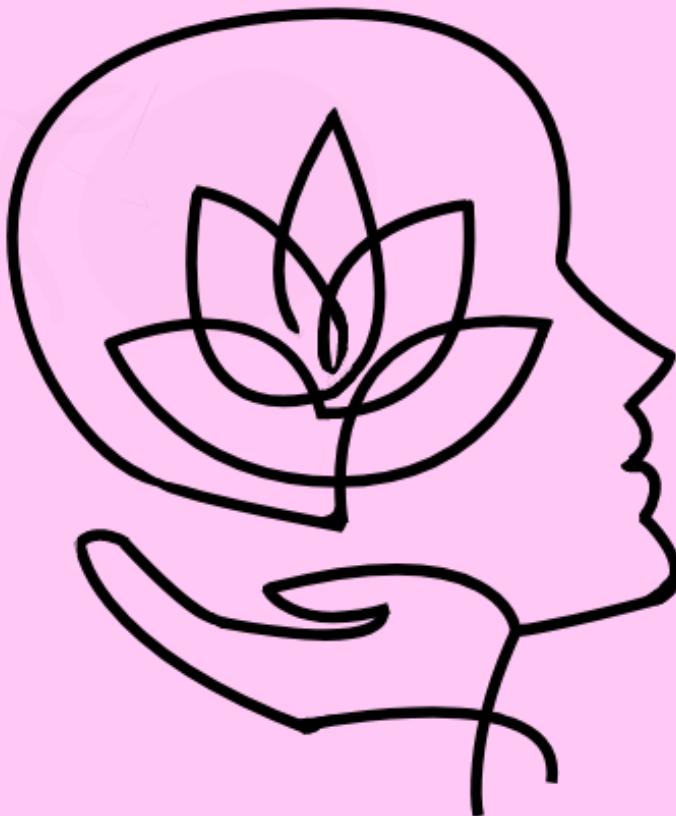


ANNUAL PROGRESS



REPORT

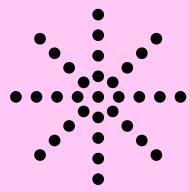
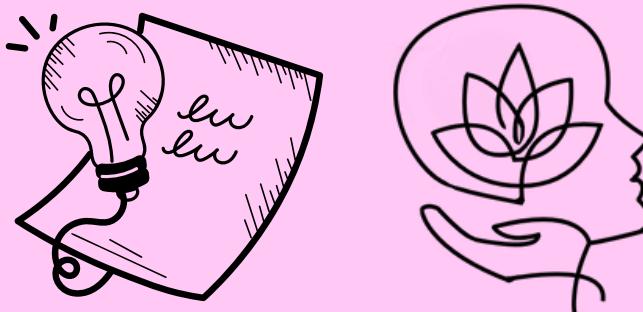
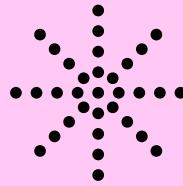


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INTRODUCTION



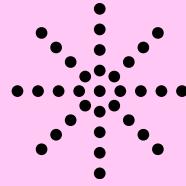
Mental health remains a critical concern for students at the Munk School, with ongoing challenges related to academic stress, resource accessibility, and overall well-being. Recognizing these issues, the Mental Health Policy Initiative (MHPI) has worked to bridge gaps in mental health support by implementing targeted programs and policies. Unlike previous years, where MHPI focused primarily on assessing student mental health needs, the 2024-2025 report shifts toward evaluating the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at addressing these concerns.

This progress report outlines the impact of MHPI's programming over the past year, including initiatives such as Mental Health Resource Sessions, Treat Yourself Tuesdays, and social wellness events. It also examines survey findings that highlight continued stressors for students, particularly workload management and the job search process. Despite the positive reception of many MHPI efforts, a substantial number of students remain unaware of available resources, underscoring the need for improved outreach and engagement.

As the Munk School community continues to navigate these challenges, this report serves as both a reflection on the progress made and a roadmap for the future. By identifying successes, gaps, and areas for improvement, MHPI aims to build a stronger, more accessible, and more effective mental health support system for students.



CURRENT STATE



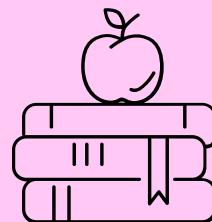
In previous years, MHPI's policy team has conducted an Impact Assessment on student mental health and services at Munk. This year, MHPI will be pivoting from this model and providing a Progress Report focusing on delivering, implementing and evaluating Impact Assessment recommendations. MHPI's Assessment highlighted a lack of awareness of mental health resources at Munk and included three recommendations to improve student's mental health for the following year. Recommendations were **increased guidance with mental health resources, continued support through social events and increased coordination with faculty**.

This following year, MHPI ran initiatives such as Mental Health Resource Sessions, Treat Yourself Tuesdays and various collaborative events. The report will review and evaluate these programming and policies implemented throughout the year from these recommendations to support student mental health at Munk. Students continued to report feeling overwhelmed throughout the academic year, highlighting internship and job searching as a main stressor to their well-being.

Additionally, while students reported benefits of MHPI initiatives, many still did not know about them and wanted more support. The issues raised indicate more communication is needed between faculty and students, especially considering unique circumstances that influence and impact students lives and experience at Munk. A jurisdictional scan of mental health initiatives at other postsecondary institutions further highlights the importance of clear communication, proactive outreach, and well-integrated support systems in addressing student mental health challenges.

JURISDICTIONAL SCAN

Mental health support for Canadian postsecondary students during COVID-19 pandemic: An environmental scan



The study examined mental health support at 20 universities and 24 colleges in Ontario during COVID-19. Findings revealed that 91% offered virtual counseling, 84% provided general MH resources, **but only 55% had COVID-19-specific materials**. Larger institutions had more comprehensive MH support, while many outsourced services via apps and hotlines. Support for out-of-province and international students was limited.

The study recommended enhancing **equitable mental health services, ensuring proactive outreach for marginalized students, and leveraging peer support networks**. It also emphasized the need for crisis-specific MH strategies and clearer communication of available services. Implementing these measures can improve accessibility, engagement, and the overall effectiveness of MH support in postsecondary institutions.

Postsecondary Mental Health Policy in Canada: A Scoping Review of the Grey Literature

The gap between faculty, students, and community services in addressing postsecondary mental health in Canada remains a significant issue. The scoping review highlights that **no national policy** exists to standardize mental health services across Canadian postsecondary institutions, **which leads to a fragmented and inconsistent approach to student mental health. Only a few universities** have established formal collaborations with local community services, **limiting students' access to a continuum of care that integrates campus and external resources**. Moreover, the review finds that **faculty and staff are inadequately trained** to recognize and respond to mental health concerns, with many feeling unprepared to support students.

This gap in training and coordination between campuses and external services contributes to a lack of timely and effective mental health support for students, demonstrating the need for comprehensive, well-integrated policies and partnerships to ensure all students have access to the mental health care they need.

McGill University- Student Wellness Hub

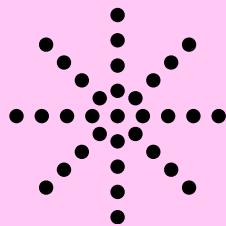
McGill offers a robust mental health support system through its Student Wellness Hub, integrating services into a stepped-care model. This allows students access to various intervention levels, from online resources to in-person counselling. **The university also supports international students through the International Student Services program, offering advice on health insurance and navigating Quebec's healthcare system.** Their approach ensures accessible, inclusive mental health services and provides specific programming for diverse student groups.

Dalhousie University- Dal After Dark & Peter Wellness Program

Dalhousie's Dal After Dark program is a key part of its efforts to foster community and connection **through weekly social events**, from trivia nights to yoga. The **program is designed to reduce isolation and stress, helping students build a sense of belonging.** Additionally, the Peer Wellness Program offers peer support, ensuring students have access to non-academic social resources throughout the year.

University of Calgary- Academic Calendar Deadlines Policy

The University of Calgary has an Academic Calendar Deadlines Policy to prevent deadline clustering. **This policy helps spread out final exams and major assignments to reduce student stress during peak periods.** The university also **encourages student advocacy for workload balance**, with student groups **actively pushing for a more structured approach to course deadline management.**



PREVIOUS MHPI IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

WHAT ARE MHPI IMPACT REPORTS?

MHPI conducts annual impact assessments to evaluate student mental health at the Munk School. Both qualitative and quantitative methods (e.g., surveys and focus groups) are used in these reviews in an effort to address issues and trends in student mental health. Each report focuses on key areas such as academic dress, access to mental health resources, student advocacy, and institutional responses to mental health concerns. Over the years, MHPI has incorporated student feedback and collaborated with administration and faculty to tackle systemic mental health concerns within the Munk School.

KEY FINDINGS FROM PAST MHPI REPORTS (2021-2024)



i. Academic Stress and Workload

Across all three reports, students consistently reported high levels of stress as a result of heavy academic workloads, poor coordination of deadlines, and the demanding nature of professional development activities (e.g., internship searches). In both 2022 and 2023, over half of the students surveyed indicated that coursework had a moderate to major negative impact on their mental health. Many students expressed concerns that deadlines were clustered together, leading to an exacerbated level of stress that limited their ability to engage in self-care.

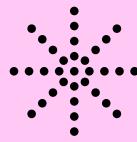
II. Access to Mental Health Resources

Many students had trouble accessing the mental health services they needed at Munk. While orientation sessions introduced available services, follow-up communication about such services didn't occur. Out-of-province and international students, in particular, struggled to navigate the University of Toronto healthcare system. The 2024 report called for establishing a dedicated mental health resource center at Munk to address gaps between on and off campus resources. Although orientation sessions somewhat familiarized them with available mental health services, follow-up communication was lacking. Many students, particularly international and out-of-province students, struggled to navigate the University of Toronto's healthcare system and find appropriate support. The 2024 report highlighted the need for a dedicated Munk School mental health resource hub to consolidate on-campus and external support services.



III. Sense of Community and Support

One positive finding over the years was the impact of peer support. Many students reported that friendships and informal peer networks reduced stress levels. In-person social activities (e.g., mental health nights and informal gatherings) were found to be beneficial. Differences were noted in community building between Master of Public Policy (MPP) and Master of Global Affairs (MGA) programs, with MGA students reporting feeling less engaged.



IV. Faculty and Administrative Support

Student interactions with faculty and administration regarding mental health were mixed. While some students found certain professors supportive, others felt hesitant to disclose mental health struggles due to concerns about professionalism or repercussions. The 2022 and 2023 reports noted that students frequently avoided approaching administration due to fears related to policies like the University-Mandated Leave of Absence Policy (UMLAP), which some viewed as punitive rather than supportive.

EVOLUTION OF FINDINGS OVER TIME

2021/22 Report

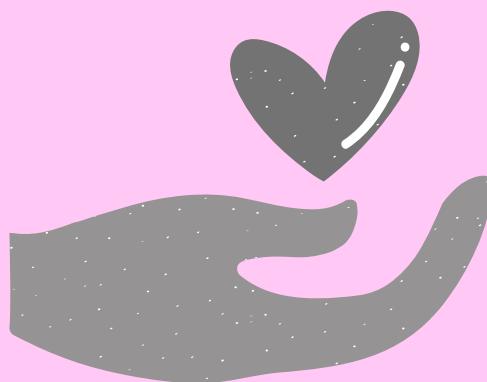
- Established baseline data on mental health challenges among MPP students
- Found that students were reluctant to discuss mental health concerns with faculty or administration
- Highlighted the stress caused by workload and lack of deadline coordination

2022/23 Report

- Expanded participation to include MGA students, though engagement remained lower than MPP students
- Identified continued concerns about resource accessibility and lack of faculty engagement with student mental health concerns
- Observed that hybrid learning options had a positive impact on student well-being coordination

2023/24 Report

- Emphasized the need for a more structured approach to mental health support at Munk (e.g., including a dedicated resource hub)
- Found that while social events helped build community, there was still a disconnect between MPP and MGA cohorts
- Identified ongoing challenges related to workload, with students advocating for better deadline



REVIEW OF 24/25 MHPI PROGRAMMING AND INITIATIVES



The Mental Health Policy Initiative has implemented a range of programs and initiatives during the 2024/25 academic year aimed at fostering well-being, support, and improving mental health among Munk students. These initiatives were open to both MPP and MGA students and were designed to address the concerns and implement the recommendations from the 2023/24 impact assessment. The initiatives focused on the recommendations of improving guidance on navigating mental health resources and support through social events.

Findings from last year's MHPI surveys and focus groups revealed that many students felt they lacked adequate information about mental health resources at Munk and UofT. To address these concerns, MHPI strengthened its resource-sharing efforts, including the MHPI Resource Information Session, which directly targeted the need for continued support and guidance on accessing mental health services. Last year's reports emphasized the positive impact of social events on student well-being, highlighting that non-academic interactions helped students build connections and improve their sense of belonging. In response, MHPI expanded its social wellness programming with initiatives like the MGA Wellness Breakfast, Treat Yourself Tuesdays, and collaborative events (such as cookie decorating and decompression sessions), ensuring that students had consistent opportunities to engage in low-pressure, supportive spaces throughout the year.

Below is a review of key events and strategies, assessing their impact and effectiveness.

MGA WELLNESS BREAKFAST

The MGA Wellness Breakfast, hosted at the MOB Lounge on November 27th and December 4th, provided a welcoming and relaxing space for students to take a break from their busy schedules. Running from 9 to 5, the event offered flexibility, allowing students to drop in at their convenience throughout the day. A variety of foods and snacks were available, the event featured relaxing activities such as coloring, which provided a simple yet effective way for students to de-stress and engage in casual conversation with peers. The space also encouraged casual conversations, making it an opportunity for students to connect with peers in a relaxed environment.

MPP TREAT YOURSELF TUESDAY

Accompanying the MGA Wellness, MHPI launched Treat Yourself Tuesdays. This initiative provided MPP students with an opportunity to take a break and prioritize self-care. Held on November 19th and December 3rd in the CG Atrium on the third floor, the event created a welcoming space for students to unwind amid their demanding academic schedules. With a selection of treats and refreshments available, the initiative encouraged students to pause, recharge, and engage in conversations with peers as a way to de-stress. The accessibility of the CG Atrium made it easy for students to drop by between classes, ensuring strong participation. These events were held during a stressful period where exams were coming and seasonal sadness.

These events were strategically held during a particularly stressful time in the academic year, as students navigated upcoming exams, heavy coursework, and the challenges of seasonal change. With final assessments approaching, many students faced heightened pressure, making it especially important to have accessible opportunities to step away from their work and engage in activities that promote well-being. By offering relaxed, welcoming spaces with food, creative activities, and social connection, the MGA Wellness Breakfast and MPP Treat Yourself Tuesdays provided relief during this period. These initiatives helped students manage stress and also reinforced the importance of integrating wellness practices into their routines, making them a valuable addition to the academic environment. Expanding such programming during peak stress periods, such as midterms and final exams, could further enhance their impact. These efforts directly responded to last year's recommendation to extend social wellness programming, as previous surveys emphasized that students benefited from opportunities to connect with peers outside of academic settings.

MHPI RESOURCE INFORMATION SESSION

As part of January Jumpstart, the MHPI Resource Information Session provided students with a comprehensive overview of the mental health and wellness resources available at Munk, UofT, and the broader community which was compiled by MHPI policy analysts. This session was designed to help students kick off the new year with the tools and support they need to navigate academic, personal and health challenges. MHPI Analysts guided attendees through various resources, covering everything from academic support, counselling services to wellness initiatives. To encourage participation and reinforce the importance of self-care, students who attended were entered into a raffle to win a 5-Minute Journal, a tool designed to support mental wellness through gratitude and reflection. This added an engaging incentive while aligning with MHPI's mission of promoting accessible and sustainable mental health practices. The session successfully provided students with valuable information in a structured yet approachable format.

The Resource Information Session also directly addressed a key recommendation from last year's report, which highlighted that many students struggled to navigate mental health services at Munk and UofT, highlighting the need for continued support and clearer guidance on available resources. By offering a dedicated session at the start of the winter term, MHPI took an important step toward improving awareness and accessibility of mental health supports.

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HOLIDAY COOKIES AND CHEER

To immerse Munk students in the holiday spirit, MHPI collaborated with the Master of Public Policy Student Association (MPPSA) and the Munk School Black Student Association (MSBA) to host a Holiday Cookie Decorating Session. This initiative aimed to provide students with a fun and festive way to de-stress during a time that can often feel overwhelming. The event created a warm and welcoming environment in CG 160, where students could enjoy decorating cookies with a variety of icing, sprinkles, and toppings. It offered a lighthearted break from academic pressures, allowing students to unwind, socialize, and engage in an activity that promoted mindfulness. Beyond its festive appeal, the Holiday Cookie Decorating Session aligned with MHPI's broader mission of integrating wellness into student life through accessible, enjoyable activities. These types of events provide students with meaningful ways to de-stress while building a stronger, more connected Munk community.

The Holiday Cookie Decorating Session also reflected last year's recommendation to expand social wellness programming, recognizing that informal, low pressure events help students build connections and improve their sense of belonging. By providing a space for students to relax and engage in a creative activity, this initiative reinforced the importance of non-academic interactions in supporting mental well-being especially during highly stressful academic periods with exams approaching and heavy assignment deadlines.

UPLIFT AND UNWIND

In collaboration with the Equity, Diversity, and Public Policy Initiative (EDPP), MHPI hosted, "Uplift and unwind" a yoga session in February, aimed at strengthening mindfulness practices and promoting student wellness. This event provided students with an opportunity to step away from their academic demands and the daily stresses to unwind in a guided yoga class. Led by an experienced instructor, the session incorporated breathing exercises, gentle stretching, and mindfulness techniques to help students cultivate relaxation and mental clarity. Physical activity is essential for a healthy mind, promoting overall well-being by reducing stress, improving mood, and enhancing focus. Regular movement supports both physical and mental health, making it a valuable tool for managing academic pressures. Incorporating activities like yoga into wellness initiatives encourages students to prioritize self-care, build resilience, and maintain balance in their daily lives. After the session, participants attended a casual debrief session with food to further unwind and engage in meaningful discussion about managing stress, diversity and inclusion at Munk.



MENTAL HEALTH POLICY CONFERENCE

In March, MHPI hosted an insightful Mental Health Policy Panel Discussion at CG-160, bringing together students, faculty, and professionals to explore critical issues in mental health policy. Featuring Dr. Nigel Turner, a scientist with Institute for Mental Health Policy Research at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and an assistant professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public and Sara Liden, a Senior Policy Advisor at the Ontario Ministry of Health, Mental Health and Addictions Division, with Dr. Daniyal Zuberi, Professor of Social Policy, as the moderator. The discussion provided a unique opportunity to hear from leading voices in the field. The panel covered a range of pressing topics, including policy challenges, innovative solutions, and the evolving landscape of mental health services. Panelists shared valuable insights on research, policy implementation, and the intersection of mental health with broader social issues. The event also highlighted potential career pathways in mental health policy, offering students practical guidance on how to contribute to this field. Beyond the discussion, the event fostered meaningful connections, allowing attendees to engage with panelists and network with peers who share an interest in mental health advocacy and policy making.

SOCIAL MEDIA INITIATIVES

MHPI's social media initiatives played a key role in promoting mental well-being by providing students with easily accessible resources, mindfulness techniques, and motivational content. Through regular posts, MHPI shared valuable information on mental health support services, self-care strategies, and practical tips for managing stress. These posts helped bridge the gap between students and available resources, ensuring that wellness support was not limited to in-person events but was also accessible anytime online. In addition to sharing resources, MHPI used social media to promote mindfulness techniques, encouraging students to incorporate simple, effective practices into their daily routines. Guided breathing exercises, gratitude prompts, and relaxation strategies were featured, helping students develop sustainable mental health habits. Motivational content, including uplifting messages and reminders to prioritize self-care, also contributed to a supportive and encouraging online environment. The initiative successfully expanded MHPI's reach, making mental health conversations more visible and engaging within the student community.

MHPI's social media initiatives directly aligned with last year's recommendation to improve guidance on navigating mental health resources by ensuring students had continued access to wellness information throughout the year. Last year's surveys indicated that many students felt they lacked sufficient knowledge of available mental health services at Munk and UofT, and that ongoing communication was needed to bridge this gap. By using social media to share mental health resources, self-care strategies, and stress management tips, MHPI extended its reach beyond in-person events, making critical information more accessible and ensuring students could engage with wellness content at their own pace.



QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS: KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY

OVERVIEW

The 2024 MHPI Student Mental Health Survey, shared in partnership with MPPSA, included 14 questions and received 47 responses (MPP1: 24; MPP2: 12; MGA1: 11). Conducted less frequently this year to reduce survey fatigue, it assessed student mental health at Munk, awareness and accessibility of supports, and perceptions of MHPI initiatives.

THE MHPI STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH SURVEY CONSISTED OF THREE SECTIONS

The first section, General Mental Health & Wellbeing Questions, consisted of 7 questions. The purpose of this section was to gain an understanding of student mental health and well-being at Munk.

This section included:

- Likert-scale questions (ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represented the most negative option and 5 represented the most positive option).
- Multiple-choice questions allow students to select all applicable options.
- Yes/No questions.
- One open-ended question invited students to elaborate on their mental health experiences.

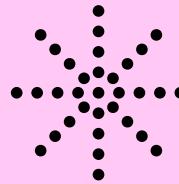
The second section, MHPI-Specific Questions, aimed to assess the effectiveness and scope of MHPI's initiatives and programming in improving student mental health at Munk. This section contained four questions, with response options including:

- A Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (where 1 represented "not helpful/didn't know about MHPI's events and initiatives" and 5 represented "very helpful").
- Yes / No questions.
- Multiple-choice questions allow students to select relevant responses.

Further, the survey included two open-ended questions, inviting participants to provide additional comments.



SURVEY EVALUATION



SECTION ONE

I. Overall Mental Health During the Academic Year

Nearly 50% of students rated their mental health as somewhat or very negative, while only 6.4% described it as very positive. The average rating was 2.7 on a 5-point scale, suggesting that many students struggle with mental well-being and stress. (See Appendix A)

II. Balancing Academics, Extracurriculars, & Job Search

When asked about balancing academics with extracurricular involvement and job hunting, 68% of students reported feeling overwhelmed or very overwhelmed. Only 8.5% felt neutral, while fewer than 25% felt somewhat or not at all overwhelmed. (See Appendix B)

III. Key Contributors to Negative Mental Well-Being

Nearly 75% of students identified job and internship search stress as a major factor affecting their mental well-being, followed by academic pressure and work-life imbalance. Only 6.4% reported no significant stress, underscoring how widespread these challenges are. (See Appendix C)

IV. Awareness of Mental Health Resources

While 45% of students reported being somewhat or very aware of mental health resources, nearly 35% indicated limited or no awareness. This gap suggests a need for stronger communication and outreach around available support. (See Appendix D)

V. Cultural Inclusivity & Support

Only 13% of respondents felt fully supported in meeting their cultural needs, while 32% felt somewhat supported. 40% indicated that the question was not applicable. (See Appendix E)

VI. Need for Tailored Mental Health Resources

Over 76% of students agreed that more tailored mental health resources are needed for specific groups, such as international students, while only 23% felt that current support is sufficient. (See Appendix F)

VII. Support for International & Diverse Students

Students highlighted the need for stronger academic and career support, improved financial aid, and more inclusive community-building initiatives. Mental health services, accessibility support, and greater transparency from administration were also commonly requested.

SECTION TWO

I. Perceived Impact of MHPI Initiatives

45% of students found MHPI initiatives helpful, but 32% were unaware of them, highlighting a need for greater visibility. (See Appendix G)

II. Attendance in January MHPI Info Session

Only 15% of students attended the January session, indicating low engagement. (See Appendix H)

III. Usefulness of MHPI Info Session

Among the 10 responses, 40% found the session very helpful, while another 40% were neutral—suggesting a mixed impact and room for improvement. (See Appendix I)

IV. Desired Mental Health Resources at Munk

Students expressed strong interest in more structured support, with counselling services (51%) and peer support groups (47%) being the most requested. Workshops and wellness activities were also noted as valuable additions. (See Appendix J)



SECTION THREE

I. Strategies to Reduce Stress and Manage Workload

Students recommended improved academic coordination, expanded mental health services, stronger community support, and more job search resources—especially for international students. Practical tools like time management workshops and burnout guides were also suggested.

II. Additional Feedback on Mental Health Support

Responses highlighted concerns around low visibility and accessibility of resources, the need for greater flexibility with deadlines, and calls for more proactive communication and planning.

KEY QUANTITATIVE THEMES



A. Mental Health and Accessibility of Resources

- Student mental health remains a concern, with an average rating of 2.7/5—slightly higher than last year's 2.5/5. Nearly 50% rated their mental health as somewhat or very negative, reflecting continued emotional strain driven by academic and job-related pressures.
- Awareness of available resources shows modest improvement. This year, 34% of students reported low awareness, compared to last year's 73.3% who found access and promotion of services “slightly” or “not at all” sufficient. However, only 12.8% of international and diverse students felt culturally supported, echoing persistent gaps in inclusive mental health services.

B. Academic Pressure and Workload Management

- Academic stress remains high, with 68% of students this year reporting feeling overwhelmed or very overwhelmed—consistent with last year's average rating of 4.2/5 among first-years and 44.4% of second-years feeling “very overwhelmed.”
- Deadline coordination continues to be a key issue. Similar to last year, students reported that overlapping assignments and internship application periods significantly impacted their mental health. Rigid deadlines and limited flexibility were also noted as ongoing barriers for those balancing multiple responsibilities.

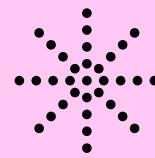
C. Work-Life Balance

- Work-life balance remains a challenge, with 46.8% of students identifying it as a key stressor—though this marks an improvement from last year, when 80% of first-years and over half of second-years reported similar struggles.
- While some students shared personal coping strategies, many called for stronger institutional support, such as wellness programming, peer-based study groups, and time management workshops to better manage competing demands.

D. Sense of Community and Support Network

- Perceptions of community and inclusivity at Munk remain mixed. Only 12.8% of students felt fully supported, while 32% somewhat agreed and 15% disagreed—indicating a decline from last year's reported improvement in cohort support, where 66.7% of second-years felt positively connected.
- Students highlighted the need for stronger peer networks, inclusive social events, and informal opportunities to build relationships. International students, in particular, reported difficulties adjusting to the academic system and accessing resources. Suggestions included more mentorship programs, cultural events, and consistent cohort orientation experiences.

LIMITATIONS



1. Sample Size Constraints

With 47 total survey responses, this study provides valuable insights into student mental health at Munk. However, the limited sample size may not fully represent the experiences of the entire student body. Participants who chose to engage with the survey may have stronger opinions on mental health concerns, introducing potential sampling bias.

2. Self-Reporting Bias

As a self-reported survey, responses are subject to personal interpretation and social desirability bias. Some students may have understated or exaggerated their experiences based on perceived expectations or discomfort in sharing personal challenges. This could impact the accuracy of reported stress levels and the perceived effectiveness of available resources.

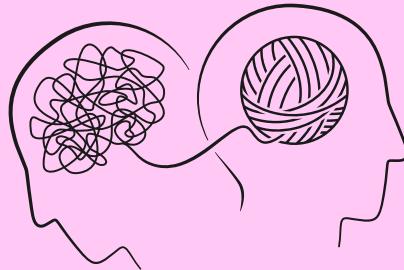
3. Lack of a Survey Response for MGA2

The MGA2 cohort did not participate in this survey, unlike MPP1, MGA1, and MPP2 students. As a result, their perspectives on mental health challenges are not reflected in the findings. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of student well-being at Munk, future assessments should explore ways to encourage greater participation from all student groups.

4. Lack of Longitudinal Data

This survey was conducted between February 10 and mid-February, capturing only a snapshot of student mental health at that specific time. This limited time frame restricts the ability to monitor trends over an extended period.

Since the survey coincided with a particularly stressful period marked by internship hiring and coursework deadlines, it may overrepresent stress levels. Extending data collection over a longer duration would provide a more comprehensive understanding of mental health trends across different periods of the academic year.



RECOMMENDATIONS



ENHANCING COORDINATION ON COURSE DEADLINES

The survey results found that many students experience significant stress and workload imbalances due to multiple due dates being close together. There are periods where there are multiple deadlines, leading to overwhelming workloads, while other weeks have a few or no assignments or exams due. To address this issue it is recommended that faculty members collaborate to coordinate due dates across different courses to ensure that deadlines are well distributed. A well-coordinated approach to due dates will not only help students manage their time more effectively but also promote better learning outcomes by allowing them to focus on their coursework without the added pressure of multiple simultaneous deadlines.



INCREASING AWARENESS OF MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELLING SESSIONS

The survey found that 51 percent of the students surveyed expressed a need for mental health counselling sessions. This suggests that there is a growing concern among students regarding their ability to manage academic stress and maintain their overall well-being. The increasing academic workload, along with personal and social pressures, as well as the challenges of the internship search, can significantly impact students' mental health. Increasing awareness of mental health counselling services can provide students with the support they need to manage academic demands, reduce stress, and develop effective coping strategies. This can be achieved by informing more students on where they can receive individual counselling sessions so they can receive personalized support, as well as introducing group sessions where students can share their concerns, receive guidance, and foster a sense of community.



IMPROVING AWARENESS OF MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

The survey results found that about 34% did not know where to find mental health resources at Munk, a trend that is observed in past surveys. This lack of awareness can prevent students from accessing the support they need, leading to increased stress and decreased well-being. Increasing the visibility of mental health resources through posters and online student portals can help students easily find the information they need. Regular communication and outreach efforts, such as periodic emails, newsletters, and social media campaigns, can further reinforce awareness while reducing stigma around seeking mental health support. While we hosted an information session in January to grow awareness of mental health resources, increased attendance through targeted outreach and incentives could help improve engagement. Additionally scheduling the event earlier in the year and aligning it with students' schedules may encourage participation. Faculty and staff should also be equipped to direct students to appropriate resources when necessary. By increasing awareness of mental health resources through proactive communication and visibility efforts, students will be better equipped to seek support, ultimately fostering a healthier and more supportive academic environment.



NEXT STEPS



To build on past impact assessments and ensure sustained improvements in mental health support at Munk, MHPI will focus on five key next steps. These steps prioritize actionable strategies that address recurring concerns and enhance awareness, accessibility, and faculty collaboration.

Continue Progress Reports to Strengthen Recommendations

MHPI will transition from conducting isolated Impact Assessments to providing annual Progress Reports that track both improvements and persistent challenges in student mental health support. MHPI will;

- Conduct Yearly Comparisons: Analyze data from past surveys to identify trends in student concerns and assess whether previous recommendations led to tangible improvements.
- Refine Recommendations Based on Feedback: Use focus groups and surveys to adjust programming to better reflect student needs.
- Advocate for Administrative Action: Present findings to faculty and leadership, reinforcing the need for structured changes rather than one-time initiatives.

Strengthen Promotion & Outreach for Mental Health Events

Although MHPI hosts mental health events, attendance and awareness remain key challenges. Increasing promotion efforts across multiple channels will ensure that students are informed and engaged. MHPI will;

- Increase Frequency of Communications: Sending frequent emails throughout the term highlighting upcoming events and mental health resources. Use Slack, Instagram, LinkedIn, and student newsletters to reinforce messaging and broaden outreach. Implement countdown reminders leading up to major events to build anticipation.
- Improve Event Accessibility & Scheduling: Host hybrid sessions so students can attend virtually if they cannot be present in person. Schedule events during high-traffic periods (e.g., before/after lectures, lunch hours, and right before exams) to ensure students can attend without disrupting academic commitments.
- Incentivize Participation: Offer snacks, coffee, or raffle prizes for students who attend events to make participation more appealing.

Increase Faculty Coordination on Workload Management

A major source of student stress is inconsistent workload distribution across courses. Coordinating deadlines between faculty members will help ensure that students do not experience intense workload spikes. MHPI will;

- Work with MPPSA and administration to create a shared faculty calendar where major deadlines and exams are mapped out before the semester begins. Encourage faculty to adjust deadlines to prevent multiple major assignments from clustering within the same week.

Improve Awareness & Accessibility of Mental Health Resources

Surveys consistently show that a significant portion of students are unaware of available mental health resources at Munk. Increasing visibility and accessibility of these resources will help more students seek support when needed.

- **Expand Campus Presence:** Place posters with QR codes linking to mental health resources in classrooms, study areas, and common spaces.
- **Expand Mental Health Resource Hub:** Develop a centralized, easily navigable online resource page within the Munk student portal. Update the hub regularly to include current mental health initiatives, counseling options, and upcoming wellness events.

Develop Tailored Support for International and Diverse Students

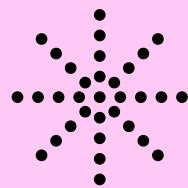
International and equity-deserving students often face unique mental health challenges, including navigating Ontario's healthcare system and finding culturally competent support. MHPI will implement targeted outreach and programming to better support these students.

- **Introduce Specialized Mental Health Sessions for International Students:** Host orientation-week mental health workshops that specifically address challenges such as accessing healthcare in Ontario, adjusting to academic life, and managing cultural transitions. Collaborate with U of T's International Student Services to provide tailored guidance.
- **Work with Student Equity Groups to Improve Inclusivity:** Engage SLI's to co-host mental health events that reflect diverse student needs. Ensure that mental health resources incorporate culturally responsive counseling options.
- **Advocate for More Accessible Mental Health Services at U of T:** Work with MPPSA and administration to increase awareness of U of T's free individual and group counseling sessions.

