e.g. active listening), goal setting, UBC coach approach, wellness topics, building responsible & inclusive communities, QPR (suicide intervention)

#### Commitment

- Volunteer between 6-8 hours a week includes:
  - Ongoing training
  - In-person and online coaching
  - Bi-weekly supervision

### Students Receiving Coaching

#### Who registered to see a coach in 2015-16\*

Year of study	Faculty/Program	38%
First Year	Faculty of Arts	38%
Second Year	Faculty of Science	23%
Third Year	Faculty of Applied Science	15%
Fourth Year	Sauder School of Business	6%
Fifth Year/Above	Faculty of Forestry	5%
Graduate Student	Faculty of FS	3%
Other	Faculty of Education	2%
	School of Social Work	2%
	Faculty of Graduate Studies	1%

\*2014-15 program and year information is similar

#### Registrations 2014-15

- 54 students registered to see a coach
  - 45 students were assigned to a coach and received in-person and/or online coaching
  - 34 students had multiple coaching interactions

#### Registrations 2015-16

- 105 students registered to see a coach
  - 86 students were assigned to a coach and received in-person and/or online coaching Coach approach
  - 64 students had multiple coaching interactions

### Coaching Activity

#### Top topics discussed in coaching

- Time management
- Stress management
- Making/maintaining relationships/friendships
- Transition to university
- Academic Performance

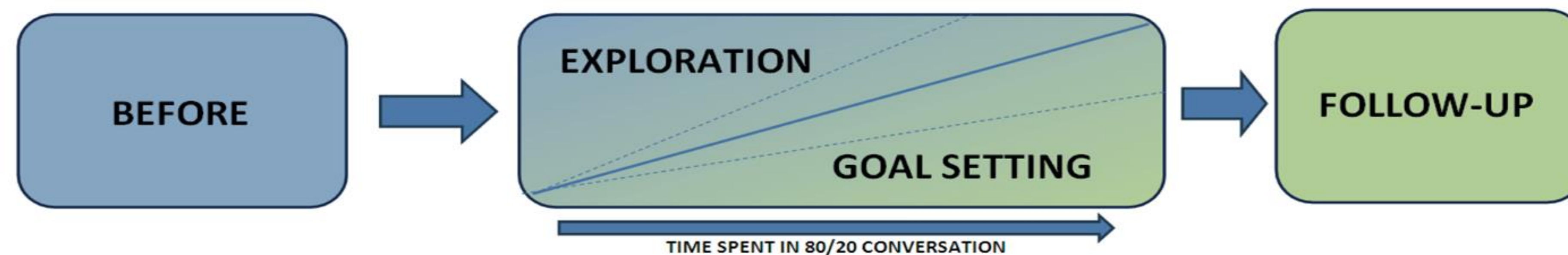
#### Top campus resources/services discussed in coaching

- Counselling Services
- UBC Recreation
- Academic Support Services

## UBC PEER PROGRAMS COACH APPROACH

**The 80/20 Conversation Model Explained:** Over the course of a coaching conversation, coaches spend 80% of the time actively listening to the student and 20% of the time asking questions, offering options, and assisting the student to build a plan of action (Gallup Inc., 2012). Phase I of the Peer Wellness Coaching pilot involved the development of this model which is now used by all UBC Peer Programs coaching programs (wellness, career and academic success coaching).

COACHEE	BEFORE	EXPLORATION	GOAL SETTING	AFTER
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student identification of Problem/Issue</li> <li>Student makes active decision to seek out coaching or is instructed/directed to seek out coaching through recommendation</li> <li>Student takes steps to make an appointment/reach out or appointment is automatically set up</li> <li>Student receives reminder email with information about confidentiality &amp; a prompt to prepare (e.g. think about what your desired outcome is and what strengths you have which could help you get there)</li> <li>Student may or may not mentally prepare for session - brainstorm questions, bring documents, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coaching Dialogue &amp; Storytelling</li> <li>The student is greeted by coach and the process of coaching is explained</li> <li>The student tells their coach about their problem/issue</li> <li>The student answers questions which make them think/reflect about root causes of issue and their desired outcome/current situation</li> <li>The student identifies their desired outcome/state</li> <li>The student identifies their current state and acknowledges their strengths</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student-led Goal Setting</li> <li>Student leads process of asking questions</li> <li>Student assesses if the options suggested by the coach fit in their plan</li> <li>Student leverages their strengths and options to create a plan of action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementing Plan of Action</li> <li>Student implements/takes action on coaching plan</li> <li>Student receives follow up invitation from coaching/coaching program (if applicable)</li> </ul>



