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Proactive approach to student mental health at the heart of R.E.C. Room initiative

A student with a healthy and positive state of mind is more likely to be engaged, successful and flourishing. The University of Lethbridge's newest strategy to enhance student mental health is the introduction of the [R.E.C. Room](#) — multi-site campus hubs designed to invite students to step away from the stress of study and research to relax their minds and connect with one another.

Introduced today in the University Hall Atrium, the R.E.C. Room (an acronym for refresh, energize, connect) is a joint initiative funded by ULethbridge and created in consultation with the University of Lethbridge Students' Union (ULSU), Student Affairs and in collaboration with Agility, Horns Recreation and the University Library. Like the giant Jenga game students can now play in the REC Room, multiple blocks of support must come together to promote flourishing.

"It's imperative we proactively address students' mental health needs and promote wellness at every opportunity," says Dr. Mark Slomp, executive director of Student Services. "With mental health issues so prevalent amongst students, and the benefits of proactively addressing those issues so pronounced, it is in every school's best interest to promote mental wellness on campus. Our investment in the mental health of our students carries the obvious short-term benefit of enhancing their student experience, and also supports student retention and in the end, leads to successful students who go on to positively impact their communities and society as a whole."

So, where are the R.E.C. Rooms, what's in them and who can use them?

The Rec Room locations include the UHall Atrium, Science Commons (outside the Innovation Zone), Markin Hall Atrium, Galileo's in the Students' Union, the University Library (just past the circulation desk), and the Chill Zone in Agility's Innovation Zone.

The rooms will be equipped with a variety of activities, including quiet pursuits like puzzles, a giant chess board, virtual reality games, digital games and art hives/murals, Indigenous games, as well as some active games such as ping pong, foosball, air hockey and giant Jenga. If you feel like just relaxing, there will be bean bag chairs for reading,

chatting or just zoning out. Horns Recreation will also be offering events as part of this initiative, such as the recent Yoga Rave, a dodge ball tournament and outdoor games (spring).

Open to all students, staff and faculty, the concept is to improve mental wellness throughout ULeithbridge.

“Research tells us that people who have strong connections and relationships with others, engage in regular play and creative activity, build frequent exercise and physical activity into their lives, laugh, serve others and participate in spiritual activity report higher levels of life satisfaction,” says Slomp. “The spaces we are setting up across campus are designed to encourage these kinds of activities and habits and serve as a catalyst for students to consider how they are deliberately cultivating a flourishing life.”

The Students’ Union played a major role in identifying what activities would resonate with students.

“Students need more support, and The R.E.C. Rooms are a fun and innovative way for the University and the Students’ Union to support students holistically rather than just purely academically,” says Gage Desteur, Students’ Union vice-president academic. “I’m looking forward to the positive impact these spaces will have on our campus and on students’ overall well-being, especially as we continue to rebuild our campus community, now that we are fully back in person.”

The R.E.C. Rooms are open for activity on Feb. 1.

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Our University’s Blackfoot name is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. The University is located in traditional Blackfoot Confederacy territory. We honour the Blackfoot people and their traditional ways of knowing in caring for this land, as well as all Indigenous Peoples who have helped shape and continue to strengthen our University community.