

Using the Wellness Model to Better Understand and Help First-Year Students Succeed

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Session Goals for Participants

- To have a general understanding of the First-Year Seminar and Learning Community programs at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA, USA.
 - To understand and be able to define the wellness model and its six interconnected, yet separate, dimensions – physical, social, intellectual, occupational, spiritual and emotional.
 - To generate ideas on how to specifically incorporate the wellness model into a First-Year Seminar class.
 - To think about what courses could be linked through a wellness theme, and possible integration of assignments.
 - To learn about results from three different assessments pertaining to wellness.
 - To find out what students have to say about wellness and how it impacts their lives.
 - To consider how formally addressing wellness can help first-year students successfully transition into college and achieve academic success.
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History of KSU 1101: First-Year Seminar course

- First offered in 1983 as a three credit hour course
 - Program continues to grow and consistently receives national recognition in the USA
 - Centered about 11 student learning outcomes
 - Fall Semester 2008; 110 sections will be offered (75 independent and 35 embedded in a Learning Community)
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History of Learning Communities (LCs) at Kennesaw State University

- First LC offered in Fall 2000 – “learning coincidences”
 - Thematic LCs began in Fall 2003
 - New university-wide curriculum requirement in Fall 2005 greatly increased number of LCs offered
 - Three linked courses is the norm – majority include KSU 1101: Freshman Seminar class
 - Faculty submit themed proposals to Learning Community Director
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Wellness Theme

Addresses First Year Experience Learning Outcome - *Knowledge of Wellness*

Three linked courses in Learning Community were:

- ❖ KSU 1101 – First-Year Seminar
- ❖ HPS 1000 – Health and Physical Science
- ❖ ENG 1101 – Composition I

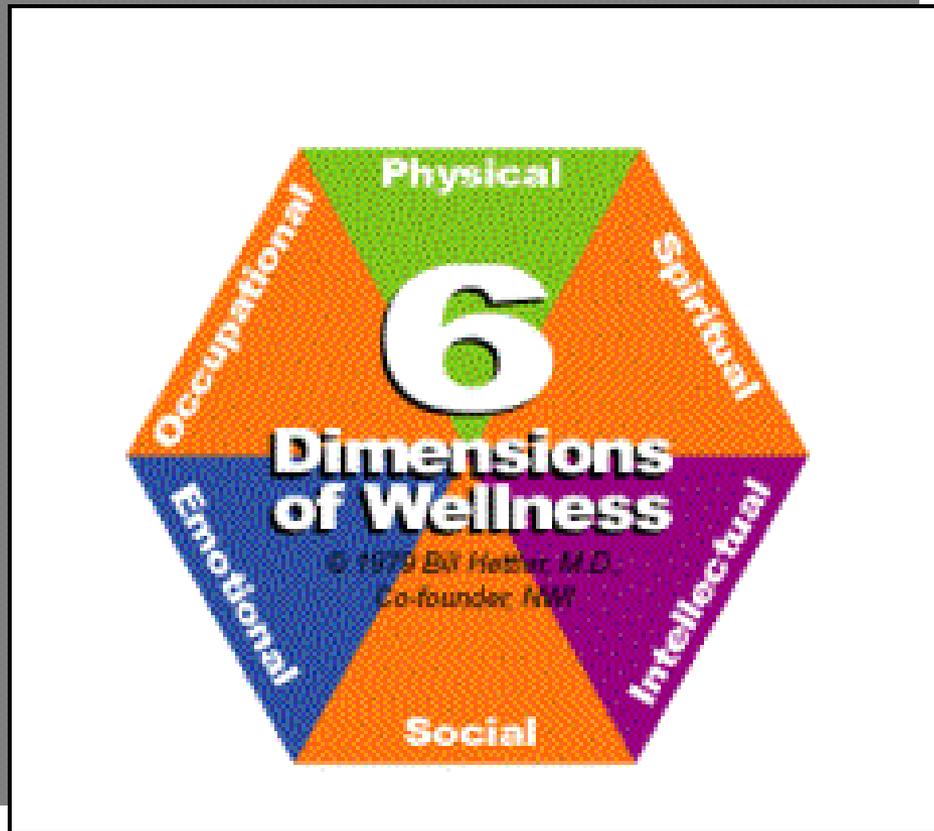
Also used this theme in independent sections of KSU 1101