COACH	BEFORE	EXPLORATION	GOAL SETTING	AFTER
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coach Preparation (Clutterbuck, 2011 as cited in McLean, 2012)</li> <li>Self awareness and orienting themselves to the student; Put aside personal distractions &amp; focus self-reflection on listening to the student, stop and suspend judgment</li> <li>Time management – arrive early to avoid rushed/flustered feeling</li> <li>Administrative tasks - sign in, updates, collect student info</li> <li>Preparation for repeat students - reviewing notes if the student is a repeat visit (e.g. what did you talk about last time? Where might today's discussion lead?)</li> <li>Coach/coaching program sends out reminder email to students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information Gathering &amp; In-depth Analysis</li> <li>Greet student and explain the process of coaching</li> <li>80/20 guideline for listening vs. asking questions/talking/offering options. The focus is on getting the student to share their story</li> <li>Coach analyses and digs deeper into conversation with open ended questions</li> <li>Coach seek to understand what the current situation is like for the student and to visualize their "ideal place"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student-led Goal Setting (Grant, 2012)</li> <li>Coach can offer suggestions/test ideas but this process should be driven by the student</li> <li>Work together to create a plan to move student towards their desired outcome</li> <li>This may be a multi-step process depending on the student's desired outcome</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow-up (Clutterbuck, 2011 as cited in McLean, 2012)</li> <li>Through a dialogue in the coaching session, the student actively reflects to articulate their desired outcome and contrast it to their current situation</li> <li>Coach follows up with student for follow up appointment (if applicable)</li> <li>Coach reflects on coaching conversation to identify points of success and areas of improvement</li> </ul>

References  
 Clutterbuck, D. (2011, June). *Using the seven conversations of coaching in supervision*. Presentation to the First Annual Coach Supervision Conference, Oxford University, Oxford, UK.  
 Gallup Inc. (2012). *Fundamentals of coaching guideline*. Washington, DC: Author.  
 Grant, A. (2012). *Integrated Model of Goal-Focused Coaching*. *The British Psychology Society*, 7(12), 146-165.  
 McLean, P. (2012). Chapter 7. *Theories supporting the self-as-coach domain*. In P. McLean (Eds), *The Completely Revised Handbook: A developmental approach*, 65-78. Chichester.

## ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

### Overview

Guided by a research framework and logic model

#### Peer Wellness Coach Surveys

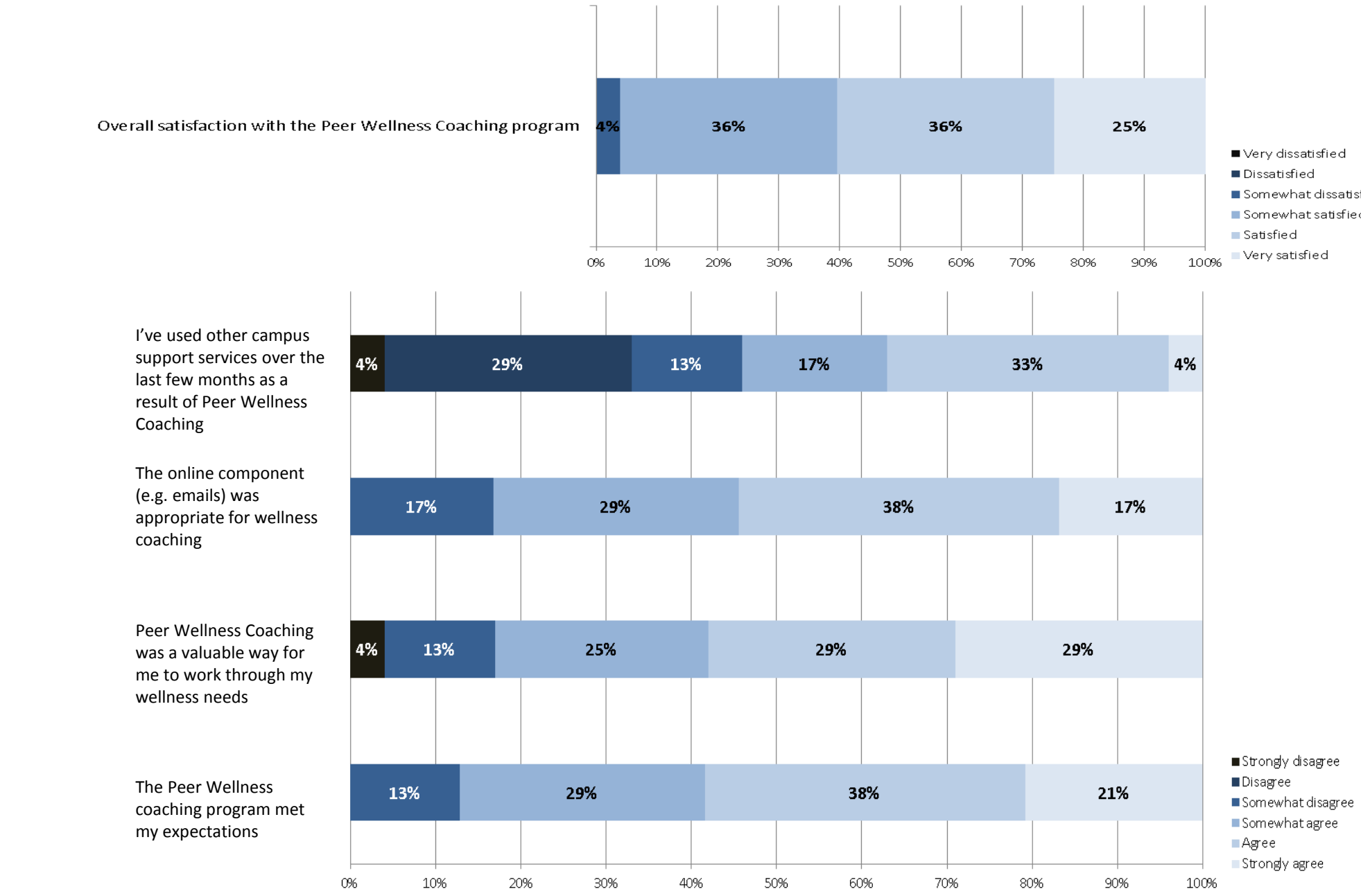
- Experience survey
- Improvement focus group

