

CONVERSATIONS IN THE DISCIPLINES

Evaluation Report

SECTION I

Launching SUNY Initiatives on Mindfulness & Health, March 4th, 2016, University at Buffalo

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SECTION II

Objectives of Conference:

The conference was designed to advance SUNY's strategic goal of a "Healthy New York" by developing SUNY-wide attention to the efficacy of mindfulness in prevention of illness and in solving chronic health problems. The specific goals of the conference were: (1) to foster research and education in mindfulness; and (2) to move SUNY towards inter-institutional collaboration on mindfulness research and education.

Format of Conference:

This was a one-day conference, held from 9 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on March 4, 2016 at the University at Buffalo. The morning began with a keynote address by Daniel Barbezat, Ph. D., who spoke on *Contemplative Pedagogy in the 21st Century: A Research Agenda*. Dr. Barbezat is a nationally prominent scholar and is the Executive Director of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. The keynote was followed by two concurrent panel discussions: *Clinical Education & Training for Healthcare Professionals* and *Mindfulness & Campus Services*. The afternoon began with a keynote address by David Vago, Ph.D., regarding *Neuroscientific Assessment of the Impact of Mindfulness on Brain Functioning*. Dr. Vago is a leading expert on neuroscientific assessment of mindfulness. The keynote was followed by two additional concurrent panel discussions: *Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention* and *Mindfulness and Education*. Additionally, there were 24 poster presentations of mindfulness research and educational projects from scholars at numerous educational institutions.

Attainment of Goals - Conclusions Drawn:

The conference achieved its goals of fostering research and education in mindfulness, and moving SUNY towards inter-institutional collaboration on such research, as evidenced by: the number of attendees (nearly 400); the quality of the keynotes and panels; the enthusiastic participation of audiences in discussion; the number of poster presentations; the willingness of attendees to share contact information so that conference organizers can take steps to facilitate further collaboration; and the information garnered from evaluation forms.

Our conclusions are: (1) Despite the results of empirical studies that have established many benefits of mindfulness for health, brain functioning, and learning ability, mindfulness has not been adequately integrated into SUNY's educational, research, and community service missions; (2) Despite substantial mindfulness research (much supported by NIH grants) that has already been accomplished, there is a

great deal more to be done; (3) There is growing interest in mindfulness, which is already integrated into academics and student life at many SUNY campuses; and (4) The SUNY scholars and professionals who have been working on mindfulness want to identify and collaborate with others doing similar work, but have not had adequate mechanisms for doing so. In sum, the day-long conference was tremendously successful in *launching* SUNY initiatives on mindfulness and health, but institutional support, from SUNY and from the individual campuses, will be necessary in order for the research and educational agendas to move forward most productively.

Participation:

400 people registered for the conference, 350 attended

Main Speakers – Keynotes & Panelists:

Opening remarks: SUNY Trustee Joseph Belluck
 Keynote: David Vago, Ph.D., Harvard Medical School
 Keynote: Daniel Barbezat, Ph.D., Amherst College
 Panelist: Catherine Cook-Cottone, Ph.D., SUNY Buffalo
 Panelist: Sherri Darrow, Ph.D., SUNY Buffalo
 Panelist: Ron Epstein, M.D., University of Rochester Medical Center
 Panelist: Carl Fulwiler, M.D., Ph.D., University of Massachusetts Medical School
 Panelist: Dan Huston, M.S.T., New Hampshire Technical Institute
 Panelist: Michael Krasner, M.D., University of Rochester Medical Center
 Panelist: Hedva Lewittes, Ph.D., SUNY Old Westbury
 Panelist: Steven Lynn, Ph.D., SUNY Binghamton
 Panelist: Sue Mann Dolce, Ph.D., SUNY Buffalo
 Panelist: Stephanie Phillips, J.D., SUNY Buffalo
 Panelist: Loretta Pyles, Ph.D., SUNY Albany

Institutions/Colleges/Businesses Represented:

50 Institutions of Higher Education:

Alfred University, Amherst College, Canisius College, Daemen College, D'Youville College, Harvard Medical School, John Hopkins University, Medaille College, New Hampshire Technical Institute, Niagara University, Rochester Institute of Technology, Trocaire College, University of Rochester, SUNY Adirondack, SUNY Albany, SUNY Binghamton, SUNY Brockport, SUNY Broome Community College, SUNY Buffalo, SUNY Buffalo State College, SUNY Canton, SUNY Cayuga Community College, SUNY Cobleskill, SUNY Corning Community College, SUNY Cortland, SUNY Delhi, SUNY Empire State College, SUNY Erie Community College, SUNY Farmingdale, SUNY Finger Lakes Community College, SUNY Fredonia, SUNY Genesee Community College, SUNY Geneseo, SUNY Monroe Community College, SUNY New Paltz, SUNY Niagara County Community College, SUNY Old Westbury, SUNY Oneonta, SUNY Plattsburgh, SUNY Polytechnic Institute, SUNY Purchase, SUNY Rockland Community College, SUNY Stony Brook, SUNY Suffolk Community College, and SUNY Upstate Medical.

69 Local Businesses and Organizations:

A Muse Ink, LLC, Accent on Windows, Amherst Pediatrics, Behavioral Healthcare Consulting, Better Business Bureau, Buffalo Computer Recycling, Buffalo General Hospital, Buffalo Healthy Living Magazine, Buffalo Medical Group, Buffalo Natural Awakenings, Buffalo Zen Dharma Community, Catholic Charities of WNY, Catholic Health System, CCSI, Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, Church of the Nativity, Citizen Science Community Resources, Clarifien Center, LLC, CMH Counseling, Darwin Martin House, E3 Rochester, EOL Planning, EOS Living, Erie County Council for the Prevention of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Inc., Erie County Medical Center, Exploring What's Next, Finding Strategies, FLACRA, Healing Caregivers, Hillside Children's Center, Himalayan Institute, HSBC Bank, Inspired Health Group, Jericho Road Community Health Center, Jewish Family Services, Kaleida Health, Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health, Lifetime Health, MaLa Contemplative Space, Mindgardens, LLC,

Mindfulness Institute of Buffalo, NYS Office of Mental Health, Olean Meditation Center, Olmsted Center for Sight, Partnership for the Public Good, Porter Center of Health, Meditation, and Martial Arts, Quiet Still Place, Rich Products, Rochester Regional Health, Roswell Park Cancer Institute, Schnitter Ciccarelli Mills PLLC, Schuyler Hospital, Sheridan Medical Group, Sisters of Charity Hospital, Sisters of St. Mary, Spectrum Human Services, United Health Care, Unity Church, Vail Medical, Visiting Nursing Association of WNY, Wadsworth Center, Wellness Connection, Western New York Children’s Psychiatric Center, Wheatfield Pediatrics, WNY Consortium of Higher Education, Women and Children’s Hospital, Yogis in Service, as well as 18 individual clinicians from private practice.

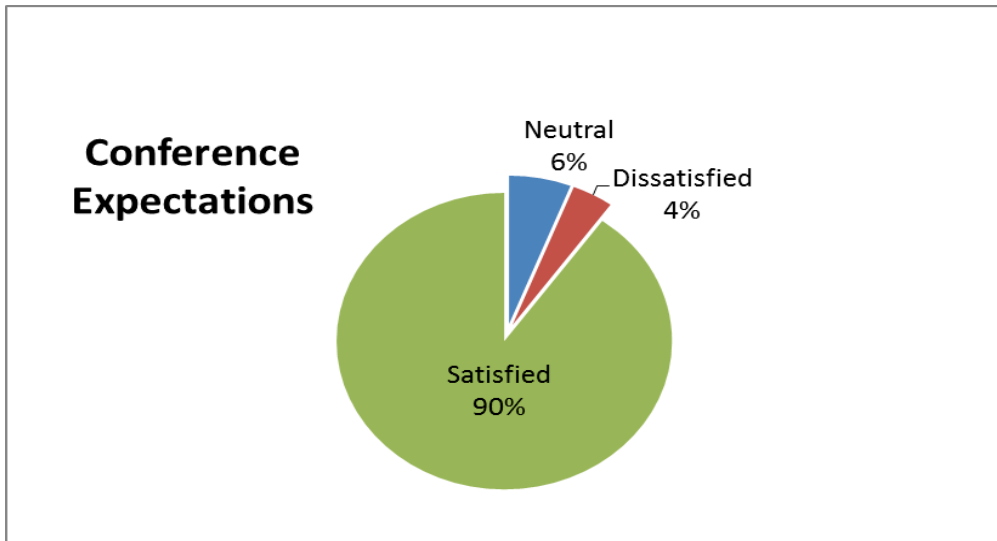
10 K-12 Schools:

Amherst Central School District, Ben Franklin Elementary School, Grand Island School District, HFM BOCES, JFK High School, Kenmore Tonawanda School District, Kenmore West High School, Nichols School, the Park School, and the Williamsville Central School District.

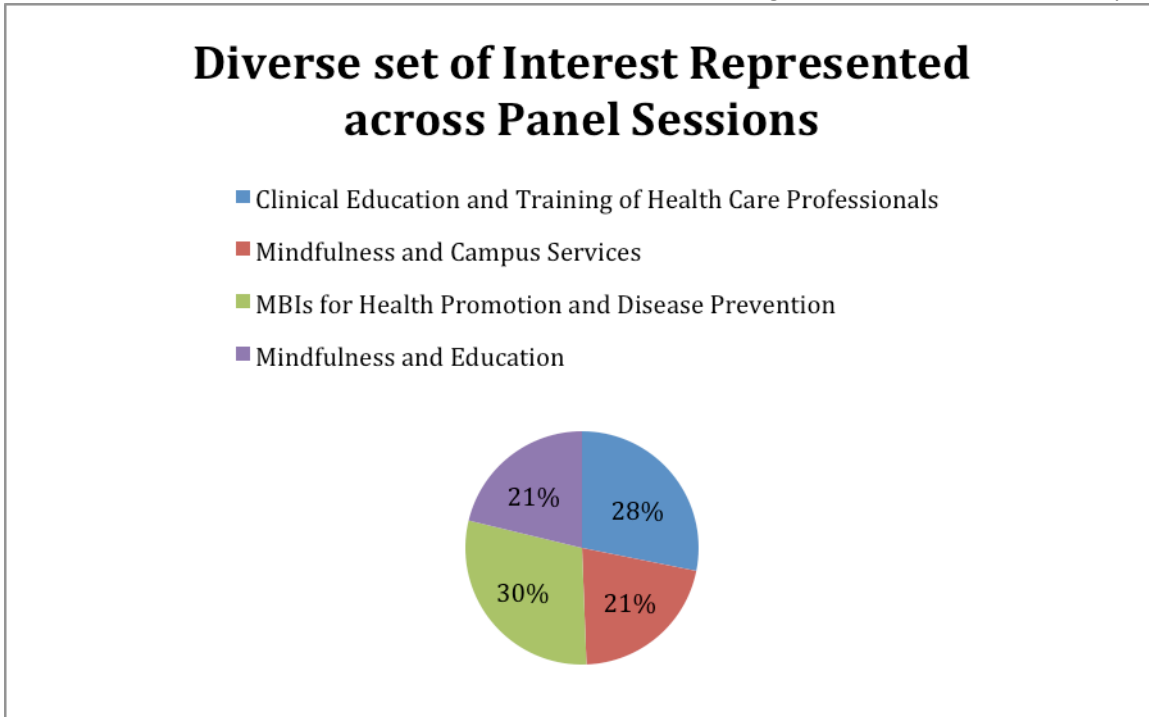
Comments by Participants (Results of Post-Conference Evaluation):

The conference evaluation results suggest that 90% of the conference participants viewed the conference positively. Of the 350 attendees, 152 people responded to the online evaluation. Using a basic Likert scale survey, findings show that 92% of those surveyed were very satisfied with the conference cost of \$20, which covered nothing more than food at the event. The low cost is completely attributable to the funding received from SUNY-CID.