Definition of Wellness

- An active, life long process that aims for an optimal balance among all aspects of one's life.
 - Dimensions are separate, yet interconnected.
 - The model:
 - moves beyond fixing problems (reactive)
 - focuses on prevention (proactive)
 - promotes self-responsibility
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The Six Dimensional Wellness Model –

created by Bill Hettler, M.D.,
co-founder of the National Wellness Institute,
USA



Emotional Dimension of Wellness – guiding questions

- Are you aware of your emotions?



- Can you effectively manage your emotions?
- Can you distinguish between feeling down and clinical depression?

Intellectual Dimension of Wellness – guiding questions

- Are you challenging yourself as a student, not just doing the bare minimum?
- Are you stretching yourself by learning new hobbies, keeping up with world events, etc.?
- Have you become a critical thinker?



Occupational Dimension of Wellness – guiding questions

- Is your work meaningful and rewarding?
(being in college is a job for students)
- Do you understand the difference between a job and a career?



Social dimension of wellness – guiding questions

- Do you have a social support system?
- Have you befriended others who are different than you?
- Are you connected to your community and environment?



Spiritual Dimension of Wellness

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guiding questions

- Do you feel hopeful and at peace?
- Are you living a life that is consistent with your values and beliefs?
- Have you discovered a personal meaning for and purpose in your life?



Physical Dimension of Wellness

– questions to ponder

Do you...

- Have regular annual exams?
- Know your family history?
- Pay attention to frequent sickness and pain?
- Have a positive body-esteem?
- Get enough sleep?



Physical Dimension of Wellness

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Questions to ponder

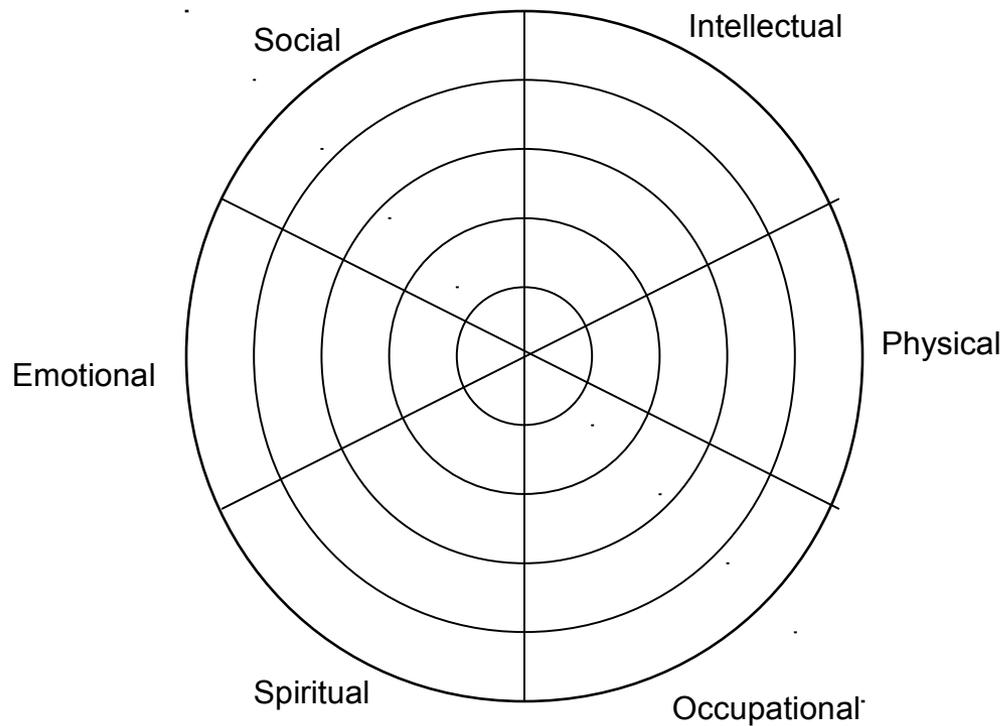


Are you...