#### Student Data Collection and Surveys

- Registration
- First meeting quick satisfaction survey
- Coaching completion survey

### Students Experiences with Coaching

Students completing their Peer Wellness Coaching are satisfied however their progress very much depends on the nature of the individual student.



#### Progress and outcomes with wellness goals

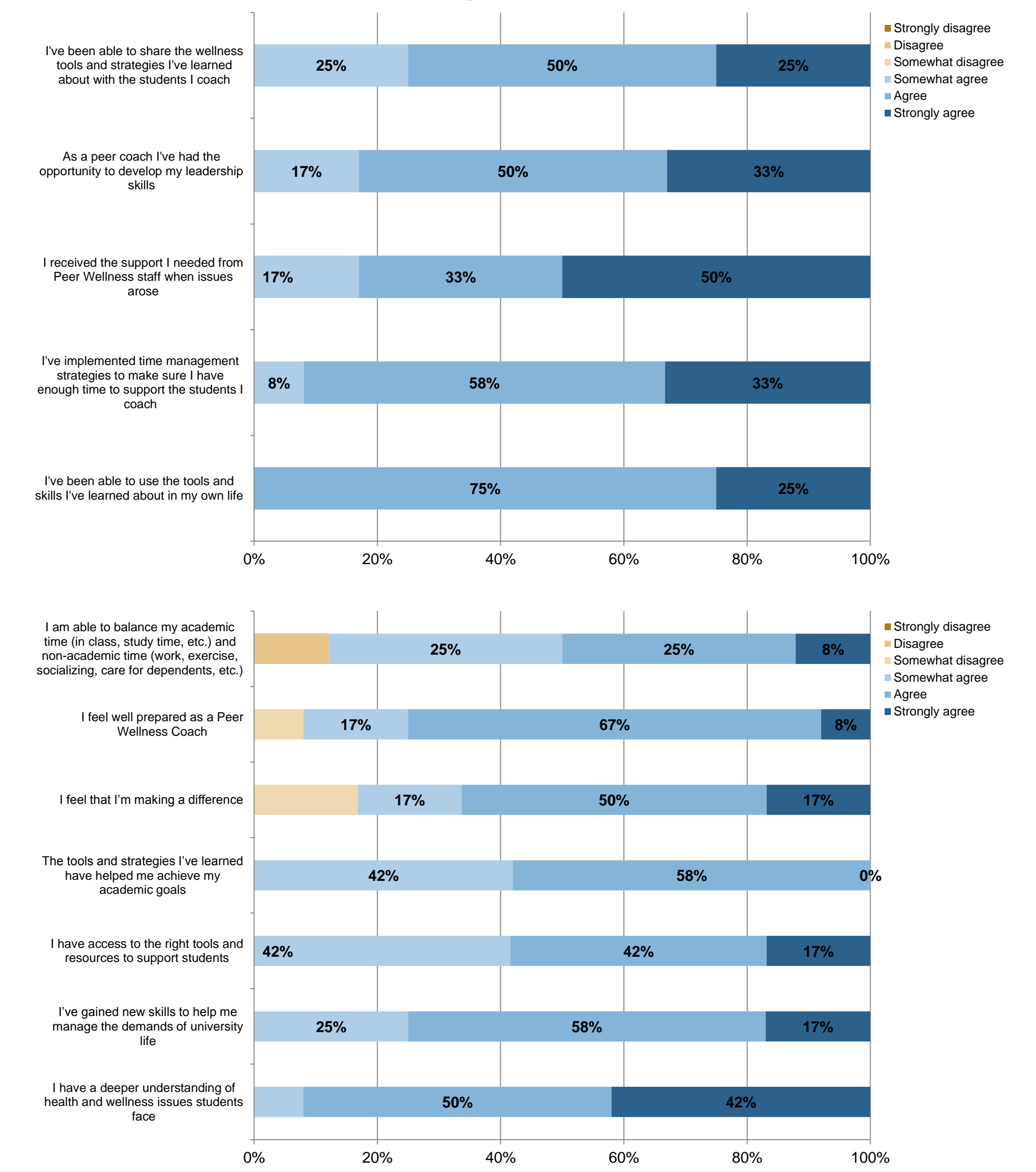
*"It worked inconsistently, but slowly there was some form of progress. Even if it just meant observing what hindered me. I still believe there is work to be done."*

