

HIGHLIGHT

EY delivers data-driven well-being for Kean University

Author:

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Much like enterprises, universities are under increasing pressure to prioritize well-being as an integral part of the academic experience. This pressure reflects a broader paradigm shift where well-being is no longer solely the concern of individuals but a fundamental determinant in an institution's ability to attract, retain, and nurture students and talent.

This shift has led Kean University in New Jersey to join forces with EY to measure and enhance the well-being of its students, faculty, and staff, resulting in data-driven and generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) insights and interventions.

Kean University teamed with EY to develop a "Vitality Index" for measuring and enhancing the well-being of students and staff

Kean University embarked on a mission to prioritize its community members' well-being, including a vast community of 12,000+ students and more than 2,000+ faculty and staff. To gauge the community's experiences, EY analyzed 469 experiential and operational metrics drawn from various sources, including surveys and existing university data. To enrich

the analysis, GenAI was used to draw connections between well-being trends, campus events, and geopolitical factors, providing a deeper understanding of the multifaceted aspects influencing well-being.

This comprehensive analysis led to the creation of a "Vitality Index" that shed light on various dimensions of well-being, encompassing physical, mental, emotional, financial, and social aspects, allowing the university to pinpoint vitality gaps and take proactive measures to address them.

With the index in hand, EY laid the foundation for Kean University's data-driven well-being strategy and intervention design to address the most pressing gaps in well-being. EY built a comprehensive Technology, Research, and Change Management method to support the Moon Shot for Equity Initiative in Education. It developed a holistic People Experience Listening Strategy leveraging "X" (qualitative) and "O" data with EY alliance partners Microsoft and Qualtrics.

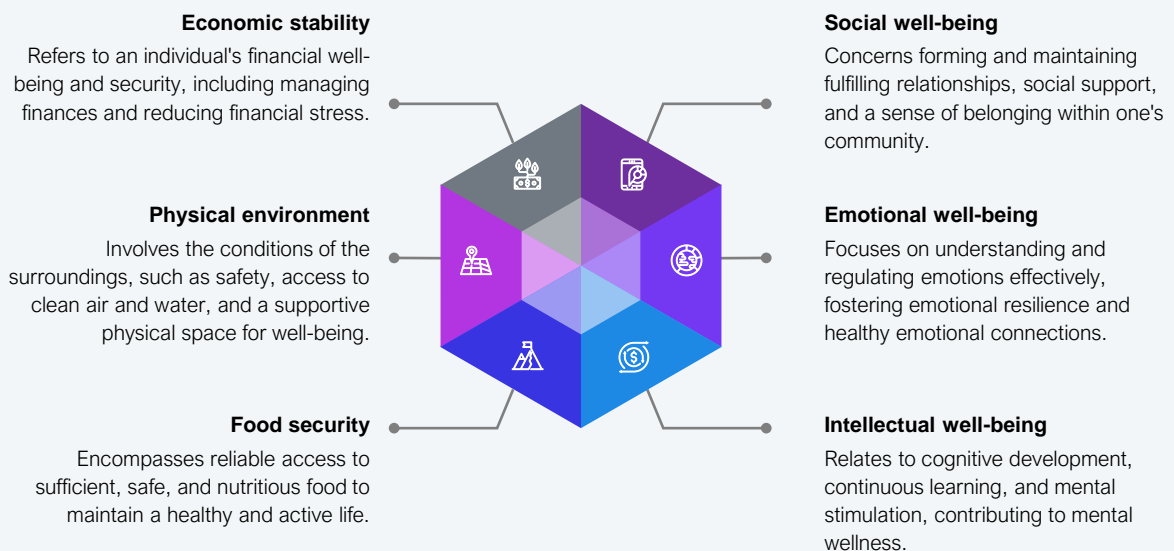
These resources enabled university leaders to efficiently address well-being disparities and provide targeted interventions. For instance, they increased flexibility in work arrangements and bolstered resources for student mental health.

The collaboration reflects a paradigm shift where well-being is not an afterthought but central to enterprise transformation

In recent years, employees have faced several challenges, from a global pandemic, evolving return-to-work models, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life to wages that have not kept up with rising inflation. This turbulent backdrop has taken a toll on the many dimensions of well-being (see Exhibit 1).

Traditionally, institutions considered it the individual's responsibility to manage these dimensions of well-being. However, there is a growing recognition that when the well-being of employees (or students) falters, it sends shockwaves throughout the organization. Productivity wanes, retention rates drop, and recruiting top talent becomes an uphill battle, ultimately impacting the bottom line. Moreover, unhappy employees tend to disengage, potentially compromising their performance and the organization's success.

Exhibit 1: Understanding the interconnected well-being dimensions empowers enterprises to craft effective strategies fostering healthier, happier workplaces



Source: HFS Research, 2023

Against this backdrop, it is imperative to prioritize your employees' well-being and cultivate a workplace culture that truly values them. It isn't just a feel-good endeavor; it's a strategic imperative that turbocharges productivity, slashes turnover rates, sparks innovation, fosters customer loyalty, and, ultimately, boosts your bottom line. However, while many institutions recognize the importance of well-being, there is often a gap between the rhetoric of promoting well-being and implementing practices that foster it. In many organizations, well-being is often reduced to a slogan, generic health program, or a sporadic once-a-year email survey—whose results often languish in CEOs' inboxes.

A commitment to well-being requires ongoing regular assessments, thoughtful reflection, and proactive interventions that acknowledge the intricate interconnectedness of well-being across all dimensions. It demonstrates that an organization is not content with superficial measures but is dedicated to cultivating a thriving community where well-being is at the forefront, continually nurtured, and consistently improved.

The Bottom Line: EY's approach to quantifying well-being is a notable example of how universities and enterprises can adapt to the paradigm shift where well-being is a central determinant of success.

Enterprise leaders should recognize that prioritizing well-being, as demonstrated by the collaboration between the university and EY, is not just a cultural trend but a strategic imperative that can enhance productivity, retention, innovation, and, ultimately, the bottom line.

To succeed, leaders must shift from individual to institutional responsibility, leverage data-driven insights, and implement ongoing, customized interventions that foster a holistic sense of well-being among employees or students.

Research author



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