- Eating properly and avoiding fad diets?
- Exercising regularly?
- Safety conscious?
- Avoiding the use of illegal drugs, tobacco and excessive intake of alcohol and caffeine?
- Comfortable with your sexuality?
- Protecting yourself against date rape?



The Wellness Wheel



Wellness Dimension(s) emphasized in First-Year Seminar class assignments

- Understanding KSU team assignment (*Social, Occupational, Intellectual*)
 - Personal reflection essay (*Occupational, Emotional, Intellectual*)
 - World religions small group project (*Spiritual*)
 - Common reader journal entries (*Spiritual, Emotional, Social*)
 - Class community service project (*Emotional, Social, Physical*)
 - Midterm and final exams (*Intellectual*)
 - Career research project (*Occupational, Intellectual*)
 - Online Career Portfolio (*Occupational*)
 - Campus events (*all dimensions*)
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Wellness assignments and activities in linked courses

English 1101

- ❖ Essay assignments
- ❖ Speeches
- ❖ Responses to reading assignments (I)
- ❖ Peer response groups

HPS 1000

- ❖ Evaluation of health quackery/myths (I)
- ❖ Computer analysis of personal nutrition
- ❖ Fitness improvement program

- ❖ Self-analysis health report; students then journal about resulting lifestyle decisions
- ❖ Out of class exercise session in a physical volunteering session (e.g. March of Dimes walk) (I)
- ❖ Units on stress management, sexuality & alcohol consumption (I)
- ❖ Health and Wellness demographics for various cultural, ethnic groups , countries and/or geographical areas researched

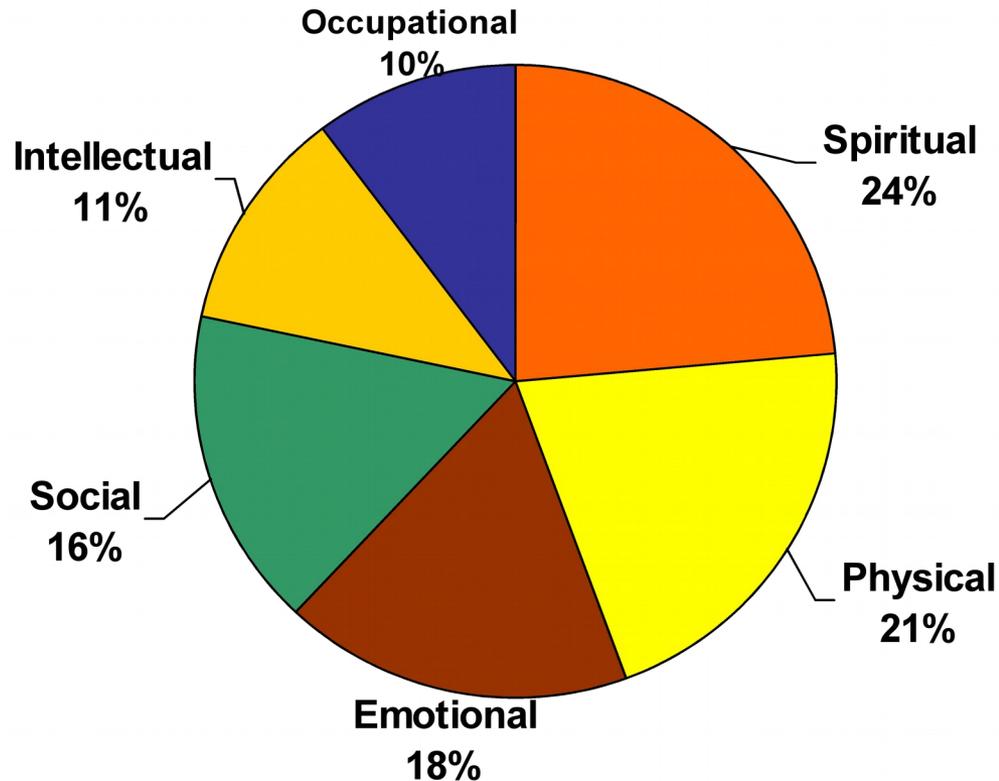
Collaborations with Wellness Center

- ❖ Presentations and resources

(I) = integrated assignments

What do students have to say?

Fall 2006 KSU 1101 Responses to Final Exam Question:
“In which dimension of wellness are you the weakest?” (N=97)



Fall 2006 KSU 1101 Final Exam responses to “How does this wellness dimension weakness affect you as a student, if at all?”

- **Spiritual:**
I am weak in the spiritual dimension. Not so much about religion, but why am I actually here? I have no idea why I am in college or why I have chosen this path in life. I would like to figure these things out soon because uncertainty drives me insane.
 - **Physical:**
I'm very overweight. It seems that due to my being overweight, I am tired a lot. So, sometimes when I am tired, I skip class (which is a horrible idea). Plus, girls like skinny guys.
 - **Emotional:**
I tend to hide my emotions. I try not to show that something is bothering me and I keep it bottled up inside. This cannot be good and I know that, but I think it could be a pride issue as to why I don't explain my feelings. It has affected me in class because if something is bothering me, I tend to not concentrate in class, and I think about that. This semester, I let relationship problems get in the way of my school work because I was upset.
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More Fall 2006 Final Exam Qualitative responses to “How does this wellness dimension weakness affect you as a student, if at all?”

I struggle with social weakness. It has affected my ability to meet people at school. This has affected me because my whole life is revolved around school or job. This creates a lot of stress and makes my school work not as good as I know it can be.

■ Intellectual:

One dimension that I need to work on is the intellectual part of wellness. I know that I am not that smart, and it sometimes takes me twice as long to do work as someone else. I need to not focus on just getting good grades and actually try to learn and absorb the material. Getting good grades for the wrong reason is not good at all.

■ Occupational:

The occupational dimension is my weakest one. I don't have a job right now simply because I don't want to work. That is laziness on my part. It has definitely affected my success as a student. I don't have any money and that creates stress which makes it hard to focus on my school work.

Sampling of a few “Your First College Year”

related survey results from Spring

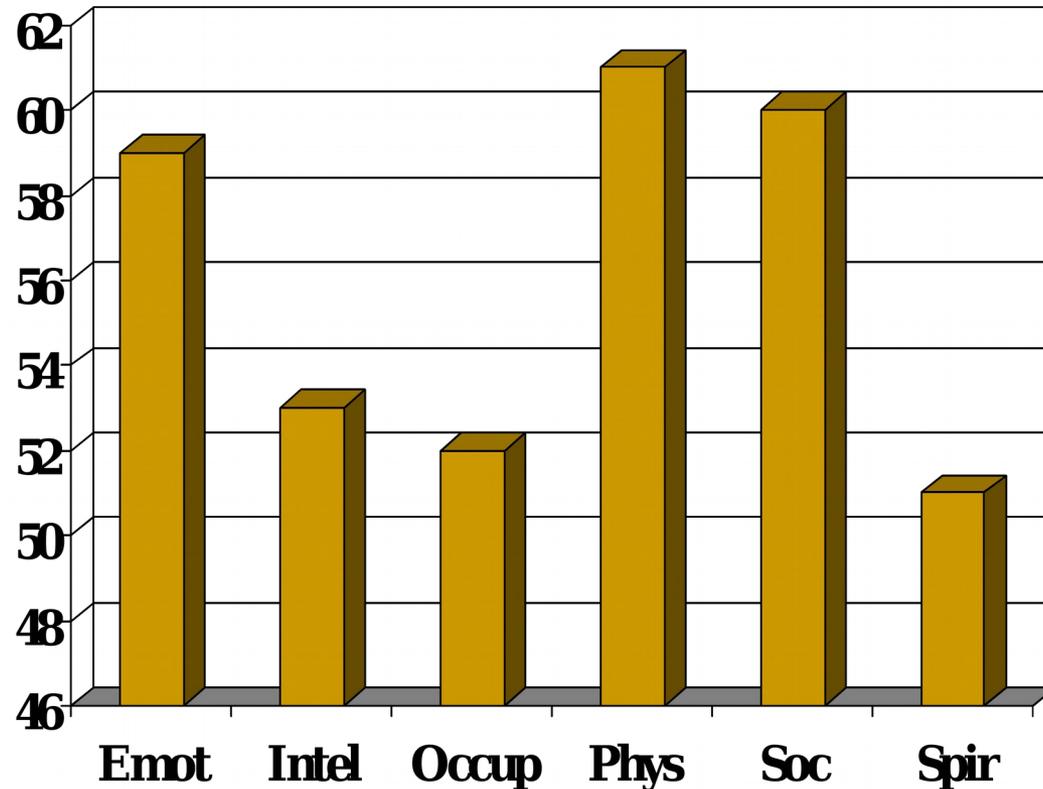
- Number of students who indicated they were:
2007 (N=539)
 - Aware their social life interfered with schoolwork (76.3%)
 - Concerned their job/occupational responsibilities interfered with schoolwork (60.7%)
 - Feeling emotionally overwhelmed by all they had to do (49.7%)
 - Finding it somewhat difficult to very difficult to adjust to the academic demands/intellectual life of college (38.9%)
 - Worried about their physical health (35.8%)
 - Discriminated against because of their religion/spiritual beliefs (11.5%)

Fall Semester 2007

- Final exam question from Fall 2006 evolved into a 10 item Likert-type scale questionnaire administered towards the end of Fall Semester 2007 in three sections of KSU 1101. (N=64)
 - Questions ranged from demographic information to ranking of wellness dimensions to inquiring about attendance at campus programs related to wellness.
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A closer look at the Fall 2007 questionnaire results

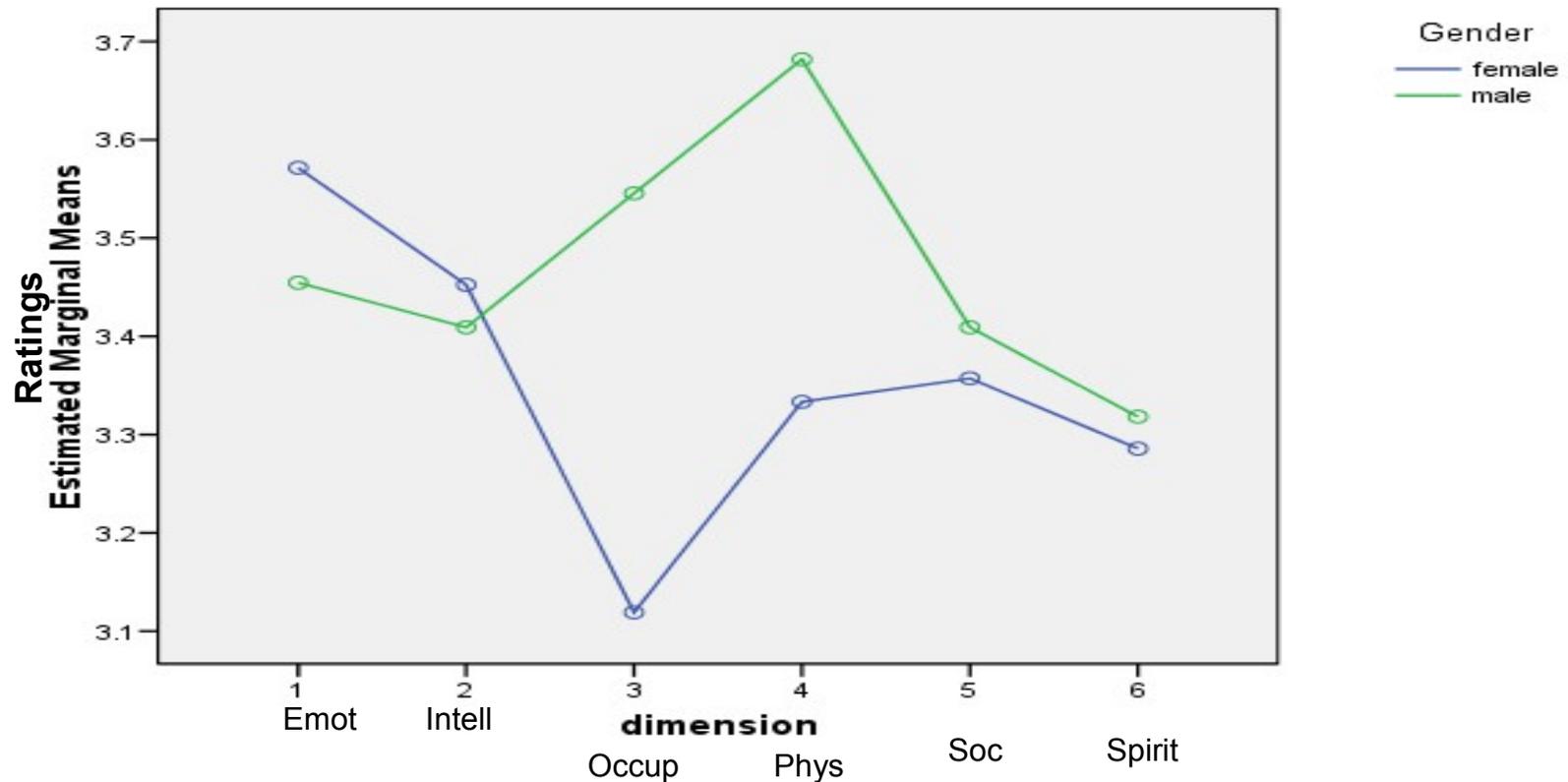
Dimension rated as
“important” or “very
important” in students’
lives



* No significant difference found between dimensions and no overall effect of gender

Fall 2007 Gender Ratings on Importance of Dimension

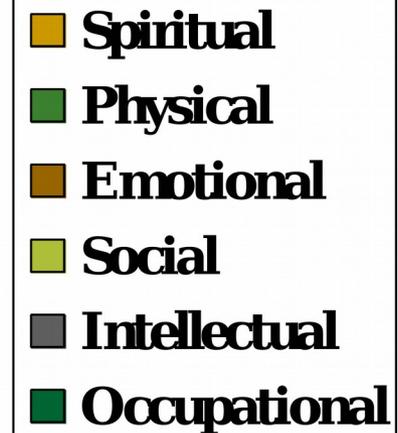
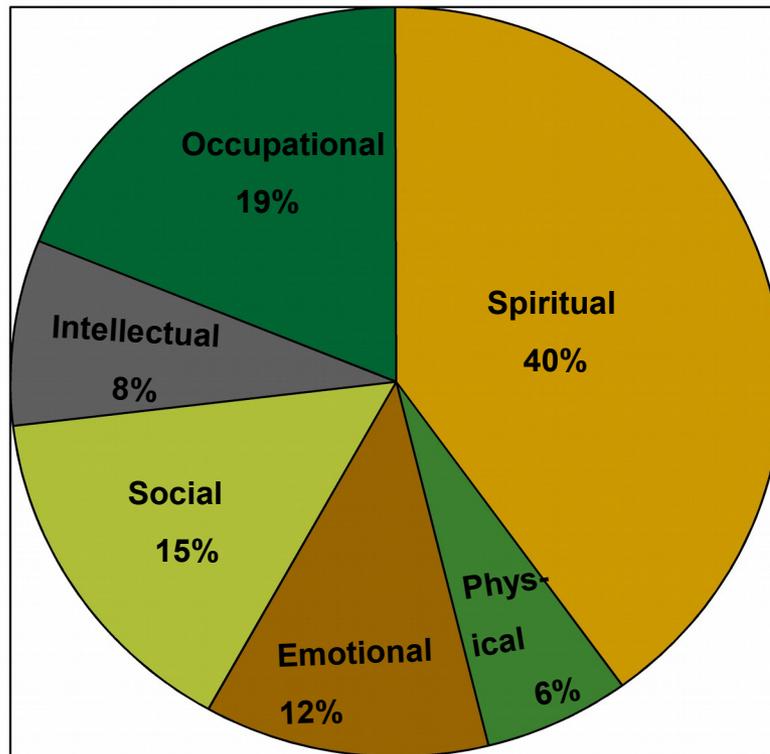
Estimated Marginal Means of MEASURE_1



- Using a repeated measures design, there was a gender interaction between the dimensions.
- Significant findings occurred in the occupational and physical dimensions at $p < .05$