*"I think I'm definitely on my way to reaching my final goal. Reflecting on them right now, I think that my goals are very difficult to achieve within one year due to their nature (emotional health for example.) However, I am more clear about what I'm doing well, and what I need to improve upon. Also, I've identified a lot more tools that I can use as I move forward in achieving my goals. Overall, while I still have some work to do, I feel more confident about the possibility that I will be able to obtain the results for which I seek."*

*"Did not finish mainly because I was very unclear and this is not the best time to do so."*

*"By time I reached for help (Peer Wellness coaching) I was already extremely unmotivated and exhausted by my university life. I think it is hard to break a habit, but it is even harder when one is unmotivated."*

### Peer Wellness Coaches Experiences



### Peer Wellness Coaches Focus Group

**Peer Wellness Coaches have deepened their learning about health and wellness in relation to supporting students:**

*"I've learned a lot from the program about wellness and it's been, really rewarding working with students across campus."*

**Peer Wellness Coaches have deepened their knowledge about their own health and wellness:**

*"It's really positively affected me and just learning about my own wellness and what I need as a student to maintain balance, so being able to work on myself has been an important part of this program."*

**Peer Wellness Coaches benefit from the support of fellow Coaches:**

*"I knew that going into this I'd be helping 'coachees' and my own wellness goals but what I wasn't expecting was like the overwhelming support we give each other and I know that whenever we have issues or we're struggling to coach our 'coachees', we get feedback from each other and it's nice to know that there are others supporting you in what you're trying to do."*

## KEY LEARNING & NEXT STEPS

### Key Learning

**Online Services:** Online services can be the first point of contact for students who don't feel comfortable with or are able to request professional counselling during business hours. The online environment allows for greater accessibility and consistency in coaching. The asynchronous nature allows for customized email responses to students so that the quality and consistency of service delivery is ensured.

**Teachable Skills:** Coaches or other student leaders can learn effective self-management skills and share those skills with other students, thereby increasing their own ability and that of the students they coach, to manage their learning and to balance the demands of their academic and personal lives.

**Peer to Peer Service Delivery:** Students respond well to peer-to-peer service because as fellow students, peers shares similar experiences and are thus perceived to be more relatable. A peer-to-peer model of service delivery reduces the power difference a student may experience with a professional staff, allowing for a more comfortable and safe dynamic. By connecting with a peer, connection is fostered between the student and the broader UBC community, improving student's general university experience and strengthening ties to on-campus resources.

**Coaching Process:** The UBC Coach Approach provides students with an opportunity to share their story, feel heard, and take an active role in their own learning. Having a peer coach follow up with them over a short period of time can be helpful in staying on track, readjusting goals to account for new possibilities, and changing circumstances is a critical component of a growth mindset approach to personal learning.

### Next Steps

Based on the success of the pilot program, two recommendations are being put forward to maintain the sustainability of wellness coaching moving forward: 1) Wellness coaching can be integrated into the service delivery model of health and wellness services as an integral part of a stepped care model and into other peer coaching programs where wellness issues often arise; 2) Skill development and knowledge of wellness topics can be incorporated into student leader training to build capacity of student leaders across the University and to enhance existing peer support programs.



a place of mind

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA