



NATIONAL  
ACADEMY  
of MEDICINE

# ***CHANGE MAKER IN ACTION SERIES***

**From Silos to Synergy:  
Communicating & Collaborating for Well-Being**

Now more than ever, organizations are striving to invest in well-being initiatives while navigating ongoing resource constraints and unpredictability. In this environment, a lack of trust and collaboration can lead individuals and teams to operate in silos with limited communication and reduced engagement. This can prevent organizations from fully understanding and responding to workforce needs, while also contributing to duplicated efforts, missed opportunities, and reduced performance at both the individual and system levels. This reality presents an opportunity to reimagine how well-being departments and other stakeholders communicate, collaborate, and learn from each other. Breaking down silos and strengthening coordination across departments, disciplines, and partners can help organizations identify and adapt effective practices across settings, creating new pathways to advance well-being.

Sign up to be a  
Change Maker to prioritize  
health worker well-being  
at your organization:  
[nam.edu/ChangeMaker](https://nam.edu/ChangeMaker)

## KEY TAKEAWAYS AND STRATEGIES

The following strategies are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, offering a flexible approach to advancing well-being through stronger communication and collaboration across a variety of organizational settings. While not strictly linear, these strategies are designed to build on one another, from trust building to bidirectional communication, integration, and ultimately measurement and continuous improvement.

### Build and Strengthen Trust

Trust between well-being departments and their partners is a prerequisite for establishing relationships and enabling meaningful collaboration. Without it, individuals and teams default to working in isolation, especially in times of scarcity. However, with trust, communication, collaboration, and engagement can thrive, creating systems that work better for everyone.

**How to Get Started:** Building trust requires intentional efforts, including clear communication and transparency. Well-being leaders and organizational leadership should engage stakeholders with genuine curiosity and active listening. Well-being efforts and teams should be visible and accessible, and they should demonstrate responsiveness by closing feedback loops. Trust grows when organizations consistently seek input, respond to concerns, and demonstrate how feedback influences decisions. Small actions, such as reporting back on points raised during a meeting, can build credibility and encourage future engagement.

### Establish Bidirectional Communication Pathways

Once trust is established, it must be intentionally sustained through consistent and transparent communication. Engaging with people throughout the organization through advisory groups, cross-functional partnerships, local champions, or peer-led support structures can help facilitate information flow between frontline staff, well-being teams, and organizational leadership.

**How to Get Started:** Communication pathways help organizations identify emerging concerns and understand how policies and workflows affect staff. Advisory councils, local champions, and other structured forums can surface frontline perspectives and help leaders communicate changes back to affected groups. Reporting back on input received and actions taken, with messaging tailored to resonate with different audiences, demonstrates accountability and strengthens partnerships.

### Embed Well-Being into Culture and Everyday Practice

Well-being efforts are most effective when incorporated into existing systems, structures, and daily work. Integrating well-being into curricula, workflows, leadership practices, and learning environments creates opportunities for collaboration between well-being offices and partners while helping ensure it is considered alongside other organizational priorities.

**How to Get Started:** Intentional partnerships (e.g., with HR, faculty, learners, leadership) are essential for integration, as they create natural channels for ongoing communication, feedback, and coordination. Shared accountability across the organization and executive leadership team helps ensure decision-making accounts for impacts on the workforce. Well-being efforts should be communicated in ways that connect to the purpose of individuals' work. Leaders and educators can reinforce well-being by incorporating it into routine conversations, daily actions, and decision-making processes to help normalize it as a core aspect of professional practice. Over time, this helps transform well-being from a siloed initiative into a system-wide approach.



*If the trust is there, and the relationships are there, there's more conversation, communication, and engagement, and then we know how to work better together."*

MEGAN FURNARI



*The only way to engage people is to actually engage with them."*

MARK SPEICHER



*That bi-directional communication opportunity that we have created...is what truly keeps our work grounded in the real experiences of our people, and not just in the priorities of our leadership team."*

EVAN THOMAN



*Students come to see well-being as integral to their development and part of their career, rather than something that is external, that is to be dealt with maybe after hours."*

CORI MCCLURE POFFENBERGER

### Use Measurement to Guide Efforts

Measurement is a powerful tool for engaging partners and aligning efforts. Data should extend beyond well-being surveys to assess organizational drivers of workforce experience, such as teamwork, administrative burden, and workflow efficiency. These data can help identify root causes of burnout, support the prioritization of improvement efforts, and serve as an accountability mechanism.

**How to Get Started:** Metrics and assessment tools should be selected collaboratively to ensure they capture meaningful and relevant information while also building buy-in across stakeholders. Once collected, data should be communicated in ways that clearly tell the story of the state of well-being within an organization. Sharing results transparently, and inviting reflection and feedback, creates opportunities for dialogue, strengthens accountability, and helps target improvement efforts.

# CASE SNAPSHOTS

NAM Change Makers reflected on specific strategies and cross-cutting approaches for strengthening communication, breaking down silos, and encouraging collaboration between well-being departments and other partners. The American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, Emory Healthcare, and University of New Mexico School of Medicine highlighted models and examples of successful on-the-ground practices for advancing well-being work. The shared approaches across all three case examples are summarized in the box below.

## CROSS-CUTTING APPROACHES FOR IMPLEMENTING KEY STRATEGIES



**Visibility and Engagement:** Increasing the visibility of well-being resources and initiatives fosters trust and engagement



**Mindset Shifts:** Encouraging shifts in how individuals understand and approach well-being supports its integration into everyday practice and helps normalize it as part of professional culture



**Governance Structures:** Advisory councils and similar structures facilitate bidirectional communication and play a key role in guiding and disseminating measurement efforts

**AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE:** AACOM supports all 44 Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine and focuses its well-being efforts on transforming the learning environment through faculty-driven approaches.

### Real-World Implementation Examples:



Communication strategies are tailored to specific audiences. For example, research findings are used to engage faculty in their behavior change to foster student well-being, while messaging to students emphasizes well-being programs as an opportunity to improve the learning environment.



**Resilient Mindsets in Medicine**, a faculty development program, equips faculty to integrate practices into their teaching that foster growth mindset, purpose and relevance, and a sense of belonging. These three mindset shifts are associated with improved student well-being and help to embed well-being into everyday practice.



An advisory committee of deans, administrators, faculty members, and students guides the selection of survey assessment tools, helping to ensure shared ownership and increasing the response rate.

**EMORY HEALTHCARE: The Office of Well-Being (EmWELL)** takes a system-based and collaborative approach to support more than 40,000 employees. Their work is guided by the **Stanford Model of Occupational Well-Being**, which focuses on culture of wellness, personal resilience, and efficiency of practice.

### Real-World Implementation Examples:



An **Advisory Council**, which includes leaders from operating units, representatives from the digital user experience team, HR, and the employee assistance program (EAP) team, among others, provides strategic guidance and facilitates strong bidirectional communication between frontline leaders and the Office of Well-Being.



During their workplace well-being survey assessment period, the Office of Well-Being conducts in-person rounding to engage employees across roles and shifts. This exercise helps build relationships, increases the visibility of their work, and provides opportunities to gather feedback.



Advisory Council members play a key role in disseminating survey results across the organization, ensuring every team, no matter how large or small, receives and understands the results.

**UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO SCHOOL OF MEDICINE:** The **Office of Professional Well-Being** serves all School of Medicine constituent populations using systems-based strategies tailored to the needs of different groups.

### Real-World Implementation Examples:



Well-being is integrated across the curriculum and administrative structures through partnerships with groups such as the **Office of Applied Cognition** and the **Office of Medical Student Affairs**. These partnerships enable coordinated support and warm handoffs for students in need.



The Office of Professional Well-Being collaborates with learning community mentors (faculty who support students throughout the duration of their medical school experience) to embed well-being education and increase awareness of well-being resources.



UNM works with students to shift mindsets around well-being by reframing common stressors in medical school as expected experiences. Through skill-based support, they emphasize building practical coping and well-being strategies to normalize these conversations and reinforce well-being as a part of everyday practice.

**Disclaimer:** The external resources on this page do not necessarily represent the views of any one organization, the Clinician Well-Being Collaborative, or the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, and have not been subjected to the review procedures of, nor are they a product of, the National Academies. We are sharing this curated list based on the expert guidance of Collaborative members to serve as resources.

# ABOUT THE CHANGE MAKER IN ACTION SERIES



The National Academy of Medicine's (NAM) Change Maker in Action Series is designed to foster dynamic information-sharing and collaboration, highlight the impact of ongoing initiatives, and elevate effective solutions to shared challenges. Each webinar focuses on a specific topic relevant to the NAM Change Maker community, promoting ongoing efforts to embed well-being as a long-term value. Through this series, the NAM aims to inspire continued progress and drive the national movement to support the well-being of the health workforce.

[Learn more at nam.edu/ChangeMaker.](https://nam.edu/ChangeMaker)

## WEBINAR SPEAKERS:



**Megan Furnari, MD, MS**  
Associate Chief Wellness Officer

### Oregon Health & Science University

The mission of OHSU Well-being is to collaboratively improve the well-being of the OHSU community through the intentional organization, implementation and evaluation of efforts to improve well-being for staff, faculty, and learners.



**Cori McClure Poffenberger, MD**  
Professor and Vice Chair for Wellbeing

### University of New Mexico School of Medicine

The Office of Professional Well-Being at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine is dedicated to providing initiatives for faculty and learners that improve practice efficiency, enhance a culture of compassion, and promote personal resiliency. The office follows a national wellness model to promote joy in practice and to reduce moral distress. The office focuses on improving professional well-being for all learners in the School of Medicine, including medical students, HPP students, BSGP students, and residents and fellows, as well as SOM clinical and nonclinical faculty.



**Mark Speicher, PhD, MHA**  
Senior VP of Research, Learning and Innovation

### American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine

The American Association of Colleges and Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) is the leading voice for the education of physicians practicing osteopathic medicine across the US. We support colleges of osteopathic medicine in their efforts to train future physicians fueled by a desire to make a difference, to treat the whole person and build a future of health and wellness for all people.



**Evan Thoman, MS, PMP, CWP**  
Chief Well-Being Officer

### Emory Healthcare

The Woodruff Health Sciences Center (WHSC) established the Office of Well-Being in January 2022. The office is a central resource and the first of its kind for the entire Woodruff Health Sciences Center, which includes Emory Healthcare. The goals of the office include facilitating system-wide changes that enable team members to effectively practice in a culture that prioritizes and promotes wellness and professional fulfillment while optimizing the function of Emory's health system and establishing a robust well-being research foundation.