Implementation of Wellness Days

1. **Purpose of Wellness Days**

Recommended Purpose:

(University) is committed to being a student-first university, ensuring that students feel welcomed to achieve their educational goals. Student wellbeing is the key to transforming students into change agents so that they can achieve success. Wellness Days can and should be used when a student wishes to be absent from a day of classes, whether it's due to mental health, emotional wellbeing, physical illness, or personal circumstances. Taking a day to perform some self-care or seek assistance from available resources will allow students to continue their educational pursuits with renewed purpose.

This program seeks to provide relief and support students in 3 impactful ways:

- Allow students an opportunity to be absent from a day of classes for any reason.
- Offer a method for indirectly notifying multiple course instructors of an excused absence while maintaining privacy and reducing the stress of direct notifications.
- Provide an in-the-moment reminder of available resources and how to contact them, allowing for students to access the resources needed for their success*

(Information partially utilized from Northeastern University Wellness Days)

2. **Accessibility of Wellness Days**

Recommended Accessibility:

- Wellness Days Form should be available through Blackboard/Canvas/University website, to create accessibility for all students who are eligible. Utilizing these platforms allows all students who are enrolled in class to be made aware of this program. A further recommendation is to allow for automatic notification to all affected professors of the Wellness Days, to reduce stress on the student who would otherwise have to contact all professors.
- Wellness Day Forms should include:

- o An explanation of all restrictions to Wellness Days (e.g. can't take Wellness Days during exams, clinicals, etc.)
  - o An explanation of student responsibilities and student acknowledgement of these responsibilities
  - o An explanation of resources that may need to be utilized
- After Wellness Days are utilized, automatic emails should be sent to students to remind them of resources they may need
  - o Wellness resources could include (not limited to):
    - Counseling services
    - Health services
    - Financial resources

3. Benefits of Wellness Days

University Benefits:

- Allows for trackable data of students taking Wellness Days. Generally, higher education does not track absences so it can be difficult to know when students are falling behind or need resources. By having a trackable system, the University can send in-the-moment reminders to get students back on track to success.
- Allows for professors to have an official way to access who may be missing class. Students typically will skip class completely or email their professors individually asking if they can miss class which can put the burden of students being at risk for dropping out or failing their classes on the professor.

Student Benefits:

- Allows students to understand their resources on campus and reenforces accessibility of resources on campus
- Reduces the stress of contacting professors as it notifies multiple course instructors of an excused absence while maintaining privacy
- Gives students a much needed 'pause' to allow them to successfully continue with their educational pursuits

4. **Recommended Timeline of Wellness Days**

Fall:

- Establish final proposal for University
- Bring proposal to appropriate stakeholders
    - Student Senate
    - Faculty/Staff Senate/Association
    - President/Chancellor's Council
    - Any other necessary Student, Staff, Faculty, or Administration groups

Spring:

- Finalize the program through a committee
- Attempt a pilot program
    - Beginning a pilot program in Spring would include new Fall freshmen and students starting in the Spring and encourage a smoother transition for these students to understand Counseling and Mental Health Resources. This semester would include 2 Wellness days per semester.

End of Spring:

- Discuss and adjust program based on feedback from appropriate stakeholders
    - Discuss whether program is ready to establish into policy