By implementing these next steps, MHPI will create a more structured, data-driven, and student-focused mental health support system at Munk. Through these targeted actions, MHPI will work toward making mental health support at Munk more effective, proactive, and impactful for all students.



CONCLUSION



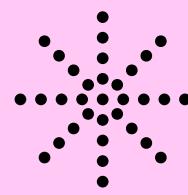
Over the past year, MHPI has made significant strides in addressing student mental health challenges at the Munk School through targeted programs, policy recommendations, and awareness initiatives. The 2024-2025 progress report highlights both the successes and ongoing gaps in mental health support, particularly in the areas of academic stress, resource accessibility, and student engagement.

While initiatives like Treat Yourself Tuesdays, Mental Health Resource Sessions, and social programming have garnered positive feedback, survey data indicates that many students still experience high levels of stress, especially due to academic workloads and job search pressures. Furthermore, awareness of available mental health resources remains uneven, underscoring the need for enhanced communication and outreach strategies.

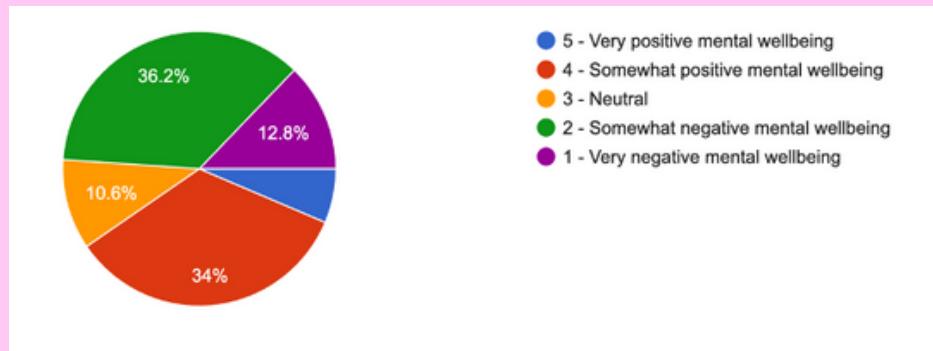
Looking ahead, MHPI is committed to strengthening its efforts in five key areas: improving faculty coordination on workload management, expanding mental health counseling services, increasing resource awareness, enhancing peer support networks, and addressing the unique needs of international and diverse students. These steps aim to create a more accessible and effective support system that prioritizes student well-being.

By continuing to collaborate with faculty, administration, and student organizations, MHPI strives to build a more inclusive, proactive, and responsive mental health framework. Through sustained advocacy and engagement, we can ensure that all Munk students have the resources, community, and institutional support needed to navigate their academic and personal challenges successfully.

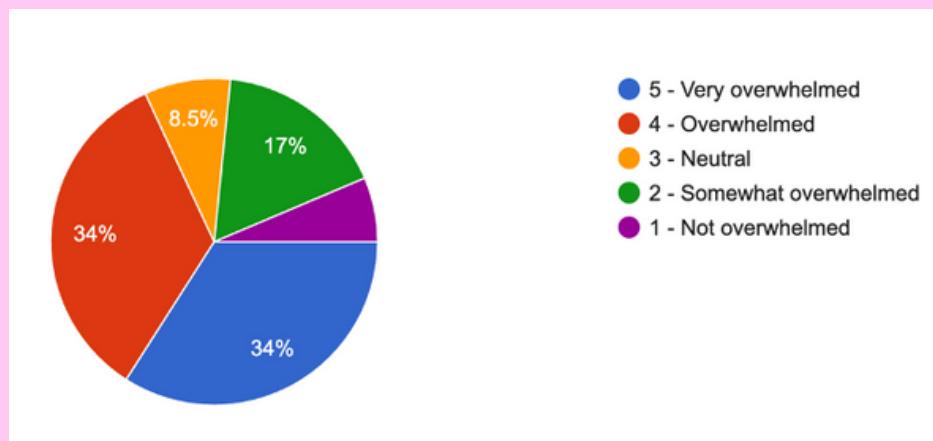
APPENDIX



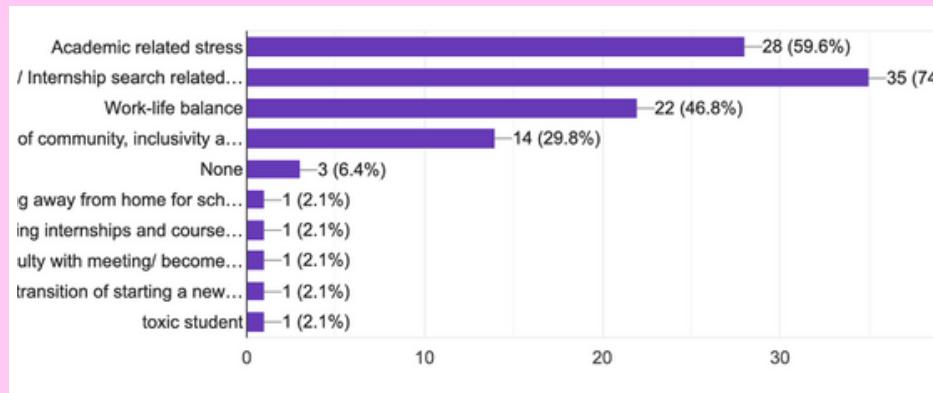
Appendix A: Overall Mental Health During the Academic Year