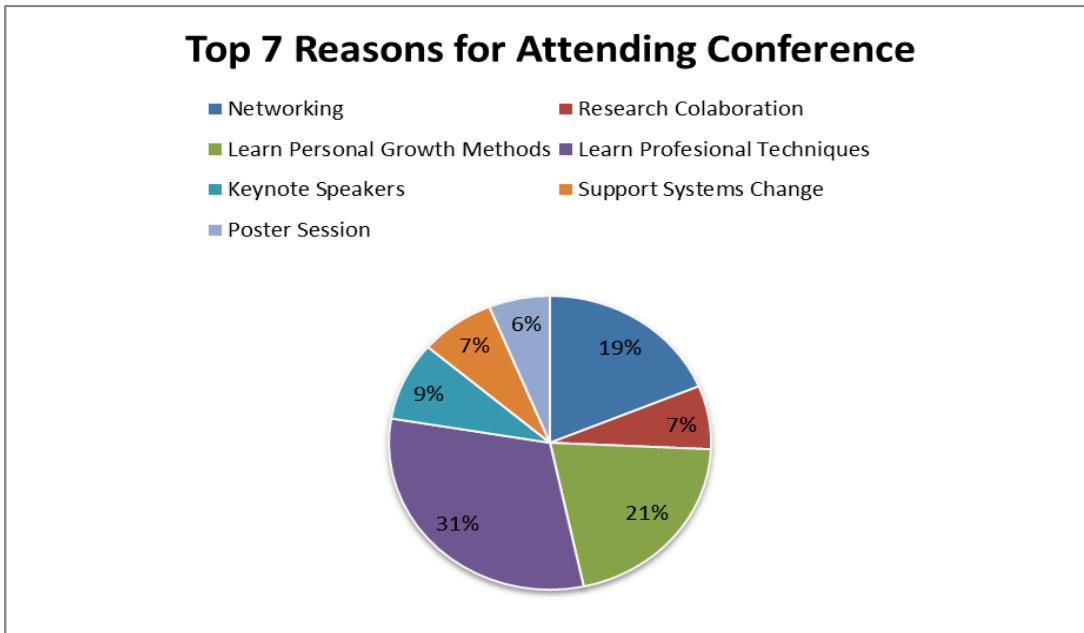
Of particular note from the evaluation, 96% of respondents were somewhat to very satisfied with the conference keynote speakers. Ninety percent were somewhat to very satisfied with the panel discussion speakers. Of those surveyed, 90% found the conference fully met their expectations for the day, as illustrated below.



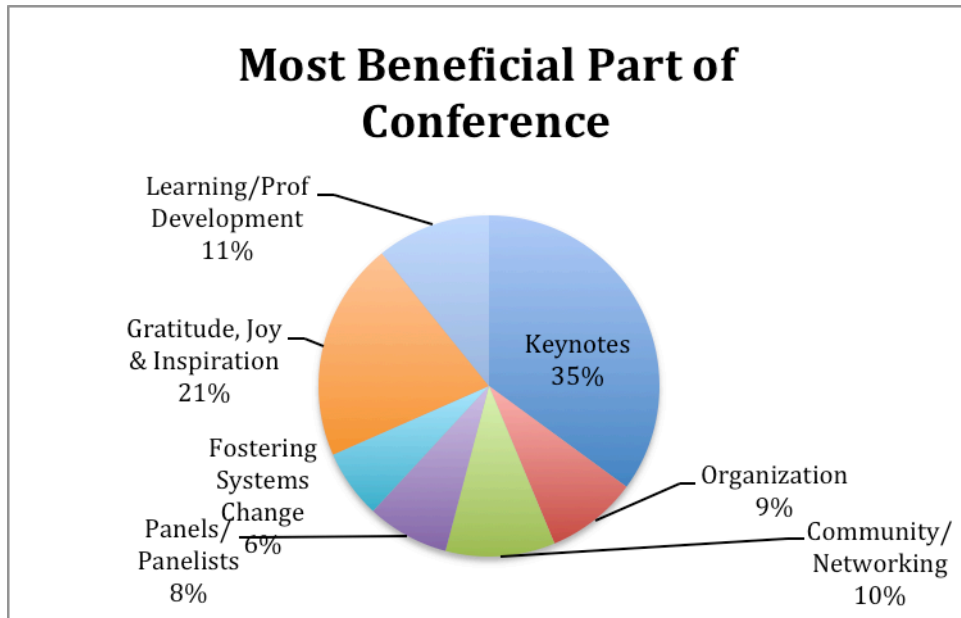
As indicated in the chart below, the conference drew a wide range of interest across the disciplines.