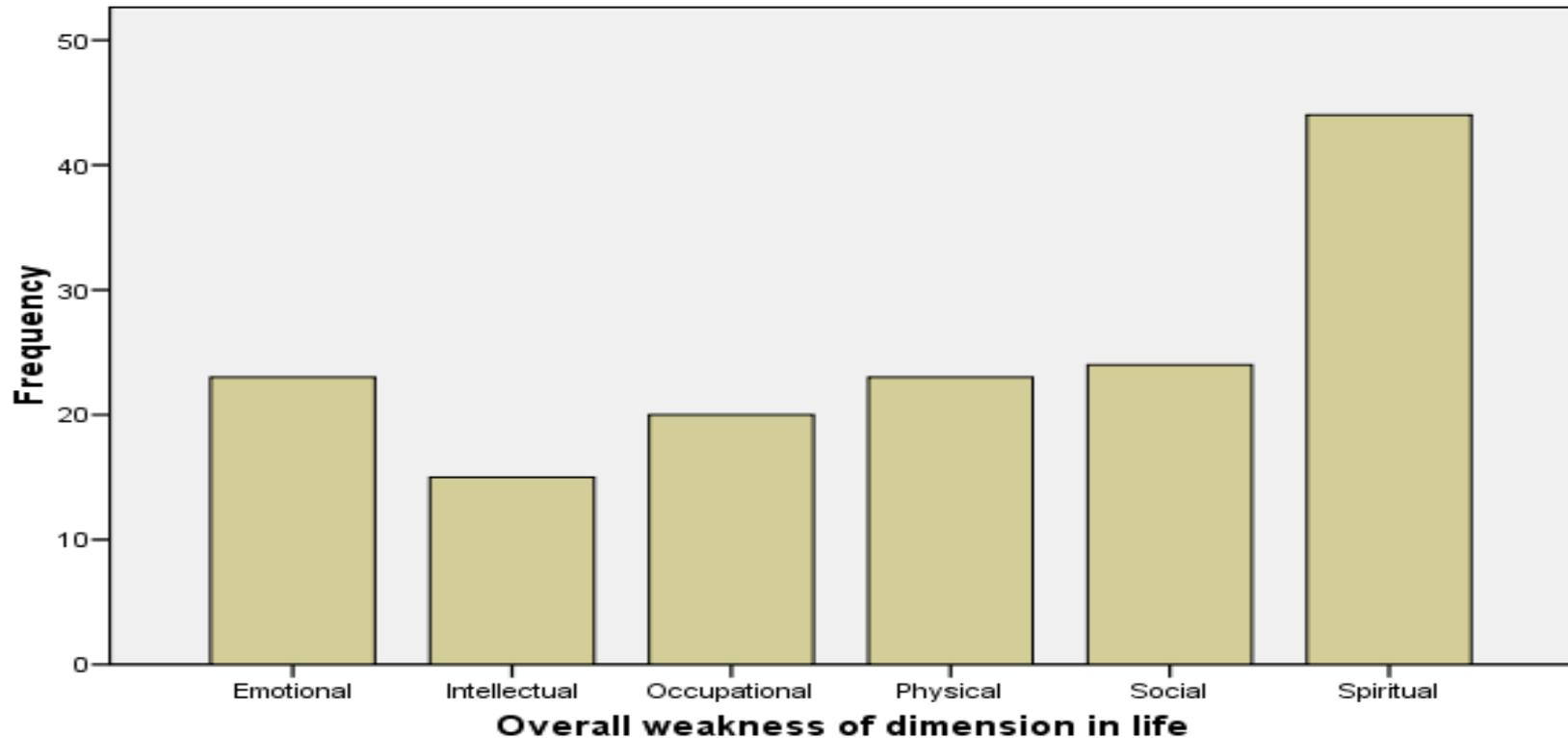
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Fall 2007 KSU 1101 Responses to Survey Question:
“In which dimension of wellness are you the weakest?” (N=64)