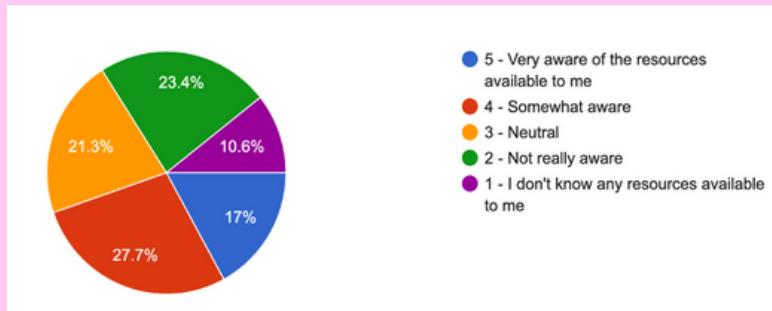
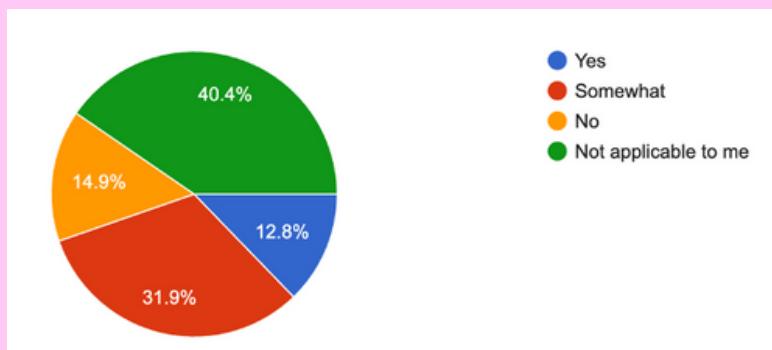
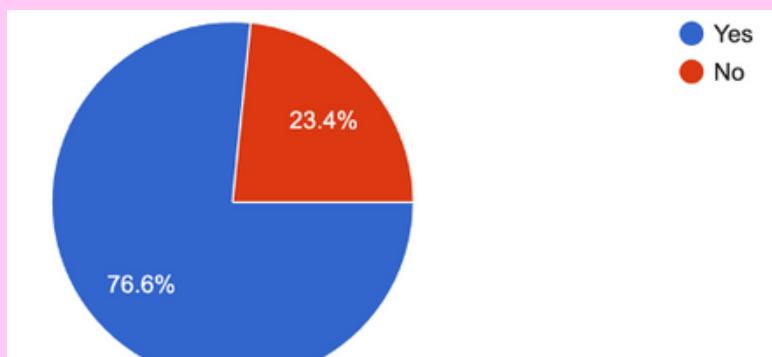
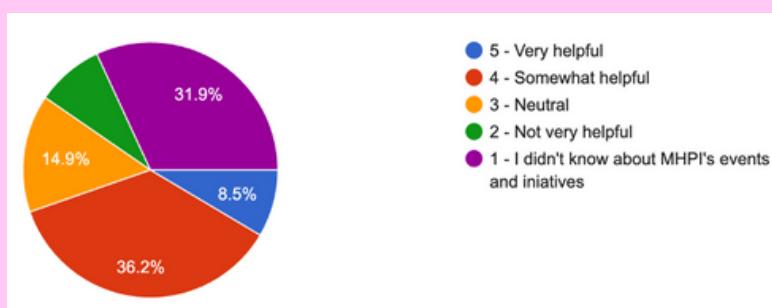


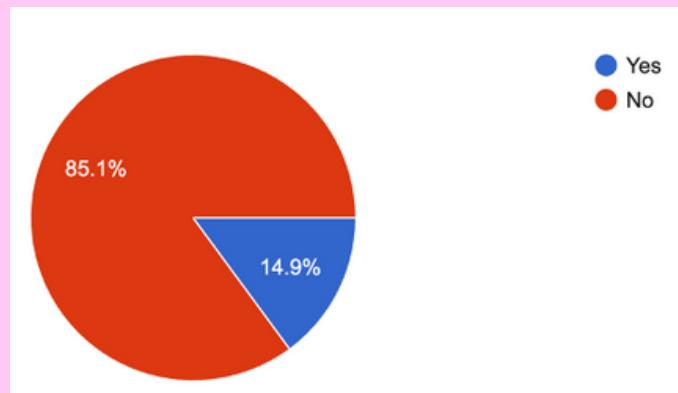
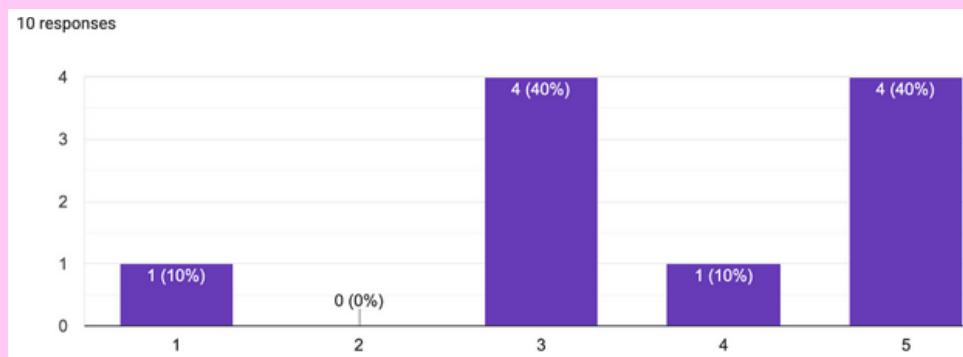
Appendix B: Balancing Academics, Extracurriculars & Job Search



Appendix C: Key Contributors to Negative Mental Well-Being



Appendix D: Awareness of Mental Health Resources*Appendix E: Cultural Inclusivity & Support**Appendix F: Need for Tailored Mental Health Resources**Appendix G: Perceived Impact of MHPI Initiatives*

Appendix H: Attendance in January MHPI Info Session*Appendix I: Usefulness of MHPI Info Session**Appendix J: Desired Mental Health Resources at Munk*