The evaluation revealed 7 primary reasons for attending the conference. The most popular reason was to learn mindful techniques for professional use. The second most popular reason was to learn mindful methods for personal growth. The opportunity to network with others who share a similar professional interest was also an important reason for attending.



Attendees felt the most beneficial aspects of the conference were the keynote speakers, the opportunity for learning and professional development, and connecting with like-minded others. Also worth noting was the outpouring of gratitude and joy for holding this event, and widespread sentiments of inspiration.



Topics or themes of interest for future mindfulness events or trainings included more on mental health and health applications, mindfulness in early childhood and K-12 settings, and personal meditation training. The vast majority of respondents were interested in mindfulness in the higher education context, asserting the need for professional development, training in pedagogical techniques, program design, curriculum design and campus-living applications.



List of Conversations Outcomes:

The conference served as an avenue for building a mindfulness community across disciplines and higher education institutions. Locally, the Western New York Contemplative Faculty & Staff group <http://www.wnycollegeconnection.com/wny-contemplative-faculty-staff-group>, an inter-institutional

collaborative which brings together faculty and staff across disciplines and institutions to raise awareness of the educational efficacy of mindfulness, has grown as a result of the Conference. This group now includes approximately 75 faculty and staff from 10 institutions of higher education (SUNY Buffalo, SUNY Buffalo State, SUNY Geneseo, SUNY Niagara Community College, Medaille College, Trocaire College, Daemen College, Genesee Community College, Niagara University, and Alfred University). Community building collaborations have also been fostered statewide. Faculty and staff at an additional 10 higher education institutions (SUNY Binghamton, SUNY Upstate Medical, SUNY Oneonta, SUNY Stony Brook, SUNY Old Westbury, SUNY Farmingdale, SUNY New Paltz, SUNY Purchase, Corning Community College, and Fulton Montgomery Community College) are seeking to strengthen the mindfulness network regionally and across New York State (NYS). This conference took the Mindfulness & Health Conversation beyond institutions of higher education to include people from a variety of constituencies within the community at large. Attendees included clinicians, doctors, and all manner of health care professionals, business professionals, and K-12 teachers as well as the general public. Conference accessibility was largely due to CID funding, which made registration affordable. This created a space for building partnerships and fostering greater cross-sector collaboration. Models are now being developed to support and sustain the mindfulness community within sectors, across sectors and across NYS.

The WNY Consortium of Higher Education became a sponsor of the Conference. The Consortium is committed to strengthening collaboration among its network of 21 colleges and institutions in the Western NY area, as well as forging partnerships with regional private and public sectors. The Consortium now supports the efforts of the Western NY Contemplative Faculty and Staff group.

To continue developing the state-wide mindfulness agenda, based on feedback received both anecdotally and from the evaluation instrument, goals for continuing the Conversation include:

- 1) holding an annual conference on mindfulness topics
- 2) conducting more campus events on mindfulness, and
- 3) expanding inter-campus working groups across institutions state-wide.

The breakdown of these outcomes is indicated in the chart below.