Combination of Fall 2006 and 2007 data

Overall weakness of dimension in life



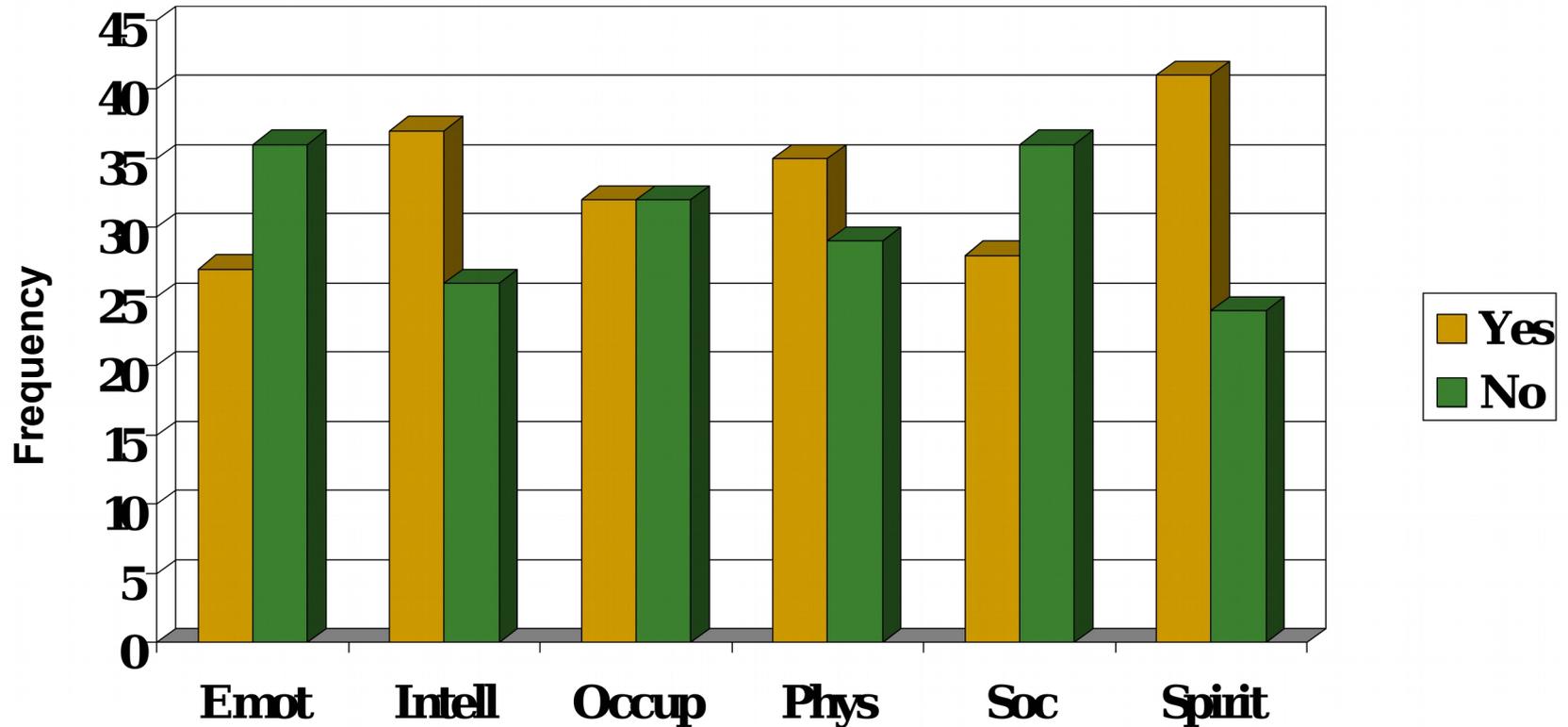
Another Final Exam Question for Fall 2006 and Survey Question for 2007 –

Does your weakness in this dimension negatively affect your success as a student...?

Chi-Square Pearson Correlations indicated a positive correlation between “Yes” and the question on the “Emotional” and “Intellectual” dimensions, and between “No” and the question on the “Spiritual” dimension.

Another Fall 2007 general question of interest

“I am trying to improve in this dimension of wellness”



Summary

- Students can not just be viewed from an academic lens.
 - Wellness model helps students explore issues that are important to them. Relevancy gets them engaged.
 - What goes on outside the classroom can ultimately determine the level of academic success a student achieves.
 - Sharing of results with campus units who interact with students on day-to-day basis (e.g. Residence Life and Center for Health Promotion and Wellness).
 - Research needs to be replicated; some findings seem to contradict one another